

## The 14<sup>th</sup> Waffen-Grenadier-Division of the SS «Galizien No. 1» in Slovakia (1944–1945): Battles and Repressions

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**Abstract.** The article, based on significant historiographic data considers the 14th Grenadier Division of the SS 'Galichina' tour of duty within Slovakia in 1941-1945. The process of formation and military operation has been restored. Special attention is attached to the open pages of the history of this unit.

**Keywords:** 14th Grenadier Division of the SS 'Galichina'; tour of duty; 1944-1945.

**Introduction.** The 14<sup>th</sup> Waffen-Grenadier-Division of the SS "Galicia No. 1" started to form in western Ukraine in March 1943 (supposedly this was suggested by the leader of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists Andrij Mel'nyk with the agreement of Adolf Hitler himself) as the police regiment "Galicia". Due to the difficult situation the Germans were facing on the eastern front, Waffen SS chief Heinrich Himmler welcomed such an initiative and suggested to enlarge the regiment into a division (the decision to form a division was made on the 28<sup>th</sup> of April 1943). In May and June 1943 recruitment took place mainly around Lvov. The results were surprising – anti-soviet notions were so strong in the region that more than 70 thousand volunteers wanted to join, which allowed the creation of five police regiments – Galizische SS-Freiwilligen Regiment/Polizei (SS Volunteer Police Regiment Galicia) [1].

**Materials and methods.** The article uses significant historiographic data, published documents, private sources (memoirs and diary records). The use of the data enabled thorough research into the problem. The work has been developed, using the chronological method, enabling to arrange the events in chronological order. The methodological principle of historicism is also very important, as it enables to study World War II, considering specific historical conditions of the time and to exclude the attempts to define the locals' consciousness during the World War II from the perspective of the early XXI century.

**Results.** Officially the division was called the Volunteer SS Division "Galicia" (*SS-Freiwilligen-Division Galizien*) [2] and was created on the 30<sup>th</sup> of July 1943 by the order of H. Himmler (it became the first division made up of eastern volunteers in the formations of the SS – *author*). At the same time, training began for the members of the new division, which was taking place in Ukraine and German occupied Europe (in Poland, Germany, France and Czech lands, 350 officers and 2000 non-commissioned officers were trained) [3]. The commander of the division was SS-Brigadeführer and Major-General of the Waffen-SS Walter Schiman. From November 1943 the command was taken by Fritz Freitag with the same commandantship [4]. In May 1944 the division was in full strength (it consisted of 15 229 soldiers and officers) with the arrangement of the 29<sup>th</sup>, 30<sup>th</sup>, and 31<sup>st</sup> Infantry Regiment and the 14<sup>th</sup> Artillery Regiment with supporting units – Motorized (Scout) Battalion, Engineer Battalion, Radio Battalion, Anti-tank Battalion, Replacement Training-Reserve Regiment and Reserve Battalion.

In the beginning of July 1944 the Galicia division – at that time already named *14. Waffen-Grenadier-Division der SS (Galizien No. 1)* – was sent to battles in the eastern front (against the summer offensive of the Soviets armies around Lvov - Sandomierz) as part of the 13<sup>th</sup> Army Corps within the 4<sup>th</sup> German Panzer Army and Army Group North Ukraine. The division was surrounded near Brody (together with other German units) [5] in the middle of July 1944 and after suffering huge losses (three quarters of its members were killed or captured and only 3 thousand were able to fight their way out) it was called away from the front. Based on the order of the Main office of the SS on the 5<sup>th</sup> September 1944 the division was moved to Neuhammer in Schliesen, where it was refitted and underwent complex reorganization [6].

During this time (29<sup>th</sup> of August 1944) an anti-German uprising started in Slovakia (later called the Slovak National Uprising), and it was decided by Berlin that the *14th Waffen-Grenadier-*

*Division der SS (Galicia No. 1)* (further 14<sup>th</sup> SS Division; 14<sup>th</sup> SS Division Galicia – *author*) would be moved into the *Schutzzonein* western Slovakia.

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The order to move the 14<sup>th</sup> SS division Galicia from Neuhammer into the *Schutzzonein* western Slovakia due to the Uprising was given by the leader of the SS, H. Himmler, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of September 1944. The headquarters of the division was given the order to quickly create a battle group (*Kampfgruppe*) with the strength of a reinforced battalion and move it to Bratislava under the leadership of the German commander (General) in Slovakia. It was supposed to be used against Slovak resistance fighters – in German eyes “gangs”. This battle group consisted of one battalion from the 29<sup>th</sup> Regiment, two anti-tank companies, two engineer companies, a scout, radio and battle security platoon and a battery of light artillery [7]. This group had 900 soldiers and officers and was named after its commander *SS-Oberstumbannführer* Karl Wildner (a Slovak German), who previously served as a higher officer in the Slovak army (for some time he was the commander of the military garrison in Martin) [8]. Most of the members of the 14<sup>th</sup> SS Division Galicia volunteered into the battle group [9], because they knew that shortly before the Uprising started, the Slovak government gave asylum to a big group of escapees from Galicia [10]. As stated by the Slovak historian K. Fremal – they correctly thought that they would find relatives and families within this group of escapees [11].



A marching unit of the Ukrainian 14<sup>th</sup> SS division during its deployment in Slovakia (1944)  
(Source: Axworthy M.W. *Axis Slovakia. Hitler's Slavic Wedge 1938–1945*. New York 2002.)

On the 29<sup>th</sup> of September 1944 the battle group Wildner disembarked from three transports in the railway station in Zemianske Kostolany. It was supposed to take part in the clearing of the southern sector (in the area of Žarnovica – Banská Štiavnica – Krupina – Zvolen) from resistance units [12]. On the following day (30<sup>th</sup> September 1944) the battle group Wildner moved from Osľany through Píla towards Žarnovica to assist SS Battle Group “Schill” (*SS-Kampfgruppe Schill*) – the elite German unit, which was fighting its way through Pohronie. Battle group Wildner was subordinated and joined with battle group Schill.

Battle groups “Schill” and “Wildner” captured Žarnovica. During the next few days they attacked the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tactical Group (TS) “Gerlach” of the 1<sup>st</sup> Czechoslovak Army through the valley of the river Hron. They were able to capture Svätý Kríž (today called Žiarnad Hronom), fought heavily for Vyhne, captured Banská Štiavnica, Banská Belá, Kozelník and after this the members of the Galicia were tasked to safeguard the areas [13].

At this time (October 1944) the rest of the 14<sup>th</sup> SS Division Galicia entered the *Schutzzone*. In the evening report from the 8<sup>th</sup> October 1944, the German commander in Slovakia stated that the 14<sup>th</sup> Waffen-Grenadier-Division of the SS was moving to Žilina: “At this time the division entered Slovakia with 286 officers and 13 999 non-commissioned officers and soldiers” [14]. It started to deploy in Považie [15] and it captured the north-western part of Slovakia within a week – the area from Púchov to Štrba (including Kysuce, Orava, Rajec and Dolný Turiec) [16].

The headquarters of the 14<sup>th</sup> SS Division Galicia was set up in Žilina together with its radio, administrative and reserve battalion. The HQ of the 29<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment was stationed in Kysucké Nové Mesto, the 30<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment was in Veľká Bytča, the 31<sup>st</sup> Infantry Regiment was in Turčiansky Sv. Martin, the 14<sup>th</sup> Artillery Battalion was in Považská Bystrica, and the Scout Detachment was in Rajec. The 14<sup>th</sup> Replacement Training-Reserve Regiment was in Čadca, the Anti-tank Battalion in Martin and the Engineer Battalion was in Vrútky [17]. In addition some units of the division were placed in Ružomberok, Dolný Kubín, Terchová, Svätý Ďur, Vrútky, Sklabinský Podzámok, Raková and Kolárovice, where they were deployed during the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> October 1944 [18].

The HQ of the German occupying force decided that the 14<sup>th</sup> SS Division Galicia would take control of north-western Slovakia, which up until that point was under the control of the 178<sup>th</sup> Panzer Grenadier Division "Tatra" (*178th Panzer Division "Tatra"*). This was done with the aim to cover the "Tatra" division [19] so it could be used against the Slovak resistance fighters in the area of Malá and Veľká Fatra. These were covered by the detachments of the I. and IV. Tactical Groups of the Slovak resistance. Later it covered the rear of the Special (convict) Regiment SS "Dirlewanger" (*SS-Sonderregiment Dirlewanger*) [20], which also joined the anti-resistance operations [21] after they were dispatched in Diviaky between the 14<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> October 1944 [22]. The deployment of the 14<sup>th</sup> SS Division Galicia allowed the pull back of German troops from north-western Slovakia before the German general offensive. The battle group "Schäfer" was redeployed from Liptov (around Ružomberok) to Komárno, where it joined with the core of the 18<sup>th</sup> Volunteer SS Mechanized Division "Horst Wessel" (*18. SS-Freiwillige-Panzergranadier division "Horst Wessel"*), whose task was to attack the resistance from the Hungarian border. A short time later the battle group "Volkman" [23] left Orava and the 1009 motorized training battalion was moved from Ružomberok to the 1<sup>st</sup> Panzer Army. The engineer group "Kotischke" was moved to Kráľová Lehota to repair the road and railway bridge above the conflux of the Biely and Čierny Váh (so-called Červený Kút) [24].



A soldier of the Hlinka's Guards and a soldier from the 14<sup>th</sup> SS Division Galicia in a firing position in Slovakia (1944)

(Source: Axworthy M.W. *Axis Slovakia. Hitler's Slavic Wedge 1938 – 1945*. New York 2002.)

The units of the 14<sup>th</sup> SS Division Galicia started operations against the resistance in Považie, Orava, Kysuce, Turiec and Liptov [25]. According to the reports of the German General in Bratislava – "the division was successful in several punitive actions", this had the effect of the "retreat of strong groups of the gangs towards the border of the protectorate" [26].

Shortly after deployment the HQ of the 14<sup>th</sup> SS Division Galicia strengthened the group "Wildner" with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Company of the 14<sup>th</sup> Anti-tank Detachment with six assault guns [27]. On the 18<sup>th</sup> of October 1944 (the day of the start of the general offensive) this unit together with "Schill" captured Krupina and later turned north towards Senohrad, Babiná, Pliešovce, Sása and

Zvolen [28]. During the next few days (26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> October 1944) the group of Lieutenant commander Wildner together with “Schill” continued in its attack towards Banská Bystrica and Zvolen. The Ukrainian soldiers fought with fervour, especially after they heard that “bolshevist partisans” captured many families of Ukrainian escapees, which needed help. After the breach of the last defence line Badín – Vlkanová the soldiers of Galicia marched, as the first ones, into the centre of the Uprising – Banská Bystrica on the 27<sup>th</sup> October 1944. On the 30<sup>th</sup> October 1944 they were decorated by the president of the Slovak republic Jozef Tiso in Banská Bystrica. Tiso served a “Te Deum”, the German General H. Höfle gave a speech and later there was a victory parade of the units which defeated the resistance. Many were decorated with German military medals for courage and service [29].

By the order of General H. Höfle from the 15<sup>th</sup> October 1944, the HQ of the 14<sup>th</sup> SS Division Galicia formed a second battle group “Wittenmayer” in Žilina that was tasked with attacking from Liptovský Hrádok towards Kráľová Lehota – Malužiná – Čertovicana Brezno [30]. It was also tasked to replace the battle group “Schäfer”. The battle group had the strength of a regiment (three strengthened battalions with approx. 3000 officers and soldiers) and was commanded by *SS-Hauptsturmführer* Fridrich Wittenmayer [31]. During the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> October 1944 this unit cleared the areas around Horný Liptov, Liptovská Porúbka and Kráľová Lehota (where it defended the engineer unit “Kotischke”). On the 19<sup>th</sup> October 1944 one strengthened company came into contact with *Panzerzug 62* – a German armoured train of Army Group “A”, which was stationed in Štrba [32]. At the same time the HQ of Army Group “A” supplemented the group “Wittenmayer” with a company from the engineer training facility in Kežmarok [33].

This activity was spotted by partisans. “Battle scouting of fascists, as well as the coming of a new German unit to Kráľová Lehota and Liptovský Ján, signalled that the enemy is preparing a stronger attack against Kosatec” [34]. The reconnaissance was right. During the 22<sup>nd</sup> till 25<sup>th</sup> October the group Wittenmayer (with the support from *Panzerzug 62*) fought a heavy fight with the resistance defence position “Kosatec” commanded by brigade captain M. Kučera and captured Malužiná (the division “Horst Wessel” was advancing from Telgárt and captured Brezno – the defence of Čertovica was no longer useful and the resistance soldiers, which were suffering from desertion, retreated to Nízke Tatry around the area of Ďumbier – Rovná Hoľa) [35]. After the capture of Nižná Boca on the 25<sup>th</sup> October 1944 the soldiers of Galicia together with the Flying squads of the Hlinka's Guards (POHG) [36] searched houses, where they found 8 resistance deserters, who were executed behind the village [37]. According to a different source the members of the group Wittenmayer infiltrated the village from Jánskadolina and shot four people (it is not known if these were the same deserters or other civilians from the village). The security unit from Galicia was seen in the area of Malužiná – Vyšná Boca until the end of January 1945 [38].

On the 26<sup>th</sup> October 1944 soldiers of Galicia captured and safeguarded the road Ružomberok – Poprad. “The Ukrainian volunteers of the 14<sup>th</sup> SS Grenadier Division fought well,” – as it was stated in the reports of the German General. In the following days (after the capture of Čertovica) the group was searching villages “in the north and south from the road Ružomberok – Poprad and captured many munitions and food depots as well as light and heavy weapons” [39]. By doing this the 14<sup>th</sup> SS Division Galicia controlled the whole area of north-western and north Slovakia from Púchov to Štrba.

Some units of the Ukrainian division joined the fighting in Turiec – even before the coming of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Regiment of the SS Brigade “Dirlewanger”. On the 9<sup>th</sup> October 1944 they invaded the area under control by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Partisan brigade M.R. Štefánik on the mountain sides of Malá Fatra. The resistance was identifying the Ukrainians as “the soldiers of the Vlasov Army”. According to M. Uhrin the division “successfully attacked the partisans from the very first days of its deployment in the area of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade. It continued to do so every day. This division was the main enemy of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Partisan Brigade M.R. Štefánik” until the very last days of the war [40]. As stated by P. Bosák: “The security units of the 14<sup>th</sup> SS Division Galicia increased their activities against mountain villages under partisan control from the 1<sup>st</sup> Stalin brigade in Veľká Fatra during the second half of October 1944. During the 17<sup>th</sup> October a battalion from this division equipped with armoured personal carriers captured Turčianska Blatnica and attacked the resistance and partisan defence line in Plešiel and Zahory. The battles continued the following day, when the resistance was pushed back to valleys in Blatnica and Gaderska valley. The reserve units of the 1<sup>st</sup> Stalin Brigade pushed the enemy back to Turčianska Blatnica. During the next days the enemy evacuated the inhabitants from the upper part of the village and set the buildings on fire, so that the partisans were unable to mount night attacks” [41].

According to the German historian R. Michaelis a *third battle group* was formed (around 20<sup>th</sup> October 1944) alongside groups Wildner and Wittenmayer, which fought against partisans around Ružomberok and Korytnica [42]. Together with the units from SS Brigade “Dirlewanger” they captured all villages under the western side of Veľká Fatra on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1944, and forced the 1<sup>st</sup> Stalin Partisan Brigade to move to the mountaintops. Heavy fighting was taking place in Belá, Dulice, Necpaly and Turčianska Blatnica. From these places they infiltrated Belianska, Necpalska, Gaderska and Blatnicka valleys. On the 26<sup>th</sup> October 1944 they moved to the road Banská Bystrica – Liptovská Osada in the area of Liptovské Revúce [43]. As the division did not meet significant resistance, it was disbanded [44]. More information regarding this third group formed from the 14<sup>th</sup> SS Division Galicia is not available in Slovak sources. Because of its brief existence it is not known, if it had a separate name.

It can be said that within the operational plans of Höfle regarding the general offensive, the 14<sup>th</sup> SS Division Galicia played a major role (in controlling north-western – north Slovakia). The main attack groups attacking from the south-western sector were “Schill” and the reinforced battalion “*Wildner*”. The northern sector incorporated the groups “*Wittenmayer*” and the “Dirlewanger” regiment strengthened by the *unnamed group from the SS Division Galicia* with the help of the 178<sup>th</sup> Division “Tatra” (the eastern and south-eastern sector incorporated the attacks from groups “Korück 531” and 18<sup>th</sup> Division “Horst Wessel”). The active participation of the Ukrainian SS units in two major sectors greatly helped in defeating the Uprising in middle Slovakia.

After the fall of Banská Bystrica and the retreat of the resistance fighters into the mountains, the units of the 14<sup>th</sup> SS Division Galicia performed security and police-assault actions (which sporadically, according to needs, performed anti-partisan expeditions or actions aimed against civilians in the area) and were acting in the area from Púchov to Štrba through local garrisons [45] (from Púchov to Nové Mestonad Váhom these actions were fulfilled by the units of the 708<sup>th</sup> Grenadier Division). They fulfilled their tasks admirably, which is underlined by regular evening reports of the German General in Slovakia. The county chief from Nové Mestonad Váhom, who was loyal to the government in Bratislava stated: “After the coming of the Ukrainian volunteers the political situation improved considerably, especially in those villages that were constantly attacked by partisans. The command of the German army, which came to town with the Ukrainian volunteers, deployed smaller units to villages where the situation was dangerous and therefore took control of the area. This stopped the partisans from moving into the villages. The German command orders smaller units to attack the partisans, which are staying in the mountains, so that the partisans are unable to identify the places of these attacks in front” [46].

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The direct occupation of Slovakia by the Wehrmacht and the Waffen SS was also performed by the units of the Task force H (*Einsatzgruppe H*), Security Police (*Sicherheitspolizei – SIPO*) and Security Service (*Sicherheitsdienst – SD*), Gestapo, Flying Squads of the Hlinka’s Guards, *Heimatschutz* (Home defence units of the German minority in Slovakia) and other specialized anti-partisan units (Chase union of Slovakia, Edelweiss and so on), which persecuted, pacified and killed members of the resistance, anti-fascists, illegal workers, racially persecuted people and people who were assisting the resistance. Especially the Task force H, SIPO and SD – the long arm of the Reich Main Security Office, usurped the control of the whole police and security service in Slovakia and became the main repressive organization in the country. The German security police and security service (under the command of *SS-Oberstumbannführer* J. Witiska) was using a system of strong points (*stützpunkt*) and assistance offices next to all county offices in Slovakia, which enabled it to (with the help of Task forces [47], Wehrmacht and Waffen SS) organize and perform a program of persecutions and attacks against the partisans and civilians without hindrance [48].

Units of the *Sonderkommando 7a* and *Einsatzkommando 13* were mainly operating in the area, which was under the control of the 14<sup>th</sup> SS Division Galicia. Some special units from the division (and from other SS divisions) were sporadically helping in penal and anti-partisan actions together with the POHG or units from the Central State Security (ÚSB) of the Slovak republic.

Nowadays there is no clear mapping of the magnitude of penal actions of the Galicia Division in Slovakia, however K. Fremal states that “its members were helping in anti-partisan, repressive and terrorist actions and committed murders and other excesses”. He also states that “many repressive and terrorist actions aimed against partisans and especially the civilian population were

accredited to the “members of the Vlasov Army”, however in truth it was the members of the 14<sup>th</sup> SS Division Galicia, especially during the second half of October 1944 and winter 1944/1945” [49].

The Slovak historian K. Fremal is opposed by the memories of Major Wolf-Ditrich Heike, the executive officer of the 14<sup>th</sup> SS Division Galicia: “We realized that by fighting the partisans it would be easy to commit atrocities against the civilian population; therefore the division always watched the correct leading of fighting. It was strictly forbidden to shoot reservists and prisoners. It was forbidden to destroy homes, however by fighting partisan positions it did happen. In situations where the civilians were helping the partisans, it was difficult to escape unpleasant incidents. Transgressions were always punished harshly. The Ukrainians were accredited with crimes, which they never did. The leadership of the division was always against such untruthful accusations” [50]. Similarly Colonel Jevhen Pobihuščyj-Ren – the substitute of the commander of the 14<sup>th</sup> Reserve Regiment of the 14<sup>th</sup> Division Galicia, was attributing the crimes committed on the Slovak population to “foreign” units added to the division [51].

The statements of Heike and Pobihušče are contradicted by the principal actions of the members of Galicia regarding the pacification of the villages of Smrečany and Žiarna Liptove at the end of October 1944. The penal action was preceded by the capture (on the 24<sup>th</sup> October in the village Vitálišovce – today a part of Liptovský Mikuláš) and later the killing of a German artillery man by the partisans from Žiarska valley. On the 25<sup>th</sup> October this was followed by the attack on a car, which was carrying SS officers near Smrečany, which resulted in the death of one of the officers. In the morning of the 28<sup>th</sup> October 1944 “a detached SS unit from battle group Wittenmayer” surrounded and bombarded the village Smrečany (an advanced supply depot of the partisan unit V.P. Jaromov) and later invaded with the aid of the POHG from Piešťany. “German fascists and gardists searched houses, set some of them on fire; the men were gathered in the centre and threatened with shooting.” They wanted to kill every tenth man, but thanks to the pleas from the representatives of the county office in Liptovský Mikuláš they did not do it. The results of the penal actions were horrifying. E. Mudroňová suffered a shot wound through the gut, when she tried to escape – she died during the transport to the hospital. The 6 month old son of Z. Šutliaková was shot and she suffered a wound, when she tried to escape to a field. M. Antoškova and M. Kacera were killed by artillery. Seven other people were lightly wounded [52]. 17 homes were burnt down completely and 7 partially, 78 outbuildings were destroyed and 7 partially. From a total of 101 homes only 20 percent remained intact [53].

On the following day (29<sup>th</sup> October) the penal action continued in the neighbouring village Žiar, where all the people were gathered near the bell-tower. The women were released, but the men were questioned and “the village was pillaged”. Anti-partisan actions in Žiarskakotlina lasted until 5<sup>th</sup> November 1944. Patrols were left in the villages and their surroundings [54].

A penal commando from group Wittenmayer probably burned the village Kvačany (north-west of Liptovský Mikuláš) on the 30<sup>th</sup> October 1944, because the population was accused of helping the partisans. During the artillery bombardment of the village 11 homes were burned, three people died (more were wounded) and five others were captured and given into the custody of the police-security service [55]. Such cases of reprisals aimed against the Slovak population were not sporadic, but were reported from other areas under the control of the 14<sup>th</sup> Division Galicia.

Members of the Galicia Division were doing similar things in villages in the county of Žilina. A Ukrainian platoon was searching houses in the village Podhorie on the 19<sup>th</sup> January 1945. The “commander” (a Ukrainian) had a list of suspicious people from the village, who were accused of helping the partisans and hiding Jews (8 people). These people were transported to the German command in Lietavská Lúčka. After their departure, partisans entered the town, as well as a second Ukrainian patrol from the village Babkov. During the fighting, a Ukrainian SS man was killed by a partisan named Pavlov. On the following day – 20<sup>th</sup> January 1945 a retributive action took place. “This day will stay in the living memory of the village Podhorie,” – as is stated in a contemporary report. “In the evening of that day, German units came to the village consisting primarily of Polish Ukrainians from garrisons all over. They invaded the village, surrounded it and started to harass the inhabitants. The people from the village were accused of killing the aforementioned soldier and therefore all men were gathered into the centre of the village and were positioned near the wall of the local school. Everybody thought they are going to be shot. This did not happen however, and all the men were severely beaten instead. [...] German barbarians started to burn down outbuildings belonging to the people of the village...” – seven barns were burned [56].

The pacification of villages in Orava and especially in villages like Zázrivá also took place. This was done by members of the 14<sup>th</sup> SS Division Galicia, POHG from Žilina and the Edelweiss

unit [57]. A punitive unit from the Ukrainian SS Division destroyed telephone lines in Ústredie on the 16<sup>th</sup> October 1944 and killed 4 partisans and three civilians in the village Plešivá (one of them was a 2 year old girl). Reprisals aimed against civilians accused of helping partisans happened around Kysuce, as well. On the 16<sup>th</sup> October members of the 14<sup>th</sup> SS Division Galicia invaded Bystrická valley. In Radoštka, they captured a merchant named Strnádlo because he was hiding partisans in his home. “They killed him, took valuable things from his home and then burnt it.” In Stará Bystrica “A terrorist punitive unit from the Vlasov army (this means members of the 14<sup>th</sup> SS Division – *author’s remark*) from Žilina attacked the village on the 18<sup>th</sup> October 1944”. The miller Š. Ragan was tortured because he was supplying the partisan unit “*Vpred*” (stationed around Krásnonad Kysucou) and his mill was burned down. The partisan F. Potočár was also shot [58]. In Makov “On the 18<sup>th</sup> December a grenade exploded near a game-keepers house in Malý Hanzlov. The local Ukrainian patrol was alerted and later it met with a partisan unit near the village Magura. Two partisans were wounded during the battle, but their mates hid them away in Beskydy forest. Ukrainian reinforcements found them and a German non-commissioned officer named Radl shot them” [59]. “In December a Ukrainian company came to the village (...), which fought alongside the Germans. This company was searching the forests and villages for partisans,” [60] – this was reported from other places in north-western Slovakia, as well.



“Join the ranks of the Gunner Division SS Galicia for the defence of your homeland – with weapons and brotherhood fight with the best soldiers in the world!” A German propaganda poster calling the people of Galicia to join the 14<sup>th</sup> SS Division Galicia, Ukraine, 1943.

(Source: Photographic archive of the Centre for the research of the Liberation movement, Lviv, Ukraine)

To curtail partisan actions in the local area, punitive units of the division were systematically destroying objects and outbuildings – haylofts, stables, game-keeper houses and wood houses. They were making a difficult time for the partisans, who were suffering from lack of food. Therefore the partisans were forced to visit valleys and homes (especially during the winter months of 1944/1945). The members of the division were also making use of their Russian (Ukrainian) language to gather information on the partisans and create pseudo partisan units as is stated by a report from Stará Bystrica (the county of Kysucké Nové Mesto). “A difficult situation arose in our villages, when the Germans stationed Ukrainians in them. They were able to intrude and use the feelings of the population and then betray them. Many people suffered because of this especially by the hands of the Gestapo. The Ukrainians were changing their clothes to look like partisans and later gave the gathered information to the Gestapo. When our people met true partisans they no longer believed them, because they thought they were Ukrainians from the German army” [61]. It is unsurprising that apathy was on the loose among the population. People from mountain villages

were afraid of the occupants, as well as partisans, who threatened the locals sometimes as well. There was fear of German repressions – persecutions and burning of villages [62].

Completely different information can be obtained from German and Ukrainian sources, which claim that members of the 14<sup>th</sup> Division Galicia had a very good “above standard” relationship with the locals “which the command of the division had to disrupt many times over” [63]. According to further reminiscences contact with the local population was forbidden, but could not be stopped: “The order was not followed. First, because we were housed with the locals and we met them the whole day over. Second, the Slovaks were a nice nation and we liked them” [64].

Special attention can be placed (in connection with the actions of the division in Slovakia) regarding the report from the village of Zbornad Bystricou (the county of Kysucké Nové Mesto). It shows the repressive methods used by the members of the 14<sup>th</sup> SS Division Galicia in Slovak villages, but also the opportunistic behaviour of the locals: “On the 13<sup>th</sup> October a group of SS men came to the village, who were members of the Vlasov army. [...] After the capture of Zborov nad Bystricou, other villages like Stará Bystrica and Nová Bystrica followed. [...] The unit gathered information about the people and their belongings affirmed by the village office, who had to be placed in every house. [...] In the evenings one could hear phrases coming from the streets like: “Halt! – Stop! – Password?” One could also hear “Nieder!” and then there were beatings. The locals tolerated the Ukrainians during their four month long stay in the village. Some fascists, especially some women, were very sad when they left. They could communicate with the Ukrainians – even if they were the enemy. They could not communicate with the Germans. It was autumn and the Ukrainians were buying ducks, geese, poultry and were paying well. The catchphrase of the people living in Zborov was: “Let them pay well!” National feelings were put aside. [...] In January the SS garrison in the village started to receive better food, train more often and was being equipped with better clothing for upcoming battles. [...] On the 23<sup>rd</sup> January the Ukrainians left for Vienna. They were attacked by partisans near the border. [...] Two or three days later some deserters returned. [...] Some among them were not allying with Germans or the USSR. They dreamed of a free Ukraine. These deserters did not join the partisans, but lived hidden in the village. In our village there were three such men, who stayed here until the Red army arrived” [65].

Information regarding desertion from the 14<sup>th</sup> division Galicia in Slovakia is supported by many sources. A leaflet action done by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Partisan Brigade M.R. Štefánik and lead by K.K. Popov stated that 50 members of the Ukrainian division changed sides and joined the partisans [66]. According to a different source 63 Ukrainian deserters fought in the partisan unit of A. Suvorov between 1944/1945 [67]. In total, approximately 200 soldiers deserted from the division during its stay in Slovakia [68].

Next to reprisal and anti-partisan actions the members of the division also built defences in Turiec, in the valley of river Váh and around Žilina during November 1944 and January 1945. The division also defended railways coming from Schliesen to Bratislava and from Žilina to Ružomberok. The Ukrainians also guarded military factories in Považie and Považská Bystrica. Despite partisan actions, not a single bridge or tunnel was destroyed in the area controlled by the division as stated by historian S. Čujev: The German officers were not able to travel without protection in open cars before, but now this changed,” – however one cannot agree with this assumption completely [69]. The successful anti-Partisan actions of the division had the effect that the units were able to self-sustain themselves. The members of Galicia were able to capture huge numbers of cars, horses, machine guns, artillery, field weapons, munitions, food, fuel and weaponry. (For example 309 field guns were captured and were used to completely equip the heavy artillery battalion of the 14<sup>th</sup> SS Division Galicia) [70]. The division underwent reorganization, refit, and training (especially around the area of Turiec) [71] and created three new battle groups, which fought against the advancing Soviet and Romanian troops. According to M. Tejchamn the 14<sup>th</sup> SS Division Galicia had 22-thousand men and officers on the 31<sup>st</sup> December 1944 [72].

By the order of Army Group “South” one of the battle groups (29<sup>th</sup> Regiment) under the command of SS-*Obersturmbannführer* Deern was used against the left flank of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Ukrainian Front. This fight lasted from December 1944 until January 1945. The main fighting took place around Banská Štiavnica between the unit and the 40<sup>th</sup> Soviet Army. After heavy fighting the regiment returned to its home unit in Turiec in the area of Považie [73]. The division was preparing to leave Slovakia. Next to the already mentioned activities the division was also helping the German and Slovak offices in the evacuation of the Ukrainian people from Slovakia, to protect them from partisan reprisals and the advancing Eastern front. These people were moved west, especially to Austria [74].

During this time (end of January 1945) the retreating units of the 14<sup>th</sup> SS Division Galicia, were exchanged with unidentified Cossack units of the Vlasov army. Many reprisals done by these soldiers were later accredited to the 14<sup>th</sup> SS Division Galicia. The Cossacks showed up in the village Podhorie for example: “In the beginning of February the local German garrisons started to deploy to the front and our village started to breath freely again. This did not last long because other units came. These were Cossacks – members of the Vlasov army. These beasts in human form started to persecute our heroes – the partisans” [75]. The Cossacks also appeared in Vyšná Boca: “On the 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1945 members of the Vlasov army came to us. I was afraid of them, not only because they had more than three hundred horses, which would eat the hay but also because they were brutal – inhuman. [...] It was sad because they were Russians in German uniforms and they fought against their own people. They were hated by the partisans and the Red army and were identified as – traitors of their homeland” [76]. It is very probable (as stated by historian M. Uhrin) that this unit was the 580<sup>th</sup> East Rider unit (*580. Ost-reiter-abteilung*) under the command of Major Kalamorz. The presence of the members of the Vlasov army around Liptov, Turiec, Orava, Kysuce and Považie was registered from the end of January up until the coming of the front in April 1945, when the 14<sup>th</sup> SS Division Galicia was already away from Slovakia.

Complaints of the local population were also connected with the retreat of the 14<sup>th</sup> SS Division Galicia in the beginning of 1945. The county office in Považská Bystrica reported that “during the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> January 1945 the Ukrainian military units, by the order of the German command, took 102 horses, 150 harnesses and 80 carts and left for another area. [...] This caused outrage among the population and a negative stance towards the German military.” The county official in Považská Bystrica stated that Ukrainian soldiers stole many things during their retreat. He said that “the local garrison in Šuja, in Žilina county, came to the villages of Kardošová Vieska and Sáděčné, where the commander demanded that all the hay had to be given to the soldiers. However they did not pay for it.” The county officer in Veľká Bytča reported that “during the 23<sup>rd</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> January 1945 the soldiers of the 14<sup>th</sup> Waffen Grenadier Division of the SS, were forcefully taking horses, harnesses, carts, and food from all the villages in the area.” “The relationship of the locals towards the Germans has worsened,” – this was stated by the county official in Kysucké Nové Mesto. “This was caused by the fact that the Ukrainians were taking horses, carts and harnesses without paying. Many Ukrainian soldiers also took food for horses and for themselves, which caused dissent among the inhabitants” [77]. There are more similar reports, however it has to be said that this was also done by other German and Hungarian military units in Slovakia.

The order to move the 14<sup>th</sup> SS Division Galicia from Slovakia to Vienna and Lower Steiermark was given on the 25<sup>th</sup> January 1945 (from the middle of January 1945 the division was renamed the 14<sup>th</sup> SS Grenadier Division (1<sup>st</sup> Ukrainian) – *14. Waffen-Grenadier-Division der SS (ukrainische No. 1)*). German strategists wanted to use the division against Yugoslav partisans in the Slovenian town Maribor. The division consisted of three march groups at the start of the redeployment (the division started to move on the 24<sup>th</sup> January 1945). Group “A” consisted of members of the 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, the 14<sup>th</sup> Training-Reserve Regiment, the Radio Company, the anti-tank unit, the 14<sup>th</sup> Artillery Regiment and all necessary equipment and weaponry. They travelled through Čadca – Žilina – Považská Bystrica – Trenčín – Nové Mestonad Váhom – Stará Turá – Myjava – Senica – Malacky and they entered Austria on the 6<sup>th</sup> February 1945 after crossing the river Morava. Group “B” consisted of the 31<sup>st</sup> Infantry Regiment, Engineer and Reserve Battalion, which was travelling through Martin – Vrútky – Žilina – Trenčín – Piešťany – Bratislava – Hartberg – Gliersdorf – Graz – Maribor. Group “C” was a separate car convoy [78].

**Conclusion.** In Lower Steiermark during March – April 1945 the 14<sup>th</sup> Waffen-Grenadier Division of the SS “1<sup>st</sup> Ukrainian changed commanders (General M. Krat) and was put under the command of the Ukrainian National Army (The commander was Pavol Šandruk and the 14<sup>th</sup> Waffen-Grenadier Division of the SS was redefined as the 1<sup>st</sup> Division of the Army (It had around 15 thousand soldiers and officers)) [79]. Its last action against the Red Army took place near the town of Feldbach. It surrendered to the British together with the commander of its Ukrainian (nationalistic) military staff. Against the intervention of J.V. Stalin himself, the British did not hand over the members of the division to the Soviets (because up until the start of the Second World War in 1939, they were citizens of Poland and not of the USSR). At first they were stationed in a camp near Spittal near the river Drava, but later they were quietly transported to north Italy and in 1947 to the British Isles [80].

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1. Tejchman M. Ve službách Třetí říše. Hitlerovy zahraniční jednotky. Praha 1999. P. 160–161.

2. The names of the division were changed several times and some information differs according to the sources (Ukrainian, Russian and German). In May 1943 – during recruitment it was called SS Shooter Division Galicia (*Galizische SS-Schützendivision*). From the 30<sup>th</sup> June 1943 until May 1944 it was called the Volunteer Division SS “Galicia” (*SS-Freiwilligen-Division-Galizien*), and in June 1944 it was renamed the 14<sup>th</sup> Galicia SS Volunteer Division (*14. Galizische SS-Freiwilligen-Division*). From the 27<sup>th</sup> June until 12<sup>th</sup> November 1944 it was also called the 14<sup>th</sup> Grenadier Division SS (Galicia No. 1) – *14. Waffen-Grenadier-Division der SS (Galizien No.1)*, and from the 15<sup>th</sup> January until the 25<sup>th</sup> April 1945 it was called the 14<sup>th</sup> Grenadier Division of the SS (1<sup>st</sup> Ukrainian) – *14. Waffen-Grenadier-Division der SS (ukrainische No. 1)*. During the last phase of its existence it was renamed the 1<sup>st</sup> Ukrainian Division of the Ukrainian National Army (25<sup>th</sup> April – 8<sup>th</sup> May 1945).

3. Williamson G. *SS - a tool of terror*. Smolensk, 1999. P. 220.

4. The division was commanded by German Generals Sylvester Stadler (April – June 1944), Nikolaus Heimann (July – September 1944), again by Fritz Freitag (September 1944 – April 1945) and lastly General M. Krat and Ukrainian General Pavlo Šandruk (25<sup>th</sup> April – 8<sup>th</sup> May 1945).

5. Except the units of the Galicia Division, another 8 Divisions of the 13<sup>th</sup> Army Corps of the 1<sup>st</sup> Panzer Army were surrounded in Brody – approx. 50 thousand people. (Важнейшие операции Великой Отечественной войны 1941–1945 гг. / Под ред. И.Г. Розанова. М., 1956. P. 383).

6. Williamson G. *SS - a tool of terror*, p. 220.

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9. Побігущий-Рен Є. Мозаїка моїх споминів. [online]. München – London, 1982. [cited on the 30<sup>th</sup> July 2006]. Part III: В дивізії „Галичина“. Available at: <http://combatant.onestop.net/ren/r316.html>

10. Regarding the escapees from Galicia in Slovakia during 1944 look at Šmigel' M. – Mičko P. *Evakuácia v znamení úteku*. Banská Bystrica 2006.

11. Fremal K. *14. Waffen-Grenadier Division der SS (Galizien No. 1) v historickej spisbe o slovenskom hnutí odporu v rokoch druhej svetovej vojny // Slovenská republika 1939 – 1945 očami mladých historikov IV / Eds. M. Šmigel', P. Mičko. Banská Bystrica 2005. P. 392.*

12. Compare; Prečan V. *Slovenské národné povstanie. Dokumenty. II. diel. Nemci a Slovensko 1944*. Bratislava 1971. P. 549.

13. Klubert T. *Obrnené jednotky v Slovenskom národnom povstaní. Nové Mesto nad Váhom 2007. P. 196.*

14. Prečan V. *Slovenské národné povstanie. Dokumenty*, p. 554, 557.

15. The archive of the Museum of the Slovak National Uprising (further AM SNP), f. IX, Výpoveď generála SS Höfleho, veliteľa nemeckých fašistických jednotiek proti povstalcovi (kópia), p. 42.

16. Klubert T. *Obrnené jednotky v Slovenskom národnom povstaní*, p. 193.

17. Чуев С. *Украинский легион*, p. 416; Schvarc M. *Die Beteiligung der Waffen-SS – Formationen bei der Niederschlagung des Slowakischen Nationalaufstandes*. Manuscript, p. 12.

18. Prečan V. *Slovenské národné povstanie. Dokumenty*, p. 669.

19. Геіке В.-Д.: *Українська Дивізія „Галичина“*. [online]. Toronto – Paris – München 1970. [cited on the 21<sup>st</sup> January 2006]. Part IV: На Словаччині. Available at: <http://combatant.onestop.net/heike/r07.html>

20. Look at Schvarc M. *Formácia Dirlwanger – jednotka trestancov. // Vojenská história. 4/2003. P. 96–111.*

21. The 178<sup>th</sup> Division “Tatra” attacked in the direction of Žilina – Rajec – Kunerad, Čremošné – Malý Šturec – Banská Bystrica. The SS Regiment „Dirlwanger“ in the direction of Ružomberok – Biely Potok – Liptovská Osada – Korytnica – Donovaly – Banská Bystrica and Liptovské Revúce – Veľký Šturec – Banská Bystrica.

22. Fremal K. *14. Waffen-Grenadier Division der SS (Galizien Nr. 1)*, p. 394–395. Look at Uhrin M. *Bojové akcie 2. partizánskej brigády gen. M. R. Štefánika v roku 1944 // Slovenská republika 1939 – 1945 očami mladých historikov V. Banská Bystrica 2006. P. 69–82.*

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24. Klubert T. *Obrnené jednotky v Slovenskom národnom povstaní*, p. 193, 194, 220.

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27. Klubert T. *Obrnené jednotky v Slovenskom národnom povstaní*, p. 194.

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29. Chňoupek B. Banderovci. Bratislava 1989. P. 230, 233.
30. Prečan V. Slovenské národné povstanie. Dokumenty, p. 756, 764.
31. Fremal K. 14. Waffen-Grenadier Division der SS (Galizien Nr. 1), p. 395 – 396, also in Чуев С. Украинский легион, p. 418–419.
32. Prečan V. *Slovenské národné povstanie. Dokumenty*, p. 721.
33. Klubert T. *Obrnené jednotky v Slovenskom národnom povstaní*, p.211, 221.
34. Droppa A. Boje v obrannom úseku Kráľova Lehota – Čertovica // Protifašistický odboj a oslobodenie Liptova. Martin 1984. P. 42.
35. Kučera M. Nezlomený kosatec. Bratislava 1976. P. 51–62; Nosko J. Takto bojovala povstalecká armáda. Bratislava 1994. P. 179–180.
36. The Flying Squads of the Hlinka's Guards (POHG) – were special armed units of the Slovak republic (1939–1945), which were created within the Hlinka's Guards (it was the paramilitary corps of the Hlinka's Slovak Peoples Party and was meant as an assistance organization of State offices) shortly after the start of the Slovak National Uprising to fight against the resistance and partisans. They cooperated with the German Nazi army and committed many war crimes.
37. Droppa A. Boje v obrannom úseku Kráľova Lehota – Čertovica, p. 44.
38. Ľud Liptova v boji proti fašizmu. Zborník spomienok účastníkov odboja. Liptovský Mikuláš, 2000. P. 215, 240.
39. Prečan V. Slovenské národné povstanie. Dokumenty, p. 768, 782.
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42. Michaelis R. Grenadierdivision der Waffen SS. 1. diel. Wiesbaden, 1994. – taken from Fremal K. 14. Waffen-Grenadier Division der SS (Galizien Nr. 1), p. 395.
43. B Bosák P. Z bojových operácií na fronte SNP, p. 124.
44. Чуев С. Украинский легион, p. 419.
45. According to Russian historian S. Čujev 11 other army formations were controlled by the staff of the Galicia Division in north-western Slovakia (most of these units had the strength of a battalion). In total – together with the Training-Reserve Regiment and subordinated units – the division had 22 thousand people. Places where units of the division were stationed were divided into sectors. Each unit in its area was responsible for security, “peace and order” and to fight against the partisans. All “foreign” units, which were in the area of control by the Ukrainian units, were supposed to follow their orders. (Чуев С. Украинский легион, p. 416–417.)
46. Slovak National Archive (SNA) Bratislava, f. 209, k. 782. Všeobecná politická situačná správa za mesiac október 1944.
47. The units of Task Force H, SIPO and SD were Sonderkommando 7a, Einsatzkommando 13, Einsatzkommando 14, Sonderkommando 15 ZbV, Sonderkommando 27 ZbV a Sonderkommando 29 ZbV. The number of personnel varied from 70 – 120 and sometimes up to 150 people.
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50. Геіке В.-Д. Українська Дивізія „Галичина“. [online]. Toronto – Paris – München 1970. [cited on the 21<sup>st</sup> January 2006]. Part VII.: На Словаччині. Available at: <http://combatant.onestop.net/heike/r07.html>
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54. Ľud Liptova v boji proti fašizmu, p. 241.
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72. Tejchman M. *Ve službách Třetíříše. Hitlerovy zahraniční jednotky*, p. 160.
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#### **14-я ваффен гренадерская дивизия СС «Галичина № 1» в Словакии (1944–1945 гг.): сражения и репрессии**

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**Аннотация.** В статье на основе значительного историографического материала рассматривается боевой путь 14-й гренадерской дивизии СС «Галичина» на территории Словакии в 1944–1945 гг. Воссоздана картина процесса формирования и боевых действий, уделено внимание малоизвестным страницам истории этого подразделения.

**Ключевые слова:** 14-я дивизия СС «Галичина»; боевой путь; 1944–1945 гг.