

Ukraine: impact of the atrocities

by GWYNNE DYER

Four years after the Soviet Army fought its way into Berlin in 1945, Moscow built a huge memorial in Treptower Park to the 80,000 Russian and other Soviet soldiers who died taking the city. (5,000 of them are actually buried in the park.) And Berliners instantly took to calling it the 'Tomb of the Unknown Rapist'.

As Soviet troops fought their way into the eastern half of Nazi Germany in the winter and spring of 1945, a great atrocity took place. 'The Russian soldiers were raping every German female from eight to eighty,' wrote Natalya Geese, a war correspondent with the Red Army. 'It was an army of rapists.'

Russian film director Zakhar Agranenko, who fought in Germany in 1945, wrote in his diary that 'Red Army soldiers don't believe in 'individual liaisons' with German women. Nine, ten, twelve men at a time - they rape them on a collective basis.' Historian Antony Beevor estimated that up to two million German females were raped, many of them multiple times.

The atrocities that are being uncovered in northern Ukraine as the Russian army moves its troops east are different in scale and in style. The number of civilians murdered in the occupied towns is in the low thousands at most, and the rapes probably in the hundreds or less. There are few reports of gang rapes. Yet it is essentially the same phenomenon.

The Russian soldiers were young, frightened, and often drunk. No excuse. They had been lied to, and kept asking villagers where the Nazis are. No excuse. They serve in an army that can't feed them, doesn't supervise them, didn't even make them get rid of the evidence before they left. No excuse.

Russians are not evil. War is such an extreme situation that many evil things become possible, and it is an army's duty to prevent them from happening. The Russian army is too corrupt and incompetent to try, so its soldiers ended up with the unlimited, unsupervised power of life or death over innocent civilians.

They flagrantly abused it, and in doing so they have wrought irreversible changes in two countries: Ukraine and their own.

For Ukraine, they have virtually eliminated the possibility of a negotiated peace with Moscow so long as Russian troops are on Ukrainian soil.

Listen to President Volodymyr Zelensky speaking to Ukrainian journalists on Monday: 'Ukraine will definitely not be what we wanted it to be from the beginning. It is impossible. We will become a 'big Israel' with its own face.

'(Don't) be surprised if we have (soldiers) in cinemas, supermarkets ' people with weapons...Security will be issue number one for the next 10 years.' That's Ukraine's future: a 'big Israel', armed to the teeth and permanently awaiting the next attack.

And Russia is stuck with the big lie for a generation. Perhaps Russians could find a way to apologise for invading Ukraine if they got rid of Vladimir Putin, but it's unthinkable that they will ever acknowledge how their army has behaved in Ukraine. They're still denying what happened in Berlin in 1945.

The new narrative is already on display in an article that was published Sunday by the state news agency RIA Novosti entitled 'What should Russia do with Ukraine?' The author, Timofei Sergeitsev, explained that 'Denazification is inevitably also De-Ukrainianization, because the very idea of Ukrainian culture and identity is fake.'

'Ukraine, as history has shown, is unviable as a national state, and attempts to 'build' one logically lead to Nazism,' Sergeitsev wrote. Even the name 'Ukraine' must be abolished, and the country will become part of the Motherland after victory under the name

Little Russia (?Malorossia').

It will then require a strong military presence for thirty years to re-educate the Nazified mass of the population, which technically cannot be subjected to direct punishment as war criminals. Collaborators with the 'Nazi regime' will be sentenced to death or imprisonment, and everybody else will live happily ever after.

Sergeitsev is not some nutcase nobody. He was the political adviser to Ukrainian ex-president Viktor Yanukovich, a Russian puppet who was overthrown in a popular uprising in 2014 after he cancelled an association agreement with the European Union and started negotiating a trade deal with Russia instead.

Sergeitsev may even be Moscow's candidate for puppet ruler of occupied Ukraine once resistance is crushed. In any case, everybody now knows exactly where they stand, which means this war will go on until Ukraine is destroyed or Russia is defeated.

The stakes are getting higher, and we can no longer exclude the possibility that Russia will use poison gas or mini-nukes in Ukraine if it faces defeat in the conventional war. Yet knowing all this, how can NATO abandon Ukraine to its fate now?