



The September 2 OpEd piece “No shades of grey about Peter Savaryn’s past,” is nothing but character assassination -- without any foundation in fact -- of a deceased person who cannot defend himself.

The original article that the author is referring to, “Legacy under fire: Former U of A chancellor war record scrutinized, (August 22, 2025) was an in-depth and well-balanced report on an issue that is often clouded with disinformation. Jamie Kirzner-Roberts herself was quoted as was Pers Anders – a strident academic critic of the Galician Division and Ukrainian nationalists in general. Rather surprisingly, and as if to underscore the absurdity of the charges leveled against Savaryn, Rudling ended up defending him.

While Kirzner-Roberts attacks the original as “riddled with distortions and omissions that obscure the truth about Savaryn’s wartime past”, it is actually her piece that is riddled not only with “distortions and omissions” but false claims as well.

She states: “Savaryn was a Nazi, plain and simple. He voluntarily enlisted in the SS ... and served in a unit that committed crimes against humanity targeting Jews, Poles, and others. These are unassailable historical facts.”

First, swearing an oath to Hitler did not make someone a Nazi. Oskar Schindler and some 125,000 Jewish soldiers who served in the German army also swore an oath. Unlike other Waffen SS units, the Division had Ukrainian Catholic and Orthodox Chaplains minister to them, precisely to offset any Nazi indoctrination. They volunteered not to support Nazi Germany ideologically, but to defend Ukraine from the Soviet Union.

Second, the Galician Division has never been found guilty of any crimes against humanity. As the Deschenes Commission concluded: “Charges of war crimes against members of the Galicia Division have never been substantiated, either in 1950 when they were first preferred, or in 1984 when they were renewed, or before this Commission.”

More recently, critics have attempted to link the Division with the massacre of the Polish village of Huta Penjacka". What has been established is that members of the 4th and 5th Galician Volunteer Regiments committed the atrocities. They wore lion insignia similar to those worn by the 14th Galician Division but were otherwise completely unrelated to them and operated under separate German command. Therefore, to this very day, it remains an "unassailable historical fact" that the Division has never been proven guilty of war crimes of any kind.

Neither the Soviets nor any of the other Allies brought any charges of war crimes against the Division right after the war when (1) the opportunity presented itself at the Nuremberg trials, (2) evidence would have been fresh, and (3) eyewitnesses would have been available. Instead, the Russian KGB waited until the late 1970s to make false claims against the Division under Operation Payback, intended to drive a wedge between the Ukrainian and Jewish communities. Today, Putin uses the "Nazi" label to justify his genocidal war against Ukraine.

The KGB misinformation campaign was soon picked up by the Simon Wiesenthal Center. Its Canadian representative, Sol Littman, published an article in the Toronto Sunday Star alleging that the Division had committed what he called "some of history's ugliest deeds." However, the Star was legally challenged about that contention and was compelled to publish a retraction.

When the Deschenes Commission was launched in 1985, the Wiesenthal Center made a number of unsubstantiated accusations in regard to a list of names it provided that led the Commission to question the Wiesenthal Center's credibility. For example, at Page 258 of the Deschenes report, the Commission stated:

"It is obvious that the list of 217 officers of the Galicia Division furnished by Mr. Wiesenthal was nearly totally useless and put the Canadian government, through the RCMP and this Commission, to a considerable amount of purposeless work. That additional information be long in coming may not be surprising, under those circumstances. [BR4]As a result, evidence of participation in war crimes has remained elusive." In short, the Wiesenthal Center has consistently made false accusations against the Division that have repeatedly been proven false. And now the Wiesenthal's representative Jamie Kirzner-Roberts is at it again.

Finally, changing a street name in Edmonton is a formal process that involves community input, city policy, and approval from the Naming Committee. It is not up to a spokesperson for an American lobby group to dictate to City Council what it should do, especially since it involves circumventing the formal process.



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