

Nazi Military Veteran Honoured in Canadian Parliament During Ukrainian President's Visit



Matthew Horwood writes in the [*Epoch Times*](#):

All 338 MPs gave a standing ovation to a former member of the Waffen SS, a Nazi division accused of war crimes during World War II, during Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's [visit to Parliament](#) in Ottawa on Sept. 22.

Speaker of the House Anthony Rota referred to [Ukrainian-Canadian](#) Yaroslav Hunka, who was present in the House of Commons, as a “veteran from the Second World War who fought for Ukrainian independence against the Russians and continues to support the troops today, even at his age of 98.”

Following a 30-second applause by all MPs, Mr. Rota added that “he’s a Ukrainian hero, a Canadian hero, and we thank him for

all his service.”

Mr. Rota [apologized](#) two days later, on Sept. 24, stating in a social media post that the decision to recognize Mr. Hunka “was entirely my own, the individual in question being brought to my attention.”

“I have subsequently become aware of more information which causes me to regret my decision,” he said on X, formerly known as Twitter.

“I particularly want to extend my deepest apologies to Jewish communities in Canada and around the world,” he added, noting that “I accept full responsibility for my actions.”

Mass Atrocities

From 1932 to 1933, Ukraine’s population was decimated by a famine that was made worse by policies implemented by the Soviet Union. The Communist Party’s decision to collectivize agriculture led to a drop in food production in Ukraine, leading to the deaths of up to five million Ukrainians in a famine known as the Holodomor.

When Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union in 1941, they were greeted as liberators by many Ukrainians, who believed the fascist country would be a natural ally in the country’s quest for independence. While the Ukrainians’ new occupiers continued to brutalize them, by 1943 the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists had organized a multinational force to fight on behalf of the retreating Nazi army.

During World War II, Mr. Hunka fought with the [First Ukrainian Division](#), which is another name for the 4th Waffen Grenadier Division of the SS, the military wing of the Nazi Party, according to a Sept. 24 article by Jewish non-profit Forward. The unit, also called SS Galichina, was formed in 1943. It consisted of recruits from the Galicia region in western Ukraine and was armed and trained by the Nazis, the article said.

In February 1944, the unit perpetrated a massacre of Polish villagers in [Huta Pieniacka](#), Ukraine, burning between 500 and 1,000 Polish people alive, according to various estimates. During the Nuremberg Trials following the war, the International Military Tribunal declared the Waffen SS to be a criminal organization that carried out mass atrocities.

After the war, around 2,000 veterans of the SS Galichina were allowed to settle in Canada. By then, the unit's name was known as the First Ukrainian Division.

‘Shocking’

The [Canadian Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs](#) said on Sept. 24 on X that it was “deeply troubled and disturbed” to hear that a former member of the SS Galichina, “which actively participated in the genocide of Jews – was celebrated with a standing ovation in the Canadian Parliament.”

“Canada’s Jewish community stands firmly with Ukraine in its war against Russian aggression. But we can’t stay silent when crimes committed by Ukrainians during the Holocaust are whitewashed,” the organization added.

The [Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center](#) for Holocaust Studies said it was “deeply disturbed” by the incident. “The fact that a veteran who served in a Nazi military unit was invited to and given a standing ovation in Parliament is shocking,” the organization said in a Sept. 24 press release.

“An apology is owed to every Holocaust survivor and veteran of the Second World War who fought the Nazis, and an explanation must be provided as to how this individual entered the hallowed halls of Canadian Parliament and received recognition from the Speaker of the House and a standing ovation.”

‘Appalling Error in Judgement’

While Mr. Rota’s apology said “no one, including fellow parliamentarians and the Ukraine delegation, was aware of my intention or my remarks [about Mr. Hunka] before I delivered

them," [Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre](#) provided different information that "has come out today."

In a post to X on Sept. 24 shortly following Mr. Rota's apology, Mr. Poilievre wrote that "[Prime Minister] Justin Trudeau personally met with and honoured a veteran of the 14th Waffen Grenadier Division of the SS (a Nazi division). Liberals then arranged for this Nazi veteran to be recognized" in Parliament during the Ukrainian President's visit that day.

"This is an appalling error in judgement on the part of Justin Trudeau, whose personal protocol office is responsible for arranging and vetting all guests and programming for state visits of this kind," Mr. Poilievre added.

"Mr. Trudeau must personally apologize and avoid passing the blame to others as he always does."

[Conservative MP Melissa Lantsman](#), a Jewish Canadian, said in a post on X on Sept. 24: "The reports of this individual's history is very troubling. The Liberal Government should explain why he was invited and honoured."

'The PM Did Not Meet Him'

In response to Mr. Poilievre's statement, [Liberal MP Karina Gould](#), leader of the government in the House of Commons, posted to X in defence of Mr. Trudeau.

"The Speaker has now made it clear that he was responsible for inviting this individual to the House. The government played no role. It did not know he would be there," she wrote.

"The PM did not meet him. I am deeply troubled this happened. I urge MPs to avoid politicizing this incident."

This was followed minutes later by a post from [Liberal MP Anthony Housefather](#), chair of the [Canada-Israel Interparliamentary Group](#).

"Now that the Speaker's apology has been issued I want to make

sure we do not allow this mistake to divide Jewish Canadians, Ukrainian Canadians and all Canadians who stand together supporting Ukraine against the aggression of the Russian government,” he wrote.

The Embassy of the [Russian Federation](#) in Canada said on X the same day that the Canadian Parliament gave “the Nazi SS butcher” a standing ovation. “Yet another Trudeau’s regime insult to the memory of Canada’s sons and daughters who fought Nazism in WWII,” the post added.

Support for Ukraine

During the Ukrainian president’s [two-day visit](#) to Canada from Sept. 21 to 22, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau pledged a new investment of [\\$650 million](#) in military aid over three years for the country’s defence against Russia.

With this announcement, the Prime Minister’s Office says Canada has provided [total committed support](#) of more than \$9.5 billion in multifaceted assistance to Ukraine since the beginning of 2022.

“President Zelenskyy, you and the Ukrainian people are holding the rules-based order in the balance,” Mr. Trudeau told the Ukrainian president in the House of Commons.