

UDC 94(477-074)“1939/1945”:343.541
DOI 10.24919/2519-058X.37.346040

Volodymyr GINDA

PhD (History), Senior researcher, Department of military-historical research, Institute of History of Ukraine of National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, 4 Hrushevskogo Street, Kyiv, Ukraine, postal code 01001 (ginda@ukr.net)

ORCID: 0000-0001-8373-148X

Володимир ГИДА

кандидат історичних наук, старший науковий співробітник, відділ воєнно-історичних досліджень, Інститут історії України НАН України, вул. Грушевського, 4 м. Київ, Україна, індекс 01001 (ginda@ukr.net)

Bibliographic Description of the Article: Ginda, V. (2025). Wehrmacht brothels in the occupied territories of Ukraine as a component of Nazi sexual violence. *Skhidnoieuropeiskyi Istorychnyi Visnyk [East European Historical Bulletin]*, 37, 142–154. doi: 10.24919/2519-058X.37.346040

**WEHRMACHT BROTHELS IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES OF UKRAINE
AS A COMPONENT OF NAZI SEXUAL VIOLENCE**

Abstract. *The purpose* is to study, through the prism of the functioning of the Wehrmacht brothel system in Ukraine, one of the methods of violence regulated by the Nazi state – sexual; to determine the number of brothels established by the Nazis in the occupied Ukrainian lands; to analyze the reasons and problems during their organization and a forced recruitment of the Ukrainian women. **The research methodology** is based on theoretical developments of scientific schools of social history and psychology, military anthropology, and gender studies. In the article general scientific methods of fundamental studies, as well as methods of historicism, source studies, and interdisciplinary approaches have been applied. **The scientific novelty** consists in the formulation of the above mentioned problem, an attempt to find its specific historical solution based on the information discovered by the author about more than three dozen brothels established by the Wehrmacht in the occupied territories of Ukraine in 1941 – 1944, and at least 2.3 thousand Ukrainian women forcibly recruited for work. **Conclusions.** It has been found out that the rapid growth of uncontrolled intimate relationships among the German soldiers and local women, prohibited by the racial dogmas of Nazi Germany, as well as the spread of venereal diseases forced the occupiers to establish a number of stationary brothels for Wehrmacht soldiers and the German civil administration in early 1942. These institutions, according to the command's plan, were to help the Third Reich prevent chaotic sexual contacts with local women, prevent the spread of venereal diseases, sexual violence, deterioration of discipline in the army, and homosexual relations among servicemen. Local women and girls were usually forcibly recruited to work in rear brothels.

Key words: Ukraine, Germany, occupation, sexual violence, Wehrmacht, German soldiers, brothels, women.

**БОРДЕЛІ ВЕРМАХТУ НА ОКУПОВАНИХ ТЕРИТОРІЯХ УКРАЇНИ
ЯК СКЛАДОВА НАЦИСТСЬКОГО СЕКСУАЛЬНОГО НАСИЛЬСТВА**

Анотація. *Мета статті* – дослідити крізь призму функціонування системи борделів Вермахту в Україні один із регламентованих нацистською державою методів насильства –

сексуальний. Визначити чисельність створених нацистами борделів на окупованих українських землях, проаналізувати причини і проблеми під час їхньої організації та примусового наповнення українським персоналом. **Методологія дослідження** ґрунтується на теоретичних напрацюваннях наукових шкіл соціальної історії та психології, воєнної антропології, гендерних досліджень. У статті використовувалися загальнонаукові прийоми фундаментальних студій, а також методи історизму, джерелознавства та міждисциплінарні підходи. **Наукова новизна** полягає у постановці вказаної проблеми, спробі її конкретно-історичного розв'язання на підставі виявленої автором інформації про понад три десятки створених Вермахтом борделів на окупованих територіях України (1941 – 1944), та щонайменше 2,3 тис. насильно залучених на відповідну роботу українських жінок. **Висновки.** З'ясовано, що стрімке зростання неконтрольованих інтимних стосунків німецьких солдатів із місцевими жінками, заборонених расовими догмами нацистської Німеччини, а також поширення венеричних захворювань змусили окупантів на початку 1942 р. відкрити низку стаціонарних борделів для солдатів Вермахту та німецької цивільної адміністрації. Ці заклади, за задумом командування, мали допомогти Третьому Райху унеможливити хаотичні сексуальні контакти з місцевими жінками, запобігти поширенню венеричних хворіб, сексуальному насильству, погіршенню дисципліни у війську та гомосексуальним стосункам між військовослужбовцями. До роботи в тилових борделях зазвичай насильно залучали місцевих жінок і дівчат.

Ключові слова: Україна, Німеччина, окупація, сексуальне насильство, Вермахт, німецькі військовослужбовці, борделі, жінки.

Problem Statement. In the policy of Nazi Germany, violence became the state tool that made it possible to keep hundreds of millions of people in occupied countries in fear. The scale, forms and methods of its perpetration still terrify the imagination and consciousness of a normal person. Nowadays there is a growing body of research on the sexual violence of the German soldiers in the occupied eastern territories. The object of this article is the Nazi rear brothels operating in the Ukrainian lands invaded by the Wehrmacht as one of the components of the Nazi sexual violence. This issue has not been considered by domestic historians yet. In Ukraine, despite the fact that archival documents from the time of the German occupation are replete with facts of sexual crimes, this issue remains insufficiently studied due to its social irritation, the difficulty of reception by certain social groups, as well as the unpreparedness of the scientific community to bring the “risky” issue to the level of scientific discourse. Under the Soviet rule, these scenes of everyday occupation were “erased” by the state from official historiography, and therefore did not become part of the collective memory of the war, which left them outside researchers’ sphere of interest for decades. Despite the above circumstances, the scientific understanding of this segment of the occupation reality remains relevant for the Ukrainian society both in the context of rethinking the consequences of the Nazi occupation and the modern Russo-Ukrainian war.

Currently, in many countries, this issue is being debated at the public, state, and interstate levels. For example, in South Korea and Japan, the issue of “comfort women” fate during World War II gained international importance at the end of the last century, and women who worked at “comfort stations” were recognized as victims of sexual violence by the Japanese army. In 2015, the Japanese government officially apologized to them and transferred more than \$ 8 million to the South Korean fund for assistance to prisoners of war (Balykova, 2015). In turn, the South Korean government introduced the national day of remembrance for women at “comfort stations” in 2017, which is commemorated annually on August 14. The facts provided by the researchers about the forced prostitution of Korean women brought the international public discourse on gender discrimination and the responsibility of the aggressor for this to a new level of understanding.

Review of Recent Research and Publications. In western historiography there are studies on the Wehrmacht brothels operating in the context of sexual violence committed by the German soldiers during the war. In 1977, the German historian Franz Seidler published the monograph “Prostitution, Homosexuality, Mutilation, Problems of German Sanitation in 1939 – 1945” (Seidler, 1977), for the first time drawing attention to the functioning of brothels in the Wehrmacht during World War II. The monograph concerned the Western Front mainly. The research of the German Regina Mühlhäuser, who specializes in the study of sexual crimes by Wehrmacht soldiers in the Soviet Union, is valuable (Mühlhäuser, 2011, pp. 197–220; Mühlhäuser, 2010; Mühlhäuser, 2015, pp. 269–277). It focuses on the characteristics of intimate life regulation by the German authorities, in particular by establishing brothels for the needs of the German military personnel in occupied territories. But perhaps the most noteworthy historiographical work is the dissertation of the American Wendy Gertjeanssen, which focuses on brothels and prostitution on the Eastern Front (Gertjeanssen, 2004). In 2018, the monograph by a researcher Joanna Ostrowska was published in Poland, “Untold: Forced Sex Labour during World War II”, which revealed the sexual exploitation of Polish women during the war years in the Nazi brothels for officers, soldiers, police, and concentration camp prisoners. In her research, J. Ostrowska focused on studying this issue in the territory of the General Governorate. The researcher also focused on the post-war stigmatization of former sex workers and the tabooization of professional prostitution after the end of World War II (Ostrowska, 2018).

Special institutions operating in the Wehrmacht is discussed in detail in Paul Christa’s monograph “Forced Prostitution: Brothels in the Nazi State” (Christa, 1994) and Jeffrey Burds’s article “Sexual Violence in Europe during World War II (1953 – 1945)” (Burds, 2015, pp. 278–309). The outlined issue is raised in the studies of Russian and German historians Andriy Vasylychenko (Vasil’chenko, 2005; Vasil’chenko, 2008), Yevhen Krinko and Ksenia Sak (Krinko, & Sak, 2023, pp. 95–115) and Senke Najtcel’ and Harald Vel’cer Welzer (Najtcel’, Vel’cer, 2013).

Fragmentarily domestic and foreign historians also consider the issue in the context of studying the everyday life of the Ukrainians under the Nazi occupation. Without setting the goal of researching the relevant phenomenon, they present it as one of the negative aspects of contemporary life, avoiding detailed analysis, as well as interpretation of the consequences and conclusions.

The source base of the article was documents of the German military and medical departments, reports of the German Security Service (hereinafter referred to as the SD), which are stored in the Central State Archive of the Higher Authorities and Administration of Ukraine. Fund 3770 “Military Medical Institutions of the German Army” (Case 12) contains information about the efforts of the Chief Physician of the Wehrmacht to prevent the spread of venereal diseases in the occupied Ukrainian lands by establishing brothels (Central State Archives of Supreme Bodies of Power and Government of Ukraine f. 3770, d. 1, c. 12, 21 p.). Some information is taken from Fund 3676 “Headquarters of the Imperial Leader (Reichsleiter) Rosenberg for the Occupied Eastern Regions, Berlin, Kyiv” (CSASBPG of Ukraine, f. 3676, d. 4, c. 476, 1013 p.). Case 476 of the fourth description presents reports of the heads of the secret police and general commissars of the occupied regions of Ukraine, which mention the issues of brothels organization and operating. The post-war interrogation protocols by the Commission for the Investigation of the Nazi Crimes of Mykola Nikishyn, the former owner of Donetsk brothel, turned out to be informative (State Archives of Donetsk

Region, f. 1838, d. 1, c. 13, 127 p.). The author is grateful to the researcher Olena Stiazkina for the opportunity to use the relevant material, who discovered it in the Donetsk Regional Archive and kindly provided it for use in this research. Unfortunately, Donetsk is currently temporarily occupied by the Russian troops and the location of the relevant archival file is unknown to us, that is why, in the research the original data for the file up to 2014 are used.

A layer of relevant information is contained in the records of Soviet intelligence, underground participants and partisans, which are stored in File 22 of the fund of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine of the Central State Archive of Public Associations and Ukrainian Studies. Materials from archeographic publications of the Soviet special services during the Nazi occupation period, published during the independence of Ukraine, and ego-sources are also used.

The purpose is to do the research on the official Wehrmacht brothels operating in Ukraine, established in the occupied territories at the beginning of 1942. To reveal the reasons for brothels establishments and to show a number of problems that the occupiers encountered in the process of establishing them and staffing them with Ukrainian personnel.

The geographical boundaries cover the Ukrainian territories occupied by the Nazis. The research does not address the identification of brothels by their affiliation with a specific occupation territorial and administrative unit in Ukraine, since their activities were of the same type in the absolute majority of cases.

Research Results. Having occupied significant territories of the USSR and failed in their “blitzkrieg” plan, the Nazis were faced with the problem of coexistence between their own soldiers and civilian residents. Various departments of the Reich began to receive reports from the East about romantic and intimate relationships between soldiers and local women, which violated the postulates of the Nazi racial policy regarding the threat to the life and health of the nation through having sex with Slavic women. The German leadership before the outbreak of World War II considered the sexual needs of Wehrmacht soldiers from a racial and ideological point of view, therefore it sought to control the situation at the state level. The Nuremberg Law (Article 2) of 1935 prohibited sexual contact between the Germans and the Jews, who were considered the lowest racial type in the Nazi hierarchy. The Slavic “Untermensch” were slightly higher in this hierarchy, but intimate relations with them were also prohibited (Burds, 2015, p. 280).

The German documents concerning instructions to Wehrmacht soldiers on how to treat the local population of territories captured on the Eastern Front emphasized the prohibition of sexual contact with representatives of “lower” races (CSASBPG of Ukraine, f. 3770, d. 1, c. 12, p. 10). Fuhrer A. Hitler also warned soldiers against intimate relationships with Slavic women, in whose opinion they should protect their valuable “Aryan” blood from mixing (Piker, 1998, p. 220). In August 1942, the head of the Reich Commissariat “Ukraine” E. Koch, at a meeting of general commissars in Rivne, noted that soldiers “would face severe punishment for sexual relations with Ukrainian women” (CSASBPG of Ukraine, f. KMF-8, d.1, c. 182, p. 3). There are some cases when on the Eastern Front, girls were brought from Germany “for entertainment” so that Wehrmacht soldiers would not come into contact with local women (Lippix, 2009, p. 103). Subsequently, a complex of occupation policies and practices emerged in the Reich, related to the control of intimate relationships, prostitution, and romantic relationships between soldiers and local women (Mühlhäuser, 2011, p. 197).

But it is one thing to declare, even at the state level, regulations designed to regulate intimate relationships among soldiers, and another to put them into practice. And this is

precisely what the Nazis had significant problems with in occupied Ukraine. Firstly, the remoteness of the captured territories from the Reich and the lack of understanding by the German military political leadership of the situation on the ground led to the fact that the occupation administration and military commandants were in no hurry to carry out instructions from Berlin, but were guided mainly by their own views and interests on the issue. Secondly, the majority of soldiers were not particularly concerned with the Nazi leadership's racial criteria regarding sexual culture, which threatened the implementation of the Nazi doctrine of the impossibility of "interbreeding" with the "non-Aryan population". Thirdly, the Germans could not physically control the actions of 3.4 million soldiers who participated in the "march to the East". The majority of soldiers and officials in the rear of the occupied lands were quartered in the houses of local residents, worked in occupation institutions, where they had to contact the local population. This objectively created the prerequisites for the emergence of affection and intimacy between local women and military personnel.

The Nazi morals of aggression, contempt for the enslaved peoples, their disenfranchisement, and the lack of proper control over the lives of German soldiers to some extent provoked sexual violence against the civilian population. All this worsened discipline in the army and damaged the army's reputation. This was noted even by the Soviet intelligence agencies. "The fascist bandits are committing particularly terrible, savage abuses and violence against Soviet women in the occupied regions of Ukraine. Wild debauchery, drunken orgies, abuse and rape of women, or as the fascists call this debauchery – "fun", are observed everywhere and have reached significant proportions", it was stated in the intelligence report of the NKVD of the Ukrainian SSR for March 20, 1942. The drunken orgies reached such proportions that in some regions the German army command began to worry not about the consequences for women, but for their own military units, demonstrating concern about the deterioration of discipline in the regions and the loss of combat effectiveness" (Vasyl'iev, Koshevarova, 2018, pp. 283–284).

In turn, the difficult occupation routine and the demand for sexual contact by financially and socially well-off German soldiers led to prostitution, and a chaotic sexual contact provoked the spread of venereal diseases. Thus, in Vinnytsia, the SD reported that in July 1941 the number of cases of venereal diseases increased to 1,400 (Lauer, 2010, p. 290). The head of Kyiv branch of the SD complained about the same problem (CSASBPG of Ukraine, f. 3676, d. 4, c. 476, pp. 942, 944). The Chief Physician of the Wehrmacht Ground Forces focused on underground prostitution as the main source of venereal diseases spread in Ukraine in the order for military units and garrison commandants dated March 20, 1942 (CSASBPG of Ukraine, f. 3770, d. 1, c. 12, p. 10). The only possibility of successfully supervising prostitutes, in his opinion, was their controlled work in brothels (CSASBPG of Ukraine, f. 3770, d. 1, c. 12, pp. 8–10).

In addition, the military leadership feared that romantic relationships with women would contribute to the spread of enemy espionage, which would threaten the security of the army. This concern was not unfounded, since many women actively helped partisans and underground fighters during the occupation (Hinda, 2021, pp. 116–133). They also feared the spread of homosexual relations in the Wehrmacht, and that soldiers who had romantic relationships with local women would cease to consider the Ukrainian population as the enemy and would deviate from the main goal in the Eastern campaign, and that these relationships could lead to the breakup of soldiers' families in Germany (Mühlhäuser, 2011, pp. 216–217).

The realities of everyday life for German soldiers in the occupied territories of Ukraine forced the military leadership to intervene in the situation and try to put the sexual life of soldiers under state control. The instrument of control was to be stationary rear brothels (in the soldiers' jargon of the invaders – "houses of joy"). (Gertjeanssen, 2004, p. 159), which the Nazis established from the beginning of 1942 (on the Western Front this practice had been used since 1940). It should be noted that at the beginning of the occupation of Ukrainian lands, these institutions did not operate, since no one predicted that the war would drag on. And when the issue arose, the German military and administrative leadership of Ukraine was faced with a lack of clear, consistent, and coordinated actions. Usually everything was decided at the level of local command, which was not always unanimous. Therefore, some were engaged in opening brothels, while others, considering it immoral, avoided or made it difficult for their subordinates to visit them (Xart, Xart, X'yuz, 2006, pp. 18–19).

Permission to organize these institutions, according to the order of E. Koch dated December 22, 1942, was granted by the military and civil administration of the cities (State Archives of Zhytomyr Region, f. p. 1151, d. 1, c. 4, p. 7), and the service staff and funds were provided by the labour exchange and the financial department of the city government of the city in which the institution was planned to operate (SADR, f. p. 1838, d. 1, r. 13, p. 37). Medical care was provided by local doctors, and in their absence by military personnel. The managers were to be women from Western Europe who knew the business. German civilian employees from the occupation administration or trade, construction, and industrial firms could visit the brothel twice a week (SAZR, f. p. 1151, d. 1, c. 4, p. 7). The requirements for visiting suggest that most likely the brothels established in Ukraine were not divided into the categories defined by the Wehrmacht: soldiers, non-commissioned officers, sergeants and officers, as on the Western Front, or this division was not observed everywhere. For example, if Zhytomyr brothel was open to civilians according to the agreement (Lauer, 2010, p. 139), then in Donetsk only the military were allowed to do this (SADR, f. p. 1838, d. 1, c. 13, p. 40). Western European women also did not always manage brothels: in Donetsk, everything was managed by a Ukrainian who had applied for a patent from the city government (SADR, f. p. 1838, d. 1, c. 13, p. 37). Locals were not allowed to visit brothels, as it was announced by signs in German and Russian (CSASBPG of Ukraine, f. 3770, d. 1, c. 12, p. 10).

When it came to recruiting women for brothels at the beginning of the German-Soviet war, the Germans tried to be guided by racial dogmas. According to them, only the Germans or representatives of races related to the "Aryans" could work there. The staff was recruited for six months, after which it was replaced by another. According to the Nazi calculations, during this time the woman's body lost its attractiveness due to constant sexual contact (Vasil'chenko, 2005, pp. 331, 334). But in fact, as the German and Soviet documents run, local women, despite their "racial unsuitability", worked in the Wehrmacht's stationary brothels in Ukraine from the first days of their establishment (SADR, f. p. 1838, d. 1, c. 13, p. 38). They all had to meet certain criteria: be healthy, young (from 16 to 40 years old), and beautiful. The canons of beauty were different in many institutions. In one, women with Nordic features could work, as required by the Nazi racial doctrine, and in the other, they were selected according to preferences of owners, or a brothel was staffed from those who were available (Krinko, Sak, 2023, p. 110). However, there is fragmentary information about isolated cases of the Germans importing female from Europe. For example, in Zhytomyr brothel established in 1942, prostitutes from the Netherlands worked (Berkhof, 2011, p. 139), in Mykolayiv – from Germany (Gavrilov, 2017), in Kyiv – from France and Poland (Sorokin, Dacishina, 2022)

In Ukraine the German occupation administration was more concerned about the health of soldiers and, accordingly, the full staffing of brothels than about complying with official Nazi prohibitions on the impossibility of intimate contact with local women. The longer the war continued, the greater the contradiction between official Nazi rules and the reality that developed in the occupied territories. To some extent, Berlin understood it, so they did not monitor the implementation of orders very closely. For example, G. Himmler, who at the beginning of the war opposed the recruitment of non-Aryan women into brothels, later changed his view, suggesting that sexual contact with them did not harm the purity of the Aryan race due to the use of condoms (Gertjeanssen, 2004, p. 177).

Despite unlimited power over the population of the occupied territories, the Nazi military leadership in Ukraine faced the problem of filling brothels with Ukrainian women. The head of the medical and sanitary service of Mountain Division 4 (deployed in Donetsk region) drew attention to this state of affairs and noted that it took at least two weeks to find several “workers” for Makiyivka brothel, and months to staff the establishment (CSASBPG of Ukraine, f. 3770, d. 1, c. 12, p. 13). The fact is that in the USSR prostitution was prohibited, accordingly it did not become part of social culture and was negatively received by society. For local women, working in a brothel was considered shameful and immoral, and the fear of public condemnation and possible punishment by the Soviet authorities in the future was also a deterrent. “Here women cannot go beyond the established norms. The traditional attachment to the household, family, relatives and church remains unbroken”, Captain G. Koch noted in a report on the mood of the Ukrainian population at the end of 1941 (CSASBPG of Ukraine, f. KMF-8, d. 1, c. 38, p. 51). Among the German officials, there was a common opinion on this subject, “that local women would rather commit suicide than go to work in a brothel” (Gertjeanssen, 2004, p. 171).

Over time, the Germans were helped by the harsh everyday life of the occupation, which, as a historian O. Budnytskyi notes, put women before a choice: either a hungry life in the occupation, forcible deportation to Germany, or work in a brothel. Some chose the latter (Tolstoj, 2009). For many, suitable work became one of the options for using one’s own body as a survival resource for themselves and their families (Stiazhkina, 2015, p. 64). A significant role was played by the occupation and military administration, which, in no way taking into account the rights and wishes of Ukrainian women, resorted to pressure on them through dirty and vile psychological means. Some were blackmailed with the arrest of their relatives, because of their party past, some were intimidated with sending them to work in the Reich or imprisonment in a concentration camp, and some – to be were shot. Beautiful women could be forcibly taken to a brothel, provided there was one in the city, at any moment: they were picked up from train stations when Ostarbeiters were sent to Germany (Balyts’kyj, 1969, p. 364), from queues to the labour exchange, this method of recruitment was practiced by the occupation authorities of Mariupol (Central State Archives of Public Associations of Ukraine, f. 1, d. 22, c. 185, p. 33), and there was a a common practice in Kyiv when women were selected from lists of attractive girls and women, on the orders of the Germans, submitted reports to the police (CSASBPG of Ukraine, f. 3770, d. 1, c. 12, p. 10), and by force or under the pretext of hard work (the military administration of Kharkiv is meant) (Nikolaev, 2010). The Kyiv Labour Exchange, according to intelligence from the Central Headquarters of the Partisan Movement about life in occupied Kyiv for August 1942, offered beautiful girls work in the city’s dining halls, and from there they were forcibly taken to brothels (Vrons’ka, 2003, p. 259). One can only imagine the emotional, spiritual, and physical trauma that married

women and girls forced into such work against their will must have endured. The Germans also tried to recruit “staff” for brothels among officially employed prostitutes (Gertjeanssen, 2004, p. 178), or girls who worked in open “Casinos” or “Cabarets”. The secretary of the Voroshilovhrad underground city CP (b)U M. Tretiakevych wrote in his report that “Cabaret theatre” was established in Luhansk, where the Germans recruited girls who, in addition to their main work, could provide intimate services to the German officers in exchange for products. “This theater recruited only girls, and only beautiful ones. Singers, half-naked dancers performed on stage. The theatre’s duties included serving soldiers and officers of the German army” (CSAPA of Ukraine, f. 1, d. 22, c. 185, p. 33).

The violent methods of filling brothels in Ukraine indicate that women and girls were in fact sexual slavery to the Wehrmacht, where they were constantly abused. They had no rights and were practically the property of the Reich. They could be beaten, injured, or killed by drunken visitors, and no one cared about the fate of these women outside the institutions. In addition, if a woman entered a brothel, whether by force or by her own will, she was immediately stigmatized by society, which made her future life in her own social group much more difficult. The Soviet military treated them most contemptuously and cruelly. The Red Army soldier M. Nikulin recalled how intelligence from his unit discovered the German brothel with Russian women and intelligence officers resorted to rape them (Nikulin, 2008, p. 323).

The social status and position of those working in brothels were different. Among them were married, divorced, and women – whose husbands fought in the ranks of the Red Army, many of them had minor children and old parents (they tried to support them in this way). L. Nikolayev noted that married women were often forcibly brought into Kharkiv brothels (Nikolaev, 2010). The contingent of women was diverse: from cleaners to intellectuals. In particular, in Donetsk there were former teachers, accountants, wives of engineers and the others (Krinko, & Sak, 2023, p.110).

The post-war fate of brothel women remains largely unknown. The limited and contradictory information available to historians does not provide clear answers to many important questions. Post-war records of interrogations of the Donetsk brothel “prostitutes” by the officers of the Commission for the Investigation of Nazi Crimes indicate that they remained to live in their hometown, while some left with the Germans (Stiazhkina, 2015, p. 64). In the memoirs of the Jew J. Kaper, who worked in the Syretsk camp in a brigade that burned the bodies of people killed by the Germans in Babyn Yar, there is an episode where he talks about young girls who were brought and killed, probably prostitutes from Kyiv brothels, on the eve of the arrival of the Red Army. “It was a terrible picture, and the Germans were laughing and saying various obscene words” (Budnik, & Kaper, 1993, p. 166). The Nazi administration probably acted at its own discretion in this matter: in some cases, women were left behind after the retreat, in others, they were taken with them, and in others, they were shot.

After the end of the war, many women had to face humiliation, contempt from their compatriots, and hide their past in every possible way, because post-war society and the authorities did not delve into the motives of certain actions of people who survived the occupation. The Soviet officials viewed the population that had survived the occupation as entirely guilty of collaborating with the Germans. Women who had sexual relations with the enemy were considered “whores” and “traitors”. In the circular of the NKVD of the USSR dated January 18, 1942, “On the Organization of Operational Chekist Work in the Liberated Territory,” the department’s employees were ordered to begin their work in the liberated

territories by identifying and arresting such women and girls, as well as the owners of brothels and dens (Vrons'ka, 2003, p. 305). But, as a historian T. Vronska notes, the Soviet authorities, despite their declared policy of persecuting such women, did not launch systematic and mass repressions against them (Vrons'ka, 2013, p. 302).

To some extent, we can learn about the specifics of brothels operation, their layout and the staff working in Ukraine from the interrogation protocols of Mykola Nikishyn, the owner of Donetsk brothel. For working women, there were established norms for receiving clients (9–11 soldiers) and a working day schedule, which officially lasted for 7–8 hours, although they often had to work much longer. Sometimes girls had sexual intercourse with up to 30 soldiers in a 7-hour working day, and on average 100–220 soldiers visited the brothel daily (SADR, f. p. 1838, d. 1, c. 13, p. 40). Once a day, a doctor checked women for sexually transmitted diseases, and the German gendarme kept watch (SADR, f. p. 1838, d. 1, c. 13, pp. 38–39). There were situations when women were prohibited from working. These were mainly days of menstrual cycles, infection with venereal, skin, fungal diseases, and in case of pregnancy (SADR, f. p. 1838, d. 1, c. 13, p. 39).

In occupied Ukraine, the payment of women working in brothels was not clearly regulated, as in Western Europe. For their work, they could receive money, food rations, or just eat in brothels. Most of all, “prostitutes” appreciated food supplies, which were much more useful under the conditions of the terrible occupation everyday life than money, which was quickly devalued by inflation. At the beginning of the operation of brothels in Ukraine, the daily ration of a worker was: 300 g of bread (in the case of a doctor’s recommendation, an additional 300 g was provided), 10 g of butter, 70 g of meat, 30 g of cereals, 30 g of honey. Later, they began to issue military rations, which were much larger in content than the existing ones (SADR, f. p. 1838, d. 1, c. 13, p. 39). Visitors could also bring food and various delicacies. There is evidence that women received salaries of approximately 500 rubles per week (Novikov, 2011), while the salary of a specialist during the occupation was set at 450 to 1,200 rubles per month.

In Ukraine the official fee for visiting brothels ranged from 3 to 5 marks (30–50 rubles). Part of the money was taken by the owner of a brothel. For example, a brothel in Donetsk brought in 5–6 thousand rubles of profit daily and 140–150 thousand rubles per month (SADR, f. p. 1838, d. 1, r. 13, p. 40), and part was sent to the financial department of the city council (SADR, f. p. 1838, d. 1, c. 13, p. 39). In many ways, provision of women was determined by the attitude of owners or managers of brothels towards them. For example, M. Nikishin allowed girls, by agreement with the client, to increase the fee for “services” to 5 marks (a visit to a brothel cost 3 marks), and 2 marks – for them (SADR, f. p. 1838, d. 1, c. 13, p. 39). Owing to this, if we assume a minimum client intake rate of 9 people per day and 63 military personnel per week, women employed in a brothel’s services could earn 126 marks (1,260 rubles) per week and 5,040 rubles per month. This does not include the official food ration. A decent income made it possible to support oneself and one’s family, even considering the prices at the “black market”. But such generous treatment was usually the exception to the rule.

The question of the number of brothels established by the Nazis during World War II remains open. Historians’ data differ. For example, F. Seidler suggests that by 1942 the Nazis had organized 500 brothels, which were equally divided between the Eastern and Western fronts (Seidler, 1977, p. 186). In turn, P. Christa is convinced that there were established 569 brothels (Christa, 1994, p. 135), and W. Gertjanssen suggests that 569 is the minimum controlled by the Wehrmacht (Gertjanssen, 2004, p. 170).

This uncertainty is explained by the lack of generalizing documents that researchers could operate with, and the diverse source base that needs to be processed. For example, we managed to determine the operation of 74 stationary Wehrmacht brothels in the occupied territory of the USSR. Of these, there are 39 institutions in Ukraine: two – in Lviv, Drohobych, Donetsk, Kyiv, Mariupol, Maloarkhangelsk, one – in Ternopil, Brody, Stanislaviv, Yasnozirya, Zhytomyr, Zviahel, Dnipro, Snizhne, Makiyivka, Kropyvnytsky, Poltava, Novomoskovsk, Feodosia, Kerch, Kuteinikovo, three – in Kyiv, Mykolayiv, and Odesa, and four – in Kharkiv.

While working with statistical materials, the author analyzed the Soviet war and post-war periodicals, where materials about the crimes of the Nazi regime also mention brothels operating in the occupied regions of the USSR. There is also included information from medical reports of German departments, military units, or SD and documentation of Soviet partisans, underground fighters, and NKVD agents, which are stored in central and regional archival repositories of Ukraine. Certain data were found in ego-documents and local history literature. Most likely, there were much more brothels in Ukrainian territories – this is only the minimum that was determined. Perhaps, the documents of city and regional administrations established by the Germans in the occupied Ukrainian regional centres, which are stored in regional archives, can shed light on this issue.

Equally problematic is the determination of the number of women who were forced to work in brothels during World War II. Thus, P. Christa indicates that at least 34,140 women faced this (Christa, 1994, p. 135). He obtained these data by assuming that on average 60 women passed through each brothel in 1942 – 1945 (i.e. 10 per brothel, replaced by others after six months), and multiplied by the total number of brothels. V. Gertjeanssen is convinced that at least 50,000 of them worked during the entire war period (Gertjeanssen, 2004, p. 220). If we take into account P. Christa's calculation method, we can assume that at least 4,380 women passed through these institutions in the USSR, of which 2,280 were in Ukraine.

Conclusions. Summing up the research results, we should state that by stationing military and civilian administrators in Ukraine, the German command faced the problems of the German army romantic and intimate relationships with civilian women, sexual violence, and the spread of venereal diseases on this basis, which could harm the combat capability of the troops. In an attempt to remedy this, the Nazis attempted to control the sexual lives of soldiers through a system of establishing stationary rear brothels in early 1942. In Ukrainian territories, occupation officials and owners of institutions bypassed the rules of their work regulated by the Wehrmacht, and strictly adhered only to the requirements of medical control.

The Nazis failed to solve the outlined problems with the help of brothels, as neither excessive control over visitors nor the small number of open brothels and females employed in them contributed to this. In fact, for three years of occupation, Germany needed more than 120,000 women and 1,192 brothels for 3.4 million soldiers, each of which would have employed at least 25 women for six months (based on the calculations of the Wehrmacht leadership – one woman per 100 soldiers) (Hruhman, 2024, p. 143).

The idea that brothels would help stop unauthorized intimate relationships with local women and the spread of venereal diseases also failed. The soldiers' contacts with women did not stop, and in many cases escalated into cohabitation. The scale of this phenomenon is reflected in the report of the armored division commander, Colonel General R. Schmidt, which he presented at the meeting with A. Hitler in September 1942. R. Schmidt suggested that on the Eastern Front 3 million German soldiers had sexual relations with local women (often forcibly), which meant that the Reich should expect the birth of 1.5 million children

(Mühlhäuser, 2009, pp. 46–47). The colonel general shared his thoughts based on what he saw, and even if he exaggerated, it was not a hundred times. In May 1943, at the meeting of the Reich military lawyers, it was said that in the East almost every commander of SS units had intimate relationships with local women (Hruhman, 2024, p. 176). Venereal diseases continued to spread rapidly, which indicated late steps in solving the problem and intimate contacts of servicemen outside of sexual service brothels. For example, in Kharkiv in the autumn of 1942, 10% of all hospital beds were occupied by venereal patients, and at the end of 1942 in Zhytomyr General District their number increased by 50%, compared to the beginning of the year (CSASBPG of Ukraine, f. 4328. d. 1, c. 5, p. 38). In May 1942, the Nazis were even forced to close brothels in Mykolayiv and Kirovohrad because of venereal diseases (CSASBPG of Ukraine, f. KMF-8, d. 1, c. 6, p. 77). But the dynamics of diseases did not improve, as reported by E. Operman, the Commissioner General of Mykolayiv District, the diseases continued to spread. In addition, medical control over the “prostitutes” was lost (CSASBPG of Ukraine, f. KMF-8, d.1, r. 6, p. 94).

As we can see, the operation of brothels in occupied Ukraine, aimed at creating opportunities for their sexual and psychological relaxation, was no less important for the Nazi leadership than physical ability of soldiers to fight. Such measures were aimed at supporting the fighting spirit of the Wehrmacht. At the same time, the Nazis did not take into account the psychological, moral and physical state of local women who were forcibly involved in this shameful work. That is why, the functioning of rear brothels should be considered in the context of the Wehrmacht’s involvement of Ukrainian women in sexual slavery and Berlin-sanctioned violence in the interests of combatants.

Acknowledgement. I express sincere gratitude to all editorial board members for the consultations provided during the preparation of the article for printing.

Funding. The author did not receive any financial assistance for the research and publication of this scientific work.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Balyts’kyj, H. V.** (1967). *Vijna vnochi* [War at Night]. Kyiv: “Molod”. [in Ukrainian].
- Balykova, N. S.** (2015). Yaponiia vybachylasia pered Pivdennoiu Koreieiu za “zhinok dlia vtikhy” [Japan Apologizes to South Korea for “Comfort Women”]. *Holos Ukrainy*, 30 hrudnia. URL: <https://www.golos.com.ua/article/262875> [in Ukrainian].
- Berkhof, K.** (2011). *Zhnyva rozpachu: zhyttia i smert' v Ukraini pid natsysts'koiu vladoiu* [Harvest of Despair: Life and Death in Ukraine under Nazi Rule]. Kyiv: “Krytyka”, 455 s. [in Ukrainian].
- Budnik, D. I., & Kaper, Ja. A.** (1993). *Nichto ne zabyto: Evrejskie sud'by v Kieve, 1941 – 1943* [Nothing Forgotten: Jewish Fates in Kyiv, 1941 – 1943]. Konstanz: Hartung-Gorre. [in Russian].
- Burds, D.** (2015). Seksual'ne nasil'stvo v Evropi pid chas Drugoi svitovoi vijni (1939 – 1945) [Sexual Violence in Europe during World War II (1939 – 1945)]. *Zhinki Central'noi ta Sxidnoi Evropy u Drugij svitovij vijni: genderna specyfika dosvidu v chasi ekstremal'nogo nasil'stva: zb. nauk. prats' / za nauk. red. doktorky istor. nauk H. Hrinchenko, kand. istor. nauk K. Kobchenko, kand. istor. nauk O. Kis'*, (pp. 278–309). Kyiv: TOV “ART KNIGA”. [in Ukrainian].
- Christa, P.** (1994). *Zwangsprostitution: staatliche bordelle im Nationalsozialismus*. Berlin: Edition Hentrich. [in German].
- Derzhavnyj arkhiv Donetskoi oblasti* [State Archives of Donetsk Region – **SADR**].
- Derzhavnyj arkhiv Zhytomyrskoi oblasti* [State Archives of Zhytomyr Region – **SAZH**].
- Gavrilov, S.** (2017). Zhenskaya rabota [Women’s Work]. *Yuzhnaya pravda*, 55, 23 maya. URL: http://www.up.mk.ua/mainpage/show_item/16466 [in Ukrainian].
- Gertjeanssen, W.** (2004). *Victims, Heroes, Survivors. Sexual Violence on the Eastern Front during World War II*. A Thesis Submitted to the faculty of the graduate school of the University of Minnesota. [in English].

Hinda, V. V. (2021). Ahenty-kokhanky: zhinky na sluzhbi nimets'koi i partyzans'koi rozvidok [Agent-mistresses: Women in the Service of German and Partisan Intelligence]. *Storinky voiennoi istorii Ukrainy*, 23, 116–133. [in Ukrainian].

Hruhman, R. (2024). *Zlochyny proty zhinok pid chas vjny* [The War Crimes against Women]. Kharkiv: “Fabula”. [in Ukrainian].

Krinko, E. F., & Sak, K. V. (2023). “Doma terpmososti” v Rostovskoj i Stalinskoj oblasti v period nemeckoj okkupacii v 1942 – 1943 gg. [“Houses of Tolerance” in Rostov and Stalin Regions during the German Occupation in 1942 – 1943]. *Ural'skij istoricheskij vestnik*, 2 (79), 95–115. DOI: 1030759/1728-9718-2023-2(79)-96-115 [in Russian].

Lauer, V. (2010). *Tvorennia natsysts'koi imperii ta Holokost v Ukraini* [The Creation of the Nazi Empire and the Holocaust in Ukraine]. Kyiv: Zovnishtorhvydav Ukrainy. [in Ukrainian].

Lippix, V. (2009). *Beglyj ogon'! Zapiski nemeckogo artillerista. 1940 – 1945.* [Rapid Fire! Notes of a German Artilleryman. 1940 – 1945]. Moscow: “Jauza-Press”. [in Russian].

Mühlhäuser, R. (2011). Between ‘Racial Awareness’ and Fantasies of Potency: Nazi Sexual Politics in the Occupied Territories of the Soviet Union, 1942 – 1945. *Brutality and Desire: War and Sexuality in Europe's Twentieth Century* / Ed. Dagmar Herzog, (pp. 197–220). London: Palgrave Macmillan. DOI: 10.1057/9780230234291_8 [in English].

Mühlhäuser, R. (2010). *Eroberungen: Sexuelle Gewalttaten und intime Beziehungen deutscher Soldaten in der Sowjetunion 1941 – 1945.* Hamburger Edition. [in German].

Mühlhäuser, R. (2009). “Diskriminiert, als sei es ein Negerbastard” Der Nationalsozialistische Blick auf die Kinder deutscher Soldaten und einheimischer Frauen in den besetzten Gebieten der Sowjetunion (1942 – 1945). Am 21. *WERKSTATT Geschichte* / Heft – Klartext Verlag, Essen. 43–55. [in German].

Mühlhäuser, R. (2015). Nezaperechnyj zlochyn. Seksual'ne nasyl'stvo nimets'kykh voiakiv pid chas “vjny na znyschennia” v Radians'komu Soiuzi u 1941 – 1945 rr. [An Undeniable Crime: Sexual Violence by German Soldiers during the “War of Annihilation” in the Soviet Union, 1941 – 1945]. *Zhinky Central'noi ta Sxidnoi Evropy u Drugij svitovij vjny: genderna specifika dosvidu v chasi ekstremal'nogo nasil'stva: zb. nauk. prats' / za nauk. red. doktoryky istor. nauk H. Hrinchenko, kand. istor. nauk K. Kobchenko, kand. istor. nauk O. Kis',* (pp. 269–277). Kyiv: TOV “ART KNYHA”, [in Ukrainian].

Najteel', Z., & Vel'cer, X. (2013). *Soldaty Vermaxta. Podlinnye svidetel'stva boev, stradanij i smerti* [Wehrmacht Soldiers. Authentic Testimonies of Battles, Suffering and Death]. Moscow: “Jeksmo”. [in Russian].

Nikolaev, L. P. (2010). Pod nemeckim sapogom. Vypiski iz dnevnika: oktjabr' 1941 g. – avgust 1943 g. [Under the German Boot. Diary Excerpts: October 1941 – August 1943]. *Sojuz pisatelej*. URL: <https://magazines.gorky.media/library/213779> [in Russian].

Nikulin, N. N. (2008). *Vospominanija o vojne* [Memories of War]. Sankt-Peterburg: Izdatel'stvo Gosudarstvennyj jermitez. [in Russian].

Novikov, S. (2011). Voенно-polevoj bordel': opyt rejhsvera. [Military field brothel: the experience of the Reichswehr.] *Ukraina kriminal'naja*, 12 nojabrja. URL: http://cripo.com.ua/?sect_id=9&aid=126117 [in Russian].

Ostrowska, J. (2018). Przemilczane. Seksualna praca przymusowa w czasie II wojny światowej [The Untold: Forced Sexual Labour during World War II]. Warszawa: Marginesy. [in Polish].

Piker, G. (1998). *Zastol'nye razgovory Gitlera* [Hitler's Table Talk]. Smolensk: “Rusich”. [in Russian].

Seidler, F. (1977). *Prostitution, Homosexualität, Selbstverstümmelung: Probleme der deutschen Sanitätsführung 1939 – 1945.* Neckargemünd: Kurt Vowinkel Verlag. [in German].

Sorokin, A. K., & Dacishina, M. V. (2022). “Na Podole zakapyvali lyudej zhivymi...”. Svidetel'stva o nemeckoj okkupacii Kieva, sdelannye srazu posle osvobozhdeniya goroda [“People were Buried Alive in Podil...” Testimonies about the German occupation of Kyiv, made immediately after the liberation of the city.]. *Rodina*, 7, 28 oktyabrya. URL: <https://rodina-history.ru/2022/10/28/na-podole-zakapyvali-liudej-zhivymi.html> [in Russian].

Stiazhkina, O. V. (2015). Zhinky Ukrainy v povsiakdenni okupatsii: vidminnosti stsenariiv, intensii i resursy vyzyvannia. [Ukrainian Women in Everyday Occupations: Differences in Scenarios, Intentions and Survival Resources]. *Ukrainskyj istorychnyj zhurnal – Ukrainian Historical Journal*, 2, 42–66. [in Ukrainian].

Tolstoj, I. (2009). Mify i reputacii. Zhenshhina, muzhchina i vojna [Myths and Reputations. Woman, Man and War]. *Radio svoboda*. URL: <http://www.svobodanews.ru/content/transcript/1879899.html> [in Russian].

Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi arkhiv hromadskykh ob'iednan Ukrainy [Central State Archives of Public Associations of Ukraine – CSAPA of Ukraine].

Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchykh orhaniv vlady i upravlinnia Ukrainy [Central State Archives of Supreme Bodies of Power and Government of Ukraine – CSASBPG of Ukraine].

Vasyl'iev, V. Yu., & Koshevarova, N. H. (Comps.) (2018). *Nasyl'stvo nad tsyvil'nym naseleнням Ukrainy. Dokumenty spetssluzhb. 1941 – 1944* [Violence against the Civilian Population of Ukraine. Documents of the Special Services. 1941 – 1944]. Avtory-ukladachi: Valerij Vasyl'iev, Nataliia Koshevarova, Olena Lysenko, Mariia Panova, Roman Podkur. Kyiv: Vydavets' V. Zakharenko. [in Ukrainian].

Vasil'chenko, A. V. (2005). *Seks v Tret'em rejxe* [Sex in the Third Reich]. Moskva: “Jauza”. [in Russian].

Vasil'chenko, A. V. (2008). *Seksual'nyj mif III Rejha* [The Sexual Myth of the Third Reich]. Moskva: “Jauza-press”. [in Russian].

Vrons'ka, T. V. (Comps.) (2003). *Kyiv u dni natsysts'koi navy. Za dokumentamy radians'kykh spetssluzhb. Do 60-richchia vyzvolennia Ukrainy vid hitlerivs'kykh zaharbnykiv. Naukovo-dokumental'ne vydannia* [Kyiv during the Nazi Invasion. According to Documents of the Soviet Special Services. To the 60-th anniversary of the liberation of Ukraine from the Nazi invaders. Scientific and documentary publication]. Kyiv–L'viv. [in Ukrainian].

Vrons'ka, T. V. (2013). *Upokorennia strakhom. Simejne zaruchnytstvo u karal'nij praktytsi radians'koi vlady, 1917 – 1953 rr.* [Subjugation by Fear. Family Hostage in the Punitive Practice of the Soviet Regime, 1917 – 1953]. Kyiv: Tempora. [in Ukrainian].

Xart, S., & Xart, R., & X'yuz, M. (2006). *Ryadovyje Vermaxta i SS. Nemeckij soldat Vtoroj mirovoj vojny* [Privates of the Wehrmacht and SS. German soldier of World War II]. Moskva: “Jeksmo”. [in Russian].

*The article was received March 21, 2025.
Article recommended for publishing 28/11/2025.*