Oles Yanchuk is a unique phenomenon in Ukrainian cinema. He has directed five feature films in the Ukrainian language, infused with a Ukrainian nationalist worldview. Except for the film to be discussed in this paper, he has worked independently of the niggardly government funding for the Ukrainian film industry. Instead, he has raised money, particularly in the overseas Ukrainian diaspora, by making films that respond to the ideological sympathies of his donors. Even though the American dollar goes far in Ukraine—and this was especially true for the early years of Yanchuk’s career, his films are necessarily low budget with corresponding production values. Still, in spite of their amateurish moments, shortfalls, and heavy ideological hand, his films stand out in the Ukrainian “kino-landscape” as a coherent body of work by a director who has a vision and considerable energy.

His first feature film was Holod-33 (Famine-33). It came out in 1991, long before President Viktor Yushchenko came to power and implemented his campaign to have the world recognize the manmade famine of 1932–33 as genocide against the Ukrainian people. Yanchuk’s film was a powerful indictment of the criminality of the Soviet regime as responsible for the death by starvation of millions of the rural population in what was once an unusually productive agricultural region. The film toured North America and introduced Ukrainian communities there to a new and youngish director (born in 1956), who was sensitive to the same issues as they were.

This was followed in 1995 by a film about the wartime and postwar leader of the most violent faction of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, Stepan Bandera—Atentat: Osinve vbyystvo u Myunkheni (Assassination: An Autumn Murder in Munich). The intended audience for this film was Ukrainian nationalists, concentrated in both the overseas diaspora and in

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1 I have benefited tremendously from discussions with Chrystia Chomiak, Liliana Hentosh, Andrij Hornjatkevyč, Father Athanasius McVay, Sister Sophia Senyk, and Oleh Turii. This does not mean that they would agree with me on all points.
one region of the homeland, namely Western Ukraine, where Bandera and his movement made their greatest impact (Yanchuk himself was born in Fastiv, near Kyiv, outside Western Ukraine). Only in early 2010 did outgoing Ukrainian president Yushchenko posthumously make Bandera a Hero of Ukraine, a decision that was controversial within Ukraine and abroad.\(^2\) With *Atentat*, even more than with *Holod-33*, Yanchuk put himself in the nationalist vanguard in Ukrainian cinema.

In 2000 he released a film about another leader of the Bandera movement, Roman Shukhevych, who became the supreme commander of the nationalist armed forces, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, late in 1943. The film was called *Neskorenyi (The Undefeated)*. This glorification of Shukhevych preceded by seven years President Yushchenko’s posthumous award of Hero of Ukraine to the nationalist military leader. However, the president appreciated Yanchuk’s work and created an atmosphere in which it could reach a larger audience. On Ukrainian Independence Day (24 August) in 2007, a few months after Yushchenko made Shukhevych a Hero of Ukraine, three of Yanchuk’s film were shown on the Ukrainian-language TV channel 1+: *Atentat, Neskorenyi, and Zalizna sotnya*.\(^3\)

*Zalizna sotnya* (entitled *The Company of Heroes* in English; the literal translation of the Ukrainian title is *Iron Company*) came out in 2004. It was sponsored and produced by an Australian Ukrainian, who had written a memoir on which the film is based. The action takes place in 1944–47 in Ukrainian-inhabited regions of Poland. In the end, the company of heroes fights its way into Bavaria and surrenders to the Americans.

Yanchuk’s fifth feature film, the subject of this chapter, concerned the head of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church in the first half of the twentieth century, Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky. The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church is one of the Byzantine-rite churches in union with Rome. It retains many features in common with Eastern Orthodoxy, particularly in liturgical matters, while also displaying some hybridity with Roman (Latin) Catholic practices. In Sheptytsky’s time, the church was limited to the territory of Galicia in Western Ukraine as well as to the diaspora in North and South America. The historical and geographical congruence between the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church and Ukrainian nationalism remains strong to this day.

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\(^3\) Yanchuk, “Yakby.”