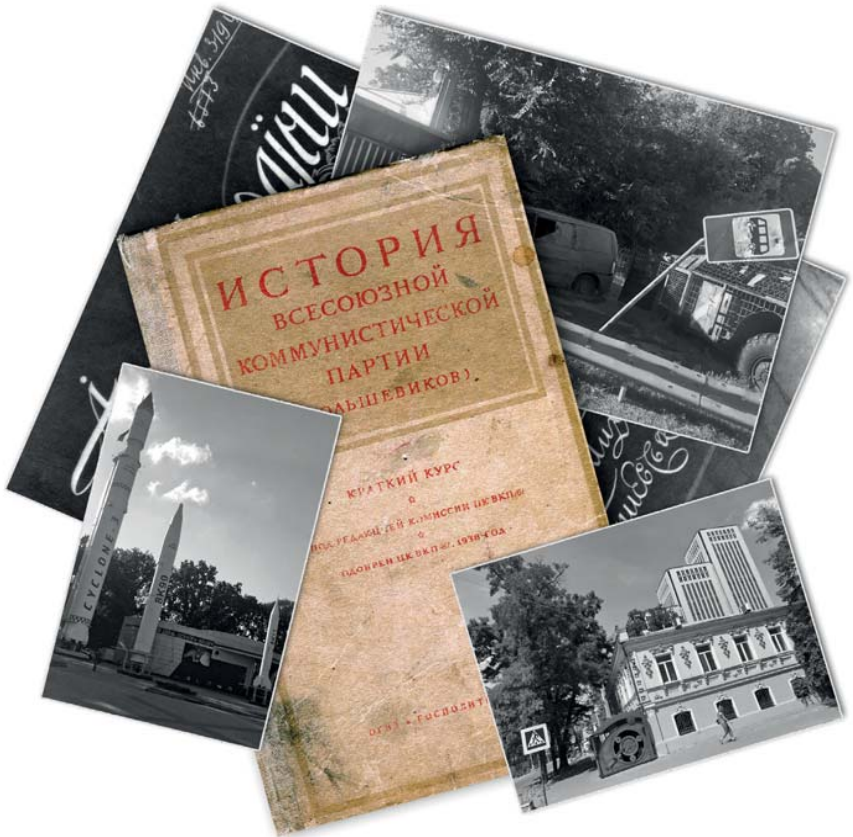


Korine Amacher /  
Andrii Portnov /  
Viktoriia Serhiienko (eds.)

# Official History in Eastern Europe



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# OFFICIAL HISTORY IN EASTERN EUROPE



EINZELVERÖFFENTLICHUNGEN DES  
DEUTSCHEN HISTORISCHEN INSTITUTS WARSCHAU

40

# Official History in Eastern Europe

Edited by

Korine Amacher, Andrii Portnov, Viktoriia Serhiienko

**fibre**

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The *Short Course* of the Communist Party was written with the personal participation of Joseph Stalin by a team of authors. It was first published in the newspaper *Pravda* in 1938 and reprinted as a book the same year. The *Short Course* was the party's official history before the Khrushchev thaw. From 1938 to 1952, more than 60 million copies were published in various languages.

After the 20<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Party, this book was withdrawn from public circulation, and a limited number of copies remained in special funds. Despite the changes associated with exposing Stalin's 'cult of personality' during the Khrushchev thaw, the *Short Course* was never formally condemned.

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## INTRODUCTION

A couple of years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, an American historian, Mark von Hagen, astonished by the tempo of the conversion of former Marxist-Leninist historians into devoted followers of the national paradigm, asked: “should Ukraine have one official history?” and suggested looking more broadly at possible avenues of development, claiming that:

“Ukraine represents a case of a national culture with extremely permeable frontiers, but a case that perhaps corresponds to postmodern political developments in which subnational, transnational and international processes need as much attention by historians, social scientists and ‘culturologists’ as those processes that were formerly studied as national.”<sup>1</sup>

Von Hagen suggested overcoming both Soviet and nationalist dogmas and turning Ukrainian history into a very modern field of inquiry:

“Ukrainian history can serve as a wonderful vehicle to challenge the nation-state’s conceptual hegemony and to explore some of the most contested issues of identity formation, cultural construction and maintenance, and colonial institutions and structures”.<sup>2</sup>

Commenting on von Hagen’s essay, Andreas Kappeler asked rhetorically if “the time for a post-nationalist approach to Ukrainian studies” had already come.<sup>3</sup> The question could also be re-formulated like this: where might one find an antidote to the official Soviet historical narrative?

The Soviet regime believed in the importance of historical education and in the proper planning and control of historical research. In 1926, the all-mighty Soviet Marxist historian Mikhail Pokrovskii claimed categorically that “the Academy could not continue playing the role of a cloister

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<sup>1</sup> Mark von Hagen, ‘Does Ukraine Have a History?’, *Slavic Review* 54, 3 (1995): 658–73, here 670.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 673.

<sup>3</sup> Andreas Kappeler, ‘Ukrainian History from a German Perspective’, *Slavic Review* 54, 3 (1995): 691–701, here 698.



for the ‘impartial seeker of truth’ and merely maintain a benevolent neutrality towards Soviet rule”.<sup>4</sup>

In the 1960s, one of the most open-minded Ukrainian émigré historians in Canada, Ivan Lysiak-Rudnyts’kyi, wrote that in a totalitarian state scholarship “has no autonomy and must directly subordinate itself to politics”.<sup>5</sup> Another prominent diaspora historian and, before 1941, one of the leading scholars in Soviet Ukraine – Oleksandr Ohloblyn – concluded in 1978 that “historical scholarship in the Motherland [Soviet Ukraine] has ceased to exist”,<sup>6</sup> because “the trend in official Soviet historiography has inevitably pushed it towards an anti-scientific and anti-Ukrainian synthesis of Ukrainian history”.<sup>7</sup> Ohloblyn labelled official Soviet historiography as both “anti-Ukrainian” and “anti-scientific” in contrast to “scientific” and “Ukrainian” diaspora scholarship. Certainly the situation was not so simple and neither diaspora nor Soviet Ukrainian historiographies were homogeneous, even though the degree of direct political pressure in the Soviet Union was much stronger. Still, the pressure of ‘patriotic duty’ and the logic of the Cold War should not be underestimated either.

Not surprisingly, Ohloblyn’s own publications were criticized for the “patriotic phraseology” and “poetic attachments” which devalued the quality of their analysis. The critic Lev Bilas pointed out that “history should deal with knowledge and not with the arousal of emotions. The patriotic or any other ‘poetic’ history is not true history, because it is not true thought”.<sup>8</sup>

The same point was made – even more strongly – by another émigré historian and Turkologist, Omeljan Pritsak, founder of the ‘Harvard miracle’ – the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute – and its first chair in 1968. For Pritsak, “If history-writing does not want to become an instrument of the totalitarian state, it must stand firmly on the principle of historical truth, whether that historical truth is pleasant or painful. The

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<sup>4</sup> M.N. Pokrovskii, ‘K otchetu o deiatel’nosti Akademii nauk za 1926 g.’, *Zven’ia: Istoricheskiĭ almanakh*, 2 (1992): 580–99, here 591.

<sup>5</sup> Ivan Lysiak-Rudnytsky, ‘Do stanu ukrains’koï nauky v SRSR’, *Suchasnist’* 8, 7 (1964): 80–6, here 80.

<sup>6</sup> Oleksander Ohloblyn, ‘Zavdannia ukrains’koï istoriohrafii na emihratsii’, in O. Ohloblyn, *Studii z istorii Ukraïny. Staty i dzberel’ni materialy*, ed. Liubomyr Vynar (N’iu-Jork, Kyïv, Toronto: UIT, 1995), 287–291, here 291.

<sup>7</sup> Idem, ‘Problema skhemy istorii Ukraïny 19–20 stolittia (do 1917 roku)’, *Ukrainsk’kyi istoryk*, 1–2 (1971): 5–16, here 9.

<sup>8</sup> Lev Bilas, ‘Ideolohiia iak istoriia i iak poeziia’, *Suchasnist’* 5, 7 (1961): 45–62, here 50.

highest criterion for historical truth should remain the scientific conscience of the researcher”.<sup>9</sup>

Maybe during the Cold War and in the diaspora it was easier firmly to claim such a division between truth and falsehood and between a scientific and an unscientific approach. At least, as Pierre Nora argued recently, over the last thirty years we have experienced a profound change which could be called a “*general politicization of history*” and which he understands as “the inevitable process of transforming what they [historians] produce into an ideology, of transforming the world in which historians work and with which they have to deal into an ideological system”.<sup>10</sup>

Throughout the twentieth century a lot of historians and other intellectuals proved to be attracted to master-ideologies involving mass violence, engaging with apologetics on behalf of Stalinism, Fascism and Maoism as well as with often self-deceiving discussions of Israeli-Palestinian or Russian-Ukrainian issues.<sup>11</sup> Concluding his analysis of the struggle of French intellectuals with politics and ideology, Tony Judt suggested that “a *refusal* to occupy the post of the (engaged) intellectual may be the most positive of the steps modern thinkers can take in any serious effort to come to terms with their own responsibility for our common recent past”.<sup>12</sup> This proposal seems still to be relevant nowadays. How are the intellectual choices made by historians today influenced by the long twentieth-century experiences of Eastern Europe? What could ‘official history’ mean for a stateless nation or a self-proclaimed ‘republic’? How did Ukrainian historiography become or how was it forced to

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<sup>9</sup> Omeljan Pritsak, *Chomu katedry ukraїnoznavstva v Harvardi?* (Kembridzh, MA, N’iu-York: Fond katedr ukraїnoznavstva, 1973), 105.

<sup>10</sup> Pierre Nora, ‘Recent History and the New Dangers of Politicization’, *Eurozine*, 24 November 2011, available at <https://www.eurozine.com/recent-history-and-the-new-dangers-of-politicization/> (last visited March 22, 2020).

<sup>11</sup> Czesław Miłosz, *The Captive Mind* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953); Raymond Aron, *The Opium of the Intellectuals* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1957); Stanley Weintraub, *The Last Great Cause: The Intellectuals and the Spanish Civil War* (London: W. H. Allen, 1968); Alistair Hamilton, *The Appeal of Fascism: A Study of Intellectuals and Fascism, 1919–1945* (New York: Macmillan, 1971); Tony Judt, *The Burden of Responsibility: Blum, Camus, Aron, and the French Twentieth Century* (Chicago, London: Chicago University Press, 1998); idem, *Past Imperfect: French Intellectuals, 1944–1956* (New York, London: New York University Press, 2011); Mark Lilla, *The Reckless Mind: Intellectuals in Politics* (New York: New York Review of Books, 2016); Susie Linfield, *The Lions’ Den: Zionism and the Left from Hannah Arendt to Noam Chomsky* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2019), and others.

<sup>12</sup> Judt, *Past Imperfect* (see note 11), 318.

become Soviet? What spaces for individual research initiatives or even for modest disagreement with obligatory planned research existed in the official history institutions of Soviet Ukraine and socialist Poland? How were Russian textbooks on history re-written during the post-Soviet years? What role do literature, film, monuments, holidays or rituals play in the politics of history? How have memories of the Second World War been instrumentalized in the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian conflict and how have images of the ongoing war in the Donbas influenced memory debates in neighbouring post-Soviet states?

The spectrum of questions mentioned above were among the topics under research in two international projects: one at the University of Geneva called *Divided Memories, Shared Memories. Ukraine / Russia / Poland (20<sup>th</sup>–21<sup>st</sup> Centuries): An Entangled History* (supported by the Swiss National Science Foundation) and the other, at the Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences of Lithuania, called *Modernisation of Identity? Challenges of 'Europeanisation', Nationalism and Post-Sovietism for Memory Cultures* (Nr. MOD-17006, supported by the Research Council of Lithuania).

The preliminary findings of both projects were discussed at the conference *Official History in Eastern Europe. Transregional Perspectives* at the German Historical Institute Warsaw on June 13–14, 2018. Our conference aimed at making research perspectives broader (both chronologically and geographically) as well as developing a sense of complexity and promoting differentiated comparative approaches to the topic.

We also tended to reserve room for disagreement. That is why our book consists of very different contributions – different both disciplinarily and stylistically. Some authors distance themselves from their topics and strive to treat them as dispassionately as possible; others speak of 'us' and clearly sympathize with or disapprove of the heroes of their essays. We decided to preserve this variety of approaches and styles, hoping for a careful and critical readership.

Korine Amacher, Andrii Portnov, Viktoriia Serhiienko

# CONSTRUCTING OFFICIAL HISTORIES: INSTITUTIONS AND PERSONALITIES



VIKTORIA SERHIENKO

## ‘OFFICIAL HISTORY’ FOR A STATELESS NATION

### MYKHAÏLO HRUSHEVS’KYĬ’S *ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF UKRAINE*

Mykhaïlo Hrushevs’kyï (1866–1934), historian and politician, came from a Ukrainian family loyal to the Russian Empire. His father was a teacher of Russian and worked in Poland and the Caucasus, where the young Hrushevs’kyï spent his childhood. During his studies at Kyïv University, Mykhaïlo Hrushevs’kyï proved to be the most talented student of Professor Volodymyr Antonovych (1834–1908), the prominent Ukrainian historian of Polish origin. At the age of 28, Hrushevs’kyï received a professorship in world history (in practice, in the history of Ukraine) at L’viv University in the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

During his lifetime Hrushevs’kyï would go on to become the most productive and influential Ukrainian historian. His greatest achievement was the representation in his work of Ukrainian history as separate from and equal to the histories of the other East Slavic nations. Rooted in the populist historiography of the *narodniks*,<sup>1</sup> he accepted its interpretation of Polish, Turkish, and more general ‘oriental’ factors in Ukrainian history.<sup>2</sup> The main issue for him, therefore, was to achieve emancipation from the Russian historical narrative. Hrushevs’kyï, who had been raised in the Russian intellectual tradition, was faced with a problem. He denied the Russian tradition and yet simultaneously depended on it, both in terms of

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<sup>1</sup> Narodnik historiography was an intellectual trend in the history writing of the 1830s–early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries which gave the leading role in Ukrainian historical development to the ‘people’ (*narod*) by which they mainly meant the peasantry.

<sup>2</sup> For more details see Natalia Iakovenko, ‘Koho i yak inshuie Mykhaïlo Hrushevs’kyï v “Istorii Ukraïny-Rusy”’, in *Obraz Inshoho v susidnikh istoriakh: mify, stereotypy, naukovi interpretatsii*, materials of the international academic conference, Kyïv, 15–16 December 2005 (Kyïv, 2008), 89–103.

phraseology and of interpretation. This challenge was largely overcome through his seminal article, ‘The Traditional Scheme of “Russian” History and the Problem of a Rational Organization of the History of the East Slavs’.<sup>3</sup> The central idea of the article evolved and was comprehensively expanded in his monumental *History of Ukraine-Rus*.<sup>4</sup> This, however, was an immense academic work, which Hrushevs’kyi now wanted to popularize. So it was the *Illustrated History of Ukraine* (hereinafter the *IHU*) which facilitated the spread of Hrushevs’kyi’s historical narrative. The *IHU* also contributed significantly to the development of Ukrainian identity among generations of the Ukrainian intelligentsia and of the wider public, becoming something of an ‘official history’ for a stateless nation.

In this article, I would like to explore the factors which helped the *IHU* to achieve literary success. To do this, I will try to show that before competing for readers across the Russian Empire, Hrushevs’kyi sought to become a leader among the Ukrainian intelligentsia, and the methods he used were not always purely academic. Then I will depict the preparation of the *IHU* for publication, revealing some of the reasons for Hrushevs’kyi’s exceptional efficiency.<sup>5</sup> I will also analyse the main themes of Russian–Ukrainian historical debate as they arise in the *IHU*. This debate, which in its political dimension boiled down to whether the Ukrainian nation should be independent or not, took place in various spheres, including in the public arena, where Hrushevs’kyi strove to attain and then maintain the advantage. Finally, I will analyse the reception of the *IHU*, both in academic circles and more broadly.

### Hrushevs’kyi’s Idea and its Competitors

The *IHU* (1911) was preceded by another popular book of Hrushevs’kyi’s written in Russian: *An Outline History of the Ukrainian People* (1904) (hereinafter the *Outline*). This book broke the historiographical silence which had persisted since the appearance of the works of Dmytro

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<sup>3</sup> Michael Hrushevsky, *The Traditional Scheme of ‘Russian’ History and the Problem of a Rational Organization of the History of the East Slavs* (Winnipeg: Ukrainian Free Academy of Sciences, 1965).

<sup>4</sup> Mykhailo Hrushevs’kyi, *Istoriia Ukraïny-Rusy*, 10 vols. (L’viv, Kyïv, 1898–1936).

<sup>5</sup> See idem, *Tvory*, 50 vols. (L’viv: Svit, 2002–20).

Bantysh-Kamens'kyi<sup>6</sup> (1788–1850) and Mykola Markevych<sup>7</sup> (1804–60). From the 1840s until the emergence of the *Outline*, not a single synthesis of Ukrainian history was published in the Russian Empire. Nevertheless, the most important factor for Ukrainian historiography was something else. For the first time in the *Outline*, the Ukrainian past unfolded as a separate history of the Ukrainian nation (*narodnost*).

However, the fame of the book was overshadowed by one particular story, discussed by Andreas Kappeler in his research on Aleksandra Efimenko<sup>8</sup> (Oleksandra Iefymenko (1848–1918)), a specialist in Ukrainian studies of Russian origin who actively opposed the ban on Ukrainian publications in the Russian Empire. As it turns out, the *Outline* appeared first because the editorial board of the *Kievskaiia Starina* (a journal influenced by Volodymyr Antonovych) had deliberately delayed publication of a manuscript by Iefymenko which had won a competition run by the journal for writing a synthesis of Ukrainian history. Although Iefymenko in this generalizing piece of writing portrayed the historical development of Ukraine (Southern Rus') as separate from the Great Russian one, she did not escape accusations from Antonovych that she had deployed a 'Great Russian standpoint'.

This is interesting because in fact Iefymenko shared Antonovych's views on Ukrainian history. She wrote later that the studies of the "History of Rus'" concern only the northeastern part of it and "in other cases amount to a falsification of public consciousness".<sup>9</sup> As Kappeler notes, Iefymenko's attitude to her research might be explained by a shift in the Ukrainian narrative between 1896–1900:

"According to the scheme of the narrative authored by Hrushevs'kyi, the story begins with the prehistory and origin of Rus'. This is why the historians from 'Kievskaiia Starina' might have had doubts about supporting the writing and publication of a history of Ukraine involving a more recent and less

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<sup>6</sup> See Dmitrii Bantysh-Kamenskii, *Istoriia Maloi Rossii: so vremen prisoedineniia onoi Rossiiskomu gosudarstvu pri tsare Aleksee Mikhaïloviche s kratkim obozreniem pervobytnogo sostoiianiia sego kraia*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Tipografiia S. Selivanovskogo, 1822).

<sup>7</sup> See Nikolai Markevich, *Istoriia Malorossii*, 5 vols. (Moscow: Tipografiia Avgusta Semena, 1842–3).

<sup>8</sup> Andreas Kappeler, 'Oleksandra Iefymenko ta Kyïvs'ka istorychna shkola', *Ukraina Moderna* 6, 17 (2010): 45–76. Kappeler developed his argument in Andreas Kappeler, *Russland und die Ukraine: Verflochtene Biographien und Geschichten* (Wien: Böhlau, 2012).

<sup>9</sup> Aleksandra Efimenko, *Istoriia ukrainskogo naroda* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia Aktsionernogo Obshchestva "Brokgauz-Efron", 1906), 1.



teleological narrative, in which Kyïvan Rus' was not interpreted as the predecessor of Ukraine alone, and which was written by an ethnic Russian."<sup>10</sup>

Due to the rejection of Iefymenko's original manuscript, she was only able to publish her book, *The History of the Ukrainian People* (1906), five years after the date originally scheduled. Although Iefymenko's study was relevant, because its publication was delayed by several years she was outstripped by Hrushevs'kyï who by then had completed his *Outline*.

As for the *IHU*, Hrushevs'kyï stated (in the preface to the first edition which appeared in 1911) that he had conceived of this book before the publication of the October Manifesto<sup>11</sup> (17 October 1905), which had made it possible to "carry out my long-standing idea".<sup>12</sup> In his *Autobiography* (1906) he had also mentioned an intention "to begin (his scholarly career – V.S.) ... with a wider and more purely academic history of Ukraine, which could then be transformed into a shorter and more popular version".<sup>13</sup> The *Autobiography*, however, refers in general to the genre of popular history. As for the *IHU*, the earliest documentary confirmation of the idea is from September 1906.<sup>14</sup>

The reader's attention is also attracted by Hrushevs'kyï's note about some "miserable adventures" which had "discouraged me ... from this work (the publication of the *IHU* – V.S.)".<sup>15</sup> This hinted at the important context in which the book appeared. Namely, it concerned how Hrushevs'kyï was nettled by the publication of *The Illustrated History of*

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>11</sup> Hrushevs'kyï refers here to the well-known fact that, until the first Russian revolution, the printing of most books in Ukrainian, including historical works, was prohibited. See Hennadiï Boriak et al., eds., *Ukraïns'ka identychnist' i movne pytannia v Rosiï's'kiiï impriï: sproma derzhavnogo rebuliuvannia (1847–1914)*. *Zbirnyk dokumentiv i materialiv* (Kyïv: Instytut istoriï Ukraïny NAN Ukraïny, 2013); *Zaborona Ukraïns'koho slova v Rosiï. Referat petersburg's'koiï akademii nauk v spravi znesennia zaborony Ukraïns'koho slova* (Scranton, PA: Vydavnytstvo prosvitn'oiï komisii Rus'koho narodnogo coiuzia, 1916); *Ob otmene stesneniï malorusskogo pechatnogo slova* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia Imperatorskoï akademii nauk, 1905).

<sup>12</sup> Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyï, *Iliustrovana istoriia Ukraïny* (Kyïv, L'viv: Drukarnia Stepana Kul'zhenka, 1911), 3.

<sup>13</sup> Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyï, *Avtobiografia*, reprint (Toronto: Acropolis Press, 1965), 9.

<sup>14</sup> Vasyľ UL'ianovs'kyï, 'Mykola Arkas, "Istoriia Ukraïny-Rusi" i Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyï', in *Istoriia, istoriosofiia, dzhereloznavstvo: Istorychnyi zbirnyk. Stati, rozvidky, zamitky, ese*, eds. idem and Lesia Dovha (Kyïv: Intel, 1996), 198.

<sup>15</sup> Hrushevs'kyï, *Iliustrovana istoriia* (see note 12), 3.

*Ukraine-Rus*<sup>16</sup> (1908) by the amateur historian Mykola Arkas (1853–1909).<sup>17</sup>

The full argument against Arkas' book Hrushevs'kyi set out in a review. His central contention was that writing popular books required the services of a historian using academic methods.<sup>18</sup> Hrushevs'kyi maintained that it was inadmissible to simplify a historical narrative at the expense of its quality. In his opinion, it was disrespectful to the reader that such an important book could have been written by someone who, though interested in the Ukrainian idea, was not a professional. His arguments are valid, but Hrushevs'kyi's uncompromising tone is also noteworthy. Researchers have called Hrushevs'kyi's intolerant attitude toward his competitor an "Arkas–Hrushevs'kyi conflict, artificially inflated and exaggerated by Arkas's defenders"<sup>19</sup> and urged us to "consider his (the professor's – V. S.) sensitivity in relation to his own ambition".<sup>20</sup> Indeed, starting from the autumn of 1906, Hrushevs'kyi was considering the idea for the book. Arkas's work, however, appeared first. Moreover, it grew popular and Hrushevs'kyi in his review notes that "no book apart from *Kobzar* is selling as well as this one".<sup>21</sup> But Hrushevs'kyi did not take the popularity of Arkas's book as evidence of its merit. He considered it exceptionally unsuccessful and even "injurious"<sup>22</sup> to "the masses,

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<sup>16</sup> Arkas began to work on the book in 1902, planning it first as a tutorial for his son's homeschooling.

<sup>17</sup> For more details see Ihor Hyrych, 'Shche do problem "Arkas i Hrushevs'kyi"', in *Istoriia, istoriosofiia, dzhereloznavstvo* (see note 14), 221–30; Vitalii Sarbei, 'M. M. Arkas i ioho "Istoriia Ukraïny-Rusi"', *Ukrains'kyi istorychnyi zhurnal* 7 (1990): 100–13; Vasyl' Ul'ianovs'kyi, 'Ukrains'ka sprava Mykoly Arkasa', *Kraianyn* 4 (1993): 8–17; idem, '“Istoriia Ukraïny-Rusi”' (see note 14), 161–220; idem, 'Ukrains'ka ideia Mykoly Arkasa (Poperedni notatky z epistoly)', in *Ukraïna: kul'turna spadshchyna, natio-nal'na svidomist', derzhavnist'. Zbirnyk naukovykh prats'*, eds. Iaroslav Isaievych et al., vol. 2 (L'viv: Instytut ukraïnoznavstva imeni I. Krypiakevycha, 1995), 111–29.

<sup>18</sup> Before that, Oleksandr Barvins'kyi (1847–1926), another extremely popular author among Galician readers, who wrote *The Illustrated History of Rus'* (1890), was criticized for a lack of professionalism.

<sup>19</sup> Ul'ianovs'kyi, '“Istoriia Ukraïny-Rusi”' (see note 14), 172.

<sup>20</sup> Hyrych, '“Arkas i Hrushevs'kyi”' (see note 17), 224.

<sup>21</sup> 'Vidhuk Mykhaila Hrushevs'koho. Do retsenziï d. Lypyns'koho', in *Tvory* (see note 5), vol. 2, *Suspil'no-politychni tvory (1907–1914)* (L'viv: Svit, 2005), 370.

<sup>22</sup> Galician historian and bibliographer Bohdan Barvins'kyi (1880–1958) noted factual errors in Arkas' book. However, he called Hrushevs'kyi's review a manifestation of the professor's implacable attitude towards competition. He considered that Arkas' book was

who want to receive some good food for the mind from enlightened circles”.<sup>23</sup> His assessment overemphasized the significance of the errors of fact in Arkas’s writing, which was a mid-market book summarizing the studies of Ukrainian history available at the time.

Having published his review, Hrushevs’kyi proposed to the historian Viacheslav Lypyns’kyi (1882–1931) that he write on the same topic. The professor then proceeded to change the text without the author’s permission. Namely, he cut some passages in which Lypyns’kyi itemized the advantages of Arkas’s book. In a letter to the historian Vasyl’ Domanyts’kyi,<sup>24</sup> Lypyns’kyi wrote that it had been “an abuse – the distortion of my thought in order to advance his own. ... This is something damaging. It delegitimizes and destroys criticism and prevents exchange of thought”.<sup>25</sup> He further added:

“The revival of the Ukrainian nation cannot be identified with even the cleverest thoughts of Prof. Hrushevs’kyi or of any other individual. By doing that, we turn the ebullient *Ukrainian popular national movement* into the sectional (*hurtkovyi*) movement of an interest group, a party movement with leaders at its head, and that pattern and routine will bring our demise, in my opinion.”<sup>26</sup>

As for Arkas himself – being a provincial official and an amateur collector of Ukrainian folklore – he never claimed that his book was proper scholarly research. It had been written purely for pleasure in his spare time. Despite the unexpected and disapproving reaction from Hrushevs’kyi, Arkas never allowed himself to express any disaffection in response. He

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“harmful” only for Hrushevs’kyi, because it was selling well. See Bohdan Barvins’kyi, ‘Chy spravdi shkidlyva?’, *Ruslan*, 30 August 1908, 3–4.

<sup>23</sup> ‘Vidhuk Mykhaila Hrushevs’koho’ (see note 21), 374.

<sup>24</sup> Domanyts’kyi was the editor of Arkas’ book and wrote to the author: “... everyone says that the professor has been publicly ‘shown his real face’ and did not acquire fame because of this review – on the contrary. I must tell you that in the last year or year-and-a-half some bad change has befallen him: he has become excessively ambitious, selfish, and miserly... The Society (the Shevchenko Scientific Society – V.S.) has to *buy* all his books and publications. What a great head of the Society!” (Inna Starovoitenko, ‘Lystuvannia Domanyts’koho do Mykoly Arkasa (1907–1908)’, *Ukrains’kyi archeohafichnyi shchorichnyk* 10–11, 13–14 (2006): 566.)

<sup>25</sup> ‘Lyst vid 21–28.08.1908 r. vid Viacheslava Lypyns’koho do Vasylia Domanyts’koho’, in *Viacheslav Lypyns’kyi. Lystuvannia (A–Zh)*, vol. 1, ed. Iaroslav Pelens’kyi (Kyiv, Filadelfiia: Skhidnoievropeis’kyi doslidnyts’kyi instytut imeni V. Lypyns’koho, Vydavnytstvo “Smoloskyp”, 2003), 507–8.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 508.

acknowledged the validity of the criticism and began to prepare a revised edition of the book.<sup>27</sup>

It might also be mentioned that a discussion of Arkas's book initiated by Hrushevs'kyi in the *Literary-Scientific Bulletin* he edited, and going beyond the realm of the purely academic, had the effect of dissuading some readers from continuing with their subscription to what was one of the few Ukrainian journals in existence at the time.<sup>28</sup>

### The Art Collector Who Publishes History Books

In his memoirs, Hrushevs'kyi wrote:

"At every moment, at every stage of my life, I need to have a certain goal before me to which I must devote myself completely and without reserve, straining my energies to the utmost, to self-oblivion, and I feel normal only when I can devote myself to the attainment of that goal without obstacle."<sup>29</sup>

When Hrushevs'kyi was not engaged in scholarship, he found a focus in collecting. The collection of Professor Hrushevs'kyi was costly and exceptional (the wealth he inherited from his father made this possible<sup>30</sup>) – Persian and Ukrainian carpets, Bohemian and Venetian glass, Saxon and Ukrainian porcelain, numerous archaeological findings, portraits of hetmans, rare 17–18<sup>th</sup>-century printed books, and contemporary Ukrainian paintings, including works by Mykhailo Boichuk, Fotii Krasys'kyi, Fedir Krychevs'kyi, and Ivan Trush.<sup>31</sup> The *IHU* therefore represented a challenge not only for the careful scholar whose stylistic flaws had been

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<sup>27</sup> The book was published three years after Arkas' death thanks to the efforts of his wife Ol'ha. See Mykola Arkas, *Istoriia Ukraïny-Rusi: z maliunkamy*, 2nd ed. (Kraków: 1912).

<sup>28</sup> Inna Starovoitenko, 'Retsenzii ta vidhuky na "Istoriuu Ukraïny-Rusi", opublikovani u periodychnykh vydanniakh Naddniprians'koï Ukraïny ta Halychyny', in *Istoriia Ukraïny-Rusi' u lystuvanni Mykoly Arkasa z Vasylem Domanyts'kym. 1906–1909 roky*, ed. Inna Starovoitenko (Kyïv: Tempora, 2009), 196.

<sup>29</sup> Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyi, 'Spomyny', *Kyïv* 9 (1988): 120.

<sup>30</sup> Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyi's father, Serhii Hrushevs'kyi, gained his wealth by selling Church-Slavonic textbooks for public schools. In particular, his first textbook of the Church-Slavonic language (Kyïv, 1872) has been reprinted more than 30 times.

<sup>31</sup> For more details see Ihor Hyrych, 'Znyshchena mystets'ka zbirka i arkhiv Mykhaila Hrushevs'koho v ioho kyïvs'kii oseli', *Pamiatky Ukraïny* 1 (1995): 103–4; Nataliia Sheludiakova, *Hrushevs'kyi – kolektsioner u konteksti naukovoï ta mystets'koho zhyttia Ukraïny kintsia 19 – pochatku 20 st. Dysertatsiia kandydata istorichnykh nauk* (PhD diss., Kyïv, 2016).

noted by some critics,<sup>32</sup> but also for the art lover. As Hrushevs'kyi wrote, 403 images<sup>33</sup> of excellent quality were used in the *IHU* (1912):

"I only gave for publication the most 'authentic' illustrations from old portraits, drawings, engravings and houses, not compositions by modern painters. At most I allowed myself to include several drawings taken from old coins and stamps which try to recreate the portrait or likeness of a person."<sup>34</sup>

It was important to Hrushevs'kyi to convey the sense of an epoch and the impression of a historical figure as he or she had been imagined by people in the past, so he selected the illustrations with care. At the same time, he considered it possible to treat fantasy images on a par with portraits from life. And quite in the spirit of Romantic historiography, he would often not mention that some of the images were products of the imagination.

Hrushevs'kyi was inspired, as evidenced by his diary entries in early 1909, by August Sokołowski's *Illustrated History of Poland*.<sup>35</sup> He called it "very weak", but it was precisely this work which prompted Hrushevs'kyi to reflect on his own book. It is notable that the idea of illustrated histories was in vogue at the time. In Poland, the most popular publications were by August Sokołowski<sup>36</sup> and Julian Baczyński,<sup>37</sup> in the Czech lands, by Jan Dolenský, Jaroslav Kosina, and Antonin Rezek,<sup>38</sup> and

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<sup>32</sup> For example, the literary historian and literary critic Serhii Iefremov wrote in his diary about Hrushevs'kyi's six-volume *History of Ukrainian Literature*: "If this man had not been immersed in chatter and had cut his work down to a quarter of the size, it would have been four times more interesting." (Serhii Iefremov, *Shchodennyky: 1923–1929* (Kyiv: ZAT "Hazeta RADA", 1997), 521.) Although Iefremov had different – at first benevolent, and later increasingly strained – personal relations with Hrushevs'kyi, he cannot be blamed for lack of professionalism. For example, Iefremov's remarks were one of the reasons why the *Outline* is one of Hrushevs'kyi's stylistically best-written books.

<sup>33</sup> Most of the plates with the drawings are stored in the Hrushevs'kyi Family Fund No. 1235 at the Central State Historical Archives of Ukraine and in the Fund of Professor Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyi at the L'viv National Scientific Library of Ukraine (LNB). Technical processing of the documents from the Fund of Professor Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyi at the LNB remains incomplete, so the materials contained there are unfortunately not accessible to researchers.

<sup>34</sup> Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyi, *Iliustrovana istoriia Ukraïny*, 2nd ed. (Kyiv, L'viv, 1912), 4.

<sup>35</sup> 'Shchodennyk Mykhaila Hrushevs'koho (1904–1910)', *Kyïvs'ka starovyna* 1 (1995): 10–30.

<sup>36</sup> August Sokołowski, *Dzieje Polski ilustrowane*, 2 vols. (Warszawa, 1899–1900).

<sup>37</sup> Julian Baczyński, *Dzieje Polski ilustrowane*, 2 vols. (Poznań, 1904).

<sup>38</sup> Jan Dolenský, Jaroslav Kosina, and Antonin Rezek, *Obrázkové dějiny národa českého* (Praha, 1893).

in Germany by Wilhelm Zimmermann.<sup>39</sup> It is therefore obvious that Hrushevs'kyi would understand the necessity of a similar book depicting the history of the Ukrainian nation. It was important in addition to publish this work before Russian historians undertook a similar task, which must also have prompted Hrushevs'kyi to hasten the realization of his plan.

However, it took time and considerable effort to collect all the illustrations (from different cities and even from different countries). To give a general impression, I will list only a few of the institutions from whose collections the illustrations were taken: the Shevchenko Scientific Society and Ossolineum, then in L'viv, the Kyiv City Museum (now the Ukrainian National Museum of Art), the Synodal Library in Moscow, and the Imperial Public Library in St. Petersburg (now the National Library of Russia). Illustrations also came from private collections. To find the names of those who did substantial work on this book, I turned to the Hrushevs'kyi Family Fund at the Central State Historical Archives of Ukraine.<sup>40</sup> In particular, there is a detailed business correspondence with the Kyiv printers Stepan Kul'zhenko,<sup>41</sup> describing the preparation of the book for printing. At the same time, the correspondence allows us to understand Hrushevs'kyi's approach to his work. He was a demanding person for the contractors, bargaining for price reductions, giving detailed instructions on the use of a particular font, paper, or method of typing and requiring a report on the receipt of each drawing.<sup>42</sup>

Hrushevs'kyi acted as manager while others were entrusted with the technical work.<sup>43</sup> From the letters of the staff of the *Literary-Scientific*

<sup>39</sup> Wilhelm Zimmermann, *Illustrierte Geschichte des deutschen Volkes*, 3 vols. (Stuttgart, 1873).

<sup>40</sup> Ihor Hyrych, ed., *Epistoliarna spadshchyna Hrushevs'koho: Pokazhchyk do fondu No 1235 y TsDIA Ukrainy u Kyievi* (Kyiv, 1996).

<sup>41</sup> The printing house was engaged in publishing the first (1911) and second (1912) editions of the *Illustrated History of Ukraine*.

<sup>42</sup> Lysty drukarni i fotolitohrafiï "Kul'zhenko", 1907, 1910–1914 years, arkush 481, 482 (zvorot), 496 (zvorot), 500–502 etc, sprava 96, opys 1, fond 1235, Tsentral'nyi derzhavnyi istorychyi arhiv Ukrainy, Kyiv (hereinafter: TsDIAUK).

<sup>43</sup> The Historian Viktor Petrov (1894–1969), characterizing the working style of the poet and literary critic Mykola Zerov (1890–1937), aptly noted his fundamental difference from Hrushevs'kyi: "Zerov never outsourced his work to others: he did everything himself. He even did what he need not have done. This was the exact opposite of Mykh. Hrushevs'kyi, who only left points of organization to himself." Quoted in V. Domontovych, 'Bolotiana lukroza', in *Proza. Rozмовy Ekhartovi z Karлом Gottsi ta inshi opovidannia i narysy*, vol. 3, ed. Yuri Sheveliov (Munich: Suchasnist', 1988), 242.

*Bulletin*, Leopold Budaï and Iuriï Tyshchenko (Siryi)<sup>44</sup> (1880–1953), we learn that both helped with his publishing plans. Budaï talked with the censor, negotiated with the publisher, chose the right quality paper, and dealt with the delivery of the illustrations. Tyshchenko was also involved in these arrangements and showing interest in Hrushevs'kyi's new book. For example, he wrote to the professor:

"I believe that the history should be published as soon as possible and priced the same as Arkas's book because there is a great demand for it, not only from the intelligentsia but from the common folk too. During my time at the bookshop I have become deeply convinced of the need for a book like this."<sup>45</sup>

The correspondence between Hrushevs'kyi and Lypyns'kyi concerned the selection of illustrations for the *IHU*. While he was working in the archives in Kraków and the libraries of Czartoryscy, Hutten-Czapscy and Krasin'scy, Lypyns'kyi had found many interesting illustrations. He published them in the collection *On the History of Ukraine (Z dziejów Ukrainy)* (1912) and sent engraved plates of them to Hrushevs'kyi.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Lysty Leopold Budaia do Mykhaila Hrushevs'koho, 1905–1912 years, 148 arkushiv, 48 lystiv, sprava 364, opys 1, fond 1235, TsDIAUK; Lysty Iuriia Tyshchenka do Mykhaila Hrushevs'koho, 1907–1910, 558 arkushiv, 198 lystiv, sprava 582, opys 1, fond 1235, TsDIAUK; Lysty Iuriia Tyshchenka do Mykhaila Hrushevs'koho, 1911–1913 years, 370 arkushiv, 128 lystiv, sprava 583, opys 1, fond 1235, TsDIAUK; Lysty Iuriia Tyshchenka do Mykhaila Hrushevs'koho, 1907–1909 years, 20 lystiv, sprava 874, opys 1, fond 1235, TsDIAUK. Thanks to Ihor Hyrych who drew my attention to this correspondence.

<sup>45</sup> Lysty Iuriia Tyshchenka do Mykhaila Hrushevs'koho, 1907–1909, arkush 472, sprava 874, opys 1, fond 1235, TsDIAUK.

<sup>46</sup> Thus, two portraits of Bohdan Khmel'nyts'kyi appeared in the book, as well as portraits of Iuriï Khmel'nyts'kyi, Pavlo Teteria, Ivan Mazepa, Maksym Kryvonis, Petro Doroshenko, and Danylo Apostol. In turn, Lypyns'kyi received from Hrushevs'kyi consent to the use of reproductions from the *Illustrated History of Ukraine and the Cultural and National Movement in Ukraine in the 16<sup>th</sup>–First Half of the 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries*. See Lysty Viacheslava Lypyns'koho do Mykhaila Hrushevs'koho, 1908–1913, 164 arkushi, 55 lystiv, sprava 604, opys 1, fond 1235, TsDIAUK; Iaroslav Pelens'kyi et al., eds., *Lystuvannia Viacheslava Lypyns'koho*, vol. 1 (Kyiv: Smoloskyp, 2003). For more details about Hrushevs'kyi's relationship with Lypyns'kyi see: Ihor Hyrych, 'Derzhavnyts'kyi napriam i narodnyts'ka shkola v ukrains'kii istoriohrafii (na tli stosunkiv Mykhaila Hrushevs'koho i Viacheslava Lypyns'koho)', in *Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyi i ukrains'ka istorychna nauka: Materialy naukovykh konferentsiï, prysviachenykh Mykhailo Hrushevs'komu*, materials of the international conference dedicated to Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyi (L'viv, 1999), 47–64; Frank Sysyn, 'Hrushevsky Confronts Lypynsky: The Historian's Final Assessment of Hetman Bohdan Khmelnytsky and the Khmelnytsky Era', in *History of Ukraine-Rus'*, by Mykhailo Hrushevsky, vol. 9, bk. 2, pt. 2, *The Cossack Age, 1654–1657* (Edmonton, Toronto: CIUS, 2010), LX–LXXVIII.



The founder of the Ukrainian Art Nouveau movement, the painter and architect Vasyly Krychevskyi (1873–1952), was involved with the artistic design of the *IHU*, creating the title page (fig. 1) and vignettes for the book at Hrushevs'kyi's behest.<sup>47</sup> Krychevskyi also made sketches of antiquities for the *IHU*, including some from the professor's collection at his house in Kyiv, where Krychevskyi's studio was also located. In 1918 the revolution would intervene, and his studio, together with Hrushevskyi's carefully assembled collection, would be burned down during street fighting as the Bolsheviks approached.

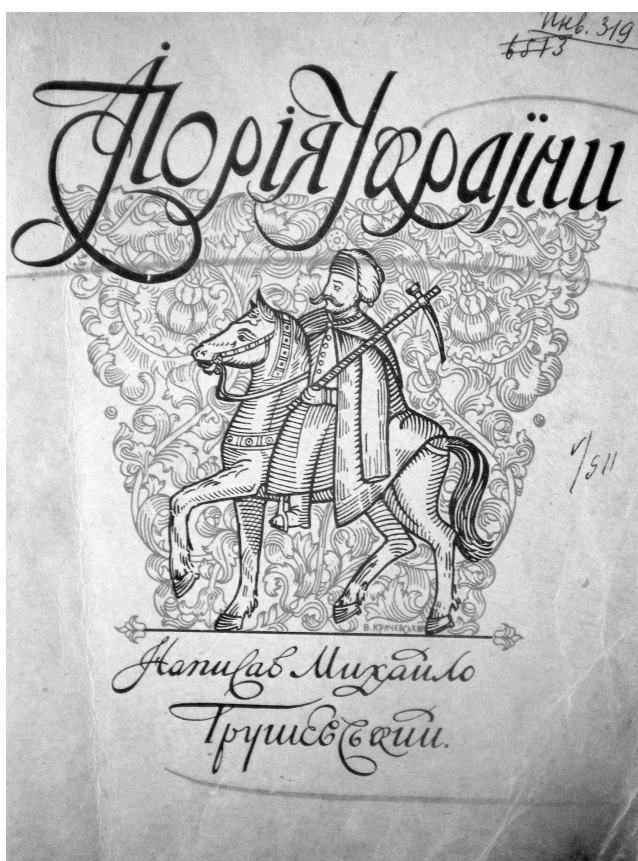


Fig. 1: The Title Page of the *IHU* Made by Vasyly Krychevskyi.

<sup>47</sup> Lysty Vasylia Krychevskyi do Hrushevs'koho, 1908, 1912, 9 arkushiv, 5 lystiv, sprava 572, opys 1, fond 1235, TsDIAUK.



## The *IHU* and the Russian–Ukrainian Historical Debate

In this part of the article, I will briefly analyse the topics in the *IHU* most significant for Russian–Ukrainian historical debate. For Hrushevs'kyi and his contemporaries, these were the following questions: the legacy of Kyïvan Rus' and the figure of prince Volodymyr (960/963–1015); hetman Bohdan Khmel'nyts'kyi (1596–1657) and the uprising under his leadership; and the figure of hetman Ivan Mazepa (1639–1709). I will also try to show how the context of Russian–Ukrainian debate influenced which historiographical tradition, whether positivist or neo-romantic, Hrushevs'kyi referred to in describing certain historical events and figures.<sup>48</sup>

The scheme of Ukrainian history used in the *IHU* corresponds to the academic *History of Ukraine-Rus'* and the popular *Outline*, some comparisons with which will follow. The structure of the *IHU* consisted of six chapters: “Before the Establishment of the Kyïvan State”, “The Life of the State”, “The Polish-Lithuanian Era”, “The Cossack Era”, “The Decline of the Cossacks and Ukrainian Life” and “The Ukrainian Revival”. As we can see from the chapter headings, Hrushevs'kyi united into one narrative of the princely era (*kniazha doba*), the period of the existence of Kyïvan Rus' and the period of the Principality of Galicia-Volhynia. He also emphasized the common history of the Ukrainian lands, which had first been part of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Polish Crown, and later – of the Habsburg and Romanov empires.

### Kyïvan Rus' and Prince Volodymyr

According to the late-imperial narrative, the Russian Empire derived its origin from Kyïvan Rus' via the principality of Vladimir-Suzdal' and the tsardom of Muscovy.<sup>49</sup> At the same time, Ukrainian historians were

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<sup>48</sup> The historian Natalia Iakovenko explained Hrushevs'kyi's usage of positivist and neo-romantic discourses, referring to the psychological concepts of the conscious and the subconscious. Obviously, her article should be considered in the context of the interest on the part of Ukrainian researchers in the 1990s in the psychoanalytic approach, caused, in particular, by texts by Solomiia Pavlychko and later by Oksana Zabuzhko. See Natalia Iakovenko, ‘Osoba iak diiach istorichnoho protsesu v istoriohrafii Mykhaila Hrushevs'koho’, in *Hrushevs'kyi i ukrains'ka istorichna nauka* (see note 46), 86–97.

<sup>49</sup> This narrative was developed by all Russian historians who were the contemporaries of Hrushevs'kyi. For example, see Nikolai Karamzin, *Istoriia gosudarstva Rossiiskogo*, 12 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1816–29); Vasilii Kliuchevskii, *Kurs russkoï istorii* (St. Petersburg,

working on their counter-narrative,<sup>50</sup> given in complete form by Hrushevs’kyi in the *History of Ukraine-Rus’*. In the popular *Outline* he summarized the results of his great research only briefly: “the life of the state, princely tradition and the way of life of the *druzhyna* (a princely army – V.S.) were retained to a greater extent in the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century in western Ukraine, in the state of Galicia-Volhynia”.<sup>51</sup>

Accordingly, the legacy of Kyïvan Rus’ should have belonged not to Russian but to Ukrainian history. This idea reached the mass reader almost simultaneously with the publication of his programmatic article ‘The Traditional Scheme of “Russian” History...’, which from the beginning of Hrushevs’kyi’s research career brought him fame as ‘the Ukrainian separatist’.

However, Hrushevs’kyi created his narrative not only by (de)constructing historical myths but also, where possible, by using some of them. Such was the fate of the imperial myth of Saint Vladimir. A long historiographical tradition, beginning with the writings of the church authors of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, set Prince Vladimir apart from all the other princes of the Kyïvan Rus’ era, emphasizing his exceptional role as the baptizer of Kyïvan Rus’. Hrushevs’kyi followed this tradition.

“Volodymyr’s rule became an extraordinarily important time in the life of our people, an *epoch*, so to speak, especially since the work he started was carried on and reinforced by his son Iaroslav, who followed faithfully in the footsteps of his father, continuing his work.”<sup>52</sup>

Prince Iaroslav Volodymyrovych, however, who in the 1860s received the epithet ‘Wise’, was lost in the shadow of his father, achieving for Hru-

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1904–22); Sergeï Solov’ëv, *Istoriia Rossii s drevneishikh vremen*, 6 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1851–79). However, the innovation of Mikhail Pogodin was to completely deprive the Ukrainians of the right to inherit the legacy of Kyïvan Rus’. See Mikhail Pogodin, ‘Zapiska o drevnem iazyke russkom M. P. Pogodina (Pis’mo k I. I. Sreznevskomu)’, *Izvestiia Otdeleniia russkogo iazyka i slovestnosti* 5, 2 (1856): 70–92.

<sup>50</sup> See the answer to Pogodin’s writings in Mikhail Maksimovich, ‘O mnimom zapustenii Ukrainy v nashestvie Batyevo i naselenii ee novoprishlym narodom (Pis’mo k M. P. Pogodinu)’, in *M. Maksimovich: Sobranie sochineniï*, vol. 1 (Kyïv, 1876), 131–45; Vladimir Antovonich, ‘Kiev, ego sud’ba i znachenie s 14 – po 16 stoletie (1362–1569)’, *Kievskaiia starina* 1 (1882): 1–48. On Pogodin–Maksymovych discussion see Aleksei Tolochko, ‘Spor o nasledii Kievskoi Rusi: Maksimovich versus Pogodin’, in *Kievskaiia Rus’ i Malorossiiia v 18 veke* (Kyïv: Laurus, 2012), 205–36.

<sup>51</sup> Mikhail Grushevskii, *Ocherk istorii ukrainskogo naroda* (St. Peterburg, 1904), 78.

<sup>52</sup> Hrushevs’kyi, *Iliustrovana istoriia* (see note 34), 81.

shevs'kyi only a “weakened reiteration of his father’s reign”.<sup>53</sup> After the reattribution of the legacy of Kyivan Rus’ in favour of Ukraine, Saint Vladimir became Volodymyr the Great. He remained on this pedestal largely as a result of the flexibility of his mythos. The attributes of Prince Vladimir as described in the Kyiv Cycle of *byliny* (epic poems) and in church circles, such as humility, gentleness and care for the poor, transferred easily into his new image in the *IHU* and the *Outline*. Volodymyr, as a living embodiment of development (the favourite word of the positivists, among whose number Hrushevs'kyi counted himself), contrasts with his predecessors, who were called *kniiaz'ia-naezdniki*<sup>54</sup> – conqueror princes, the destroyers of this peaceful, gradual development.

Why does Hrushevs'kyi choose these features from the much more complex image of Volodymyr depicted in medieval sources? According to positivist and populist (*narodnik*) notions about the good of the “people”,<sup>55</sup> which Hrushevs'kyi shared, the ruler of a state should “seek to make relations between the authorities and citizens gentler, take trouble over rapprochement with the citizenry and over creating better rules”.<sup>56</sup> Since such a historical character already existed, it was enough to make him ‘ours’ in order to fill the vacant position of national hero.

### Hetman Bohdan Khmel'nyts'kyi and his Uprising

The Cossack myth is the key to the Ukrainian historical narrative.<sup>57</sup> In early modern times, the Cossacks had been hired warriors in service of the Rzeczpospolita. Their main duty was to protect the steppe border with the Ottoman Empire. However, they also claimed a more important role. The uprising led by the Cossack Hetman<sup>58</sup> Bohdan Khmel'nyts'kyi began with demands from the Cossacks for privileges exclusive to the nobility and it evolved into war with the Rzeczpospolita, which then lost control of the situation. Because of this war, the Hetmanate – the early

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<sup>53</sup> Grushevskii, *Ocherk* (see note 51), 68.

<sup>54</sup> Mikhail Grushevskii, *Ocherk istorii ukrainskogo naroda*, 2nd ed. (St. Petersburg, 1906), 78.

<sup>55</sup> By “people” Hrushevs'kyi understood mainly the peasantry, compare also note 1.

<sup>56</sup> Hrushevs'kyi, *Iliustrovana istoriia* (see note 34), 81.

<sup>57</sup> For example, see Serhii Plokhy, *The Cossack Myth: History and Nationhood in the Age of Empires* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); idem, *The Cossacks and the Religion in Early Modern Ukraine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

<sup>58</sup> The Hetman was the elected head of the Cossacks.

modern Ukrainian polity – was created. Soon afterwards, the Hetmanate fell under the overall rule of the tsar, while retaining some distinctive political traditions. Imperial historiography at the time of Hrushevs'kyi described “the desire of the Russian people to break away from the Polish-Lithuanian Union and unite with (*prisoedynitsia*) single-faith East Russia”.<sup>59</sup> The uprising was therefore deemed a “self-evident” consequence of this desire. Hrushevs'kyi, however, considered Khmel'nyts'kyi's goals contextually – from the defence of the interests of the Cossacks as a distinct social stratum to the war for Ukrainian independence.<sup>60</sup>

Hrushevs'kyi was also interested in the reasons for the failure of the uprising. According to the *IHU*, just as in the *Outline*, Khmel'nyts'kyi's greatest fault (and the main reason for the decline of the whole movement) had been that he did not seek or build support among the peasantry. In a positivist spirit, Hrushevs'kyi explains this fact with reference to the hetman's origins as part of the privileged Cossack-noble estate, beyond the interests of which, as a ‘product’ of this society, Khmel'nyts'kyi could not reach. It was in the interests of this class to create a social structure close to that of the Rzeczpospolita defence – the only one they knew. Hrushevs'kyi wrote in the *IHU* (1912):

“The people launched the Uprising to free themselves from the lords' yoke; ... Meanwhile, the Cossack officer stratum (*stars'hyna*), now holding power in their own hands – and supplanting the nobility – wanted to follow in its footsteps: to own the lands, to rent the villages, to subjugate the peasants. ... But the Ukrainian people had already sensed that the new nobility was tread-

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<sup>59</sup> Sergei Solov'ev, *Sochineniia*, vol. 10, bk. 5, *Istoriia Rossii s drevnei shikh vremen* (Moscow: Golos, 1995), available at [http://militera.lib.ru/common/solovyev1/10\\_01.html](http://militera.lib.ru/common/solovyev1/10_01.html) (last visited January 15, 2020).

<sup>60</sup> Hrushevs'kyi wrote that Khmel'nyts'kyi was fighting for the interests of the Cossacks until his famous entry into Kyiv in January 1649, after which he began to rethink the goals of the movement he led. The incompleteness of the plan of further action and Khmelnyts'kyi's constant hesitation between the Cossacks' demands and the defence of the ‘people's interests’ are emphasized in the *IHU* and the *Outline*. The biggest aim of the Hetman the *Outline* describes as “the desire to go beyond the framework of the Polish régime and Cossack ordinances and to look for new living conditions for the Ukrainian people” (Grushevskii, *Ocherk* (see note 51), 234). How exactly Khmelnyts'kyi saw these new conditions (if he had such a vision) Hrushevs'kyi does not specify. Whereas the *IHU* states that the goal was the independence of the Ukrainian people within its ethnographic boundaries, Hrushevs'kyi wrote of Khmelnyts'kyi: “Perhaps he did not envisage these new plans very clearly. However, the main point was, as I said above, a consciousness of the need to fight for the whole Ukrainian people, for all of Ukraine, for its liberation, independence and self-determination” (Hrushevs'kyi, *Iliustrovana istoriia* (see note 34), 303).

ing this old path and was hostile to them because they suspected these selfish intentions.”<sup>61</sup>

An emphasis on the abnormality of social conflict between the peasantry and the Cossack officer stratum is a necessary element of the narrative in Hrushevs'kyi's popular writings. In fact, in an early modern society divided into estates, national unity in that particular sense was fundamentally impossible. Nevertheless, were it not for the social conflict he described, how could Hrushevs'kyi explain the victory of the rule of Moscow over the Hetmanate, unless the explanation lay in the relative weakness of the movement itself? We should also keep in mind that Hrushevs'kyi described himself as a positivist (though far from consistently). For him, the arrow of progress and all best hopes lay in the future. Conflicts between masses and elites in the past were therefore largely an inversion of that national unity, which must arise in the future.<sup>62</sup>

It was also possible to explain the failure of the Khmel'nyts'kyi Uprising by setting aside a positivist view of the role of the individual in history and turning to a neo-romantic vision of it: namely one where accidental, rather than predictable, almost natural forces of history explain the defeat of an individual and his work. And Hrushevs'kyi used this explanation. In his opinion, both external aggression and internal social conflicts might not have become insurmountable obstacles to the establishment of the Hetmanate, had it not been for Khmel'nyts'kyi's early death. He portrayed the Hetman as a kind of Moses, who died untimely without accomplishing his forty years of wandering. In an article from 1898, he wrote: “the Khmel'nyts'kyi Uprising began with the break with Poland and should have ended with a break with Moscow; but at that moment Khmel'nyts'kyi died, leaving everything in uncertainty”.<sup>63</sup> On the other hand, following the expectations of the genre, Hrushevs'kyi stated with pathos in the popular *IHU*: “At the most decisive moment, when its

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<sup>61</sup> Hrushevs'kyi, *Iliustrovana istoriia* (see note 34), 325.

<sup>62</sup> Hrushevs'kyi wrote: “Using the old historiosophic terminology, these two epochs of Ukrainian political life – the old, the princely and the new, the people's (the Cossacks) – could be called the thesis and antithesis that reach a synthesis in the century of the Ukrainian Renaissance (in the 19th century – V.S.). The struggles of the people are renewed and clarified in light of the progressive European ideas which are being adopted by our new intelligentsia ... a cultural struggle has begun to achieve the ideals which bind together the masses and this new intelligentsia”. Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyi, *Istoriia Ukrainy-Rusy*, 1 vol. (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1991), 20.

<sup>63</sup> Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyi, ‘Khmel'nyts'kyi i Khmel'nyshchyna’, *Zapysky Naukovoho tovarystva imeni Tarasa Shevchenka XXIII–XXIV* (1898): 27.

entire fate lay in the balance, Ukraine lost its long-time leader – the only man capable of leading it ... It was one of the most tragic moments in the history of Ukraine”.<sup>64</sup>

In spite of these positivist and neo-romantic variations, I share Omeljan Pritsak's opinion that the only radical change in Hrushevs'kyi's previous assessments of the Hetman as an indispensable leader appeared “under the impression of the role of Khmel'nyts'kyi he developed as a result of his own experiences during 1917–19”.<sup>65</sup>

### The Figure of Hetman Ivan Mazepa

The idea of Hetman Bohdan Khmel'nyts'kyi (mentioned above) and Hetman Ivan Mazepa as polar opposites was prevalent in the historical narrative and public opinion of the late Russian Empire. If the first had the reputation of the ‘loyal man’, the second was the ‘traitor’ to the tsar. Khmel'nyts'kyi gained this reputation by joining the Hetmanate to Russia at the Council of Pereiaslav (1654). The image of Mazepa arose as a result of his military alliance with Charles XII of Sweden against Tsar Peter I during the Northern War of 1700–21. In Ukrainian historiography, however, Mazepa's decision was considered a last powerful attempt at liberation from Russian domination. Thereafter Ukrainians suspected of disloyalty were called *mazepintsy* (English: mazepists; the word had strong pejorative connotations). In this way, the past was politicized for contemporary use.

There is however another point of interest. To bring closer his portrayal of both hetmans, Hrushevs'kyi underscored Mazepa's aspirations for autonomy and his personal qualities. He emphasized how Mazepa tried to strengthen the authority of the hetman and the influence of the Cossack officer stratum; at the same time, he was in fact an executor of tsarist policy. At first glance, the Ukrainian historical narrative could not benefit from this:

“The times of Samoïlovych and Mazepa were important and constituted almost forty years of that significant period when the fate of the free society

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<sup>64</sup> Hrushevs'kyi, *Illiustrovana istoriia* (see note 34), 320.

<sup>65</sup> This refers to the fact that during 1917–18 Hrushevs'kyi was in charge of the revolutionary parliament (*Tsentral'na Rada*) of the Ukrainian People's Republic. See also this article about romanticism, positivism, and the sociological school in the intellectual biography of Hrushevs'kyi: Omeljan Pritsak, ‘Istoriosofiia Mykhaila Hrushevs'koho’, in *Istoriia Ukraïny-Rusy* (see note 62), XL–LXXIII.

established as a result of the great Uprising of 1648–9 was decided. On the ruins of the unfinished construction of this free society was built a new enslavement of the Ukrainian people, which then absorbed all the remains and beginnings of that free society.”<sup>66</sup>

In Hrushevs’kyi’s narrative, siding with Charles XII was not the decision of Mazepa but the result of pressure from his advisers from among the Cossack elite (here Hrushevs’kyi is a positivist for whom the individual is only a ‘product’). The Cossack elite wanted to unite with the Swedes and intended thereby to continue the political tradition established by Khmel’nyts’kyi. Hrushevs’kyi, however, interpreted Mazepa’s stance as indecisive and weak. He emphasized the Hetman’s old age, as a result of which he was not prepared for radical change. Hrushevs’kyi had written in the *Outline* about the Hetman’s reflections on the threat of Swedish troops invading Ukraine: “The situation became critical. But the old Hetman, hesitant and incapable of courageous risk, dared not take a decisive step”.<sup>67</sup> Hrushevs’kyi went on to add condescendingly in the *IHU*: “it is also true that the risk was great and the danger terrible”.<sup>68</sup>

However, the matter did not lie in Mazepa’s alleged indecision. As Tatiana Tairova-Iakovleva proves, the Hetman was a cautious and experienced politician.<sup>69</sup> So why did Hrushevs’kyi portray Mazepa like this? Of course, it was not a deliberate distortion of the past by the researcher, who believed in his own ‘objectivity’. It is important to remember the context in which Hrushevs’kyi worked. He sought to legitimize Mazepa’s decision in the eyes of a hostile public whose opinion it would have been foolish to ignore. The historian intended to show how easily any loyal citizen could be made a ‘traitor’ by the tsarist authorities.<sup>70</sup> Interestingly, when Hrushevs’kyi experienced the rare opportunity of leading a state in circumstances requiring swift reactions, he stopped repeating this thesis about Mazepa’s “indecisiveness”.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Hrushevs’kyi, *Iliustrovana istoriia* (see note 34), 363.

<sup>67</sup> Grushevskii, *Ocherk*, 2nd ed. (see note 54), 338.

<sup>68</sup> Hrushevs’kyi, *Iliustrovana istoriia* (see note 34), 378.

<sup>69</sup> See Tatiana Tairova-Iakovleva, *Mazepa* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 2007).

<sup>70</sup> Compare Mikhail Grushevskii, ‘Novoe znamia natsionalistov’, *Ukrainskaia zhizn’* 2 (1912): 16–21; Mykhailo Hrushevs’kyi, ‘“Mazepynstvo” i “Bohdanivstvo”’, *Literaturno-naukovyi vistnyk* 15, 1/3 (1912): 94–102.

<sup>71</sup> This apt remark was made by Tairova-Iakovleva (see note 69).

## Hrushevs'kyi Among Friendly Critics and Grateful Readers

Omeljan Pritsak once remarked that Hrushevs'kyi had been unlucky not to have faced any truly critical response in his lifetime.<sup>72</sup> Recognition from the Ukrainian intelligentsia came early to Hrushevs'kyi,<sup>73</sup> and like his other major writings, the *IHU* was received warmly. One reviewer wrote:

"Prof. Hrushevs'kyi's book reminds us of an epic because of its unusually lively and figurative language ... [The book] might be read with interest and pleasure both by someone intelligent, cultivated, and knowledgeable about history, and by the common reader, a man of the people becoming acquainted with the history of his fatherland for the first time."<sup>74</sup>

Another reviewer was highly approving that Hrushevs'kyi had depicted the continuity of Ukrainian history from the times of Kyïvan Rus' to the 20<sup>th</sup> century: "The culture created by the upper classes of the Ukrainian people managed to root itself in the masses ... [and] came together with the cultural creativity of the masses in one organic entity – the national culture of the Ukrainian people".<sup>75</sup>

Almost the only critical remark, or rather wish, referred to the limited attention paid to economic history.<sup>76</sup> However, another reviewer explained, "the elaboration of Ukrainian history is still at a stage where

<sup>72</sup> Pritsak, 'Istoriiosofiia' (see note 65), XLV. Almost the first critical text on Hrushevs'kyi's research was the article written by Pritsak himself. It came out 32 years after Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyi's death. First published: Omeljan Pritsak, 'U stolittia narodyn Hrushevs'koho', *Lysty do pryiateliv* 157–9, 5–7 (1966): 1–18.

<sup>73</sup> In 1910, on the celebration of the 25th anniversary of Hrushevs'kyi's research activity, superlatives were brought out for the occasion. He was called a "giant", likened to Leo Tolstoy, and exalted over "all other comrades of MS who are some feeble and fragile creatures; he alone knows where he is going, what he is doing and what others should do". The *History of Ukraine-Rus'* was called the "Gospel of the Ukrainian movement". In general, his activities were assessed as an "epoch-making". Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyi, *Tvory v 50 tomakh*, vol. 47, bk. 1, *Iuvilei na hrushevs'kiiiana* (L'viv: Svit, 2016), 42, 45, 59, 63.

<sup>74</sup> Dmytro Doroshenko, 'Retsenzii. Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyi. Iliustrovana istoriia Ukraïny. Kyïv-L'viv, 1911', in *Retsenzii na pratsi Hrushevs'koho (1890–1914). Seriia Dopolizhnyi materialy: Dovidnyky, pokazhchyky, arkhivy*, vol. 46, bk. 1 (L'viv: Svit, 2015), 413.

<sup>75</sup> Mykola Zalizniak, 'Retsenzii. Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyi. Iliustrovana istoriia Ukraïny. Kyïv-L'viv, 1911', in *ibid.*, 286.

<sup>76</sup> Sofiia Rusova, 'Retsenzii. Prof. M. Grushevskii. Illiustrirovannaia istoriia Ukraïny (Avtorizovannyi perevod so vtorogo ukrainskogo izdaniia). St. Petersburg, 1913', in *ibid.*, 447.



generalizations are extremely difficult and sometimes impossible due to a lack of materials and preparatory studies”.<sup>77</sup>

Already after 1917 the *IHU* was criticized for a narrow ‘party-political’ logic (*partiïnist*)<sup>78</sup> in its approach to the revolution in Ukraine. It was meant by this that Hrushevs’kyi openly endorsed the Ukrainian People’s Republic (*Ukrain’s’ka Narodna Respublika*, the UNR) in his book and condemned the newly-proclaimed Hetman Pavlo Skoropads’kyi (1873–1945) whose rule succeeded the UNR. In agreeing with such an assessment, one should not forget that the criticism was also politically motivated<sup>79</sup> and fitted into the broader context of the interwar discussion among Ukrainians in emigration about the reasons for the defeat of Ukrainian independence.

As for the reading public, at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the Ukrainian movement gained more and more supporters. So the *IHU* fell on fertile ground and aroused great interest (as evidenced by numerous reissues). Its popularity was aided by a coherent narrative, the quality of the illustrations and a general recognition of Hrushevs’kyi as the leader of the Ukrainian movement. All this resulted in the quick purchase of the six thousand copies of the first edition.<sup>80</sup> In his monograph *Unmaking Imperial Russia: Mykhailo Hrushevs’kyi and the Writing of Ukrainian History* – which is the most comprehensive intellectual biography of the professor to date – Serhii Plokhyy notes how many people commented enthusiastically on the book, talked about it to each other and wanted to

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<sup>77</sup> Mykola Vasylenko, ‘Retsenziia. Prof. Mykh. Hrushevs’kyi. Illiustrirovannaia istoriia Ukrainy (Avtorizovannyi perevod so vtorogo ukainskogo izd.). St. Peterburg, 1913’, in *ibid.*, 489.

<sup>78</sup> Hrushevs’kyi was one of the leaders of the Ukrainian Party of Socialist Revolutionaries.

<sup>79</sup> Dmytro Doroshenko, ‘Retsenziia. Mykhailo Hrushevs’kyi. Iliustrovana istoriia Ukraïny. Kyïv–Viden’, 1921’, in *Mykhailo Hrushevs’kyi. Retsenzii na pratsi Hrushevs’koho (1890–1914)*, vol. 46, bk. 2 (L’viv: Svit, 2015), 69; Mykola Rozhkov, ‘Retsenziia. Prof. Mikh. Grushevskii. Illiustrirovannaia istoriia Ukrainy (Avtorizovannyi perevod so vtorogo ukrainskogo izdaniia). St. Petersburg, 1913’, in *Retsenzii* (as in note 74), 455–6. These critics represented the first reviewer, Dmytro Doroshenko, as a member of the Ukrainian Party of Socialist Federalists and a liberal democrat, and the second, Nikolaï Rozhkov, as a member of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP); he later became a Menshevik.

<sup>80</sup> The book was distributed through the bookstores of the *Literary-Scientific Bulletin*, *Kievskaiia Starina*, and the Shevchenko Scientific Society. See Lysty drukarni i fotolitohtafii “Kul’zhenko”, 1907, 1910–1914 years, arkush 510 (zvorot), 513, sprava 96, opys 1, fond 1235, TsDIAUK.

move on to reading the *History of Ukraine-Rus'*. For instance, a teacher from Tarashcha, O. Hrun'ko, confessed to Hrushevs'kyi: "This year I managed with great difficulty to obtain a copy of your *Illustrated History of Ukraine*, which I read with ardour, heatedly, without even stopping to take a breath. There I learned certain things about Ukraine that conventional Russian textbooks did not offer".<sup>81</sup>

Despite the reasonable price not everyone was able to buy the book. Parts of the provincial intelligentsia could not easily afford even this level of expense (the first edition cost only 2 rubles). Some people asked for a free copy. For example, a political exile from Ust'-Sisol'sk, Hryhorii Porevych, wrote: "Your work is so popular and of such substance that it is my heart's desire to obtain it".<sup>82</sup>

The second edition of the *IHU*, like the first, appeared in the edition of the aforementioned Kul'zhenko printing house in Kyiv in 1912. This time, Hrushevs'kyi had expanded the last chapter entitled "Ukrainian Revival", covering the development of the Ukrainian national movement in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. He added and replaced some illustrations. Eventually, this chapter became as large as the others and much more detailed than the writing on earlier, much longer periods. As a 'historian-awakener', Hrushevs'kyi made this emphasis so that there could be no doubt about the exceptional role of the contemporary period in the 'revival' of the Ukrainian "nation" (a rare word for Hrushevs'kyi, who preferred the word 'people').

The Russian language translation of the *IHU*, which was printed in 1913 by the St. Petersburg publishing house Enlightenment, also became popular. This book was based on the second edition. Its reviewer wrote: "The book is translated into good Russian; is very interesting and is easy to read. It is printed beautifully: great paper, readable, clear font, perfectly made illustrations".<sup>83</sup>

However, all efforts to sell the *IHU* beyond the Russian Empire and Habsburg Galicia were unsuccessful. There was a lack of knowledge about the Ukrainian issue in the West. For example, the professor's correspondence with Vasyli Stepanenko, a Ukrainian folklorist who ran the Ukrainian Bookstore in Kyiv, reveals the attempt to publish an English-lan-

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<sup>81</sup> Quoted in Serhii Plokhyy, *Unmaking Imperial Russia: Mykhailo Hrushevsky and the Writing of Ukrainian History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 209.

<sup>82</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> Mykola Vasylenko, 'Retsenziia. Iliustrovana istoriia Ukraïny. Rosiis'koïu movoiu (Bibliohrafichna zamitka)', in *Retsenzii* (as in note 74), 410.

guage translation of the *IHU*.<sup>84</sup> Stepanenko negotiated with one of London's largest publishing houses, founded in 1882 by Thomas Unwin. On reading an overview of the Ukrainian movement, the publisher was initially interested in the idea of the book. However, as Stepanenko added: "Due to the complete unfamiliarity of English society with our affairs, he doubts that the book could be profitable in English. The publisher used as a comparison his publication of a book on the Polish question, which for a long time has sold very poorly".<sup>85</sup>

Unwin wanted to insure himself and share the financial risk with his client; Hrushevs'kyi, however, refused. Later, Stepanenko sought other opportunities to publish the professor's book but he was unsuccessful. The main reason for the failure, as Stepanenko explained, was that in the UK "we have to contend with an absolute ignorance about us and this really complicates things".<sup>86</sup> It would not be a mistake to extend this statement to the entire European book market at the time.

The following editions – the third (1913), the fourth (1917) and the fifth (1918) – were published by the Kyiv printing house of Petro Bars'kyi. In the fifth edition, the story ended with the revolt against the Rada led by Hetman Pavlo Skoropads'kyi. The last edition in Hrushevs'kyi's lifetime was printed in 1921 in Vienna,<sup>87</sup> where he was in exile. It was difficult to do the work abroad, however, because of the absence of the original plates and engravings. The illustrations were made from a previous edition, which was also not ideal, as a result of revolutionary unrest. The review of the Vienna edition noted: "As for the illustrations, because of the poor-quality paper, they are not worth a tenth of the earlier ones, and some look like spots or caricatures. It is a great pity because the illustrations were the real pride of previous editions".<sup>88</sup>

There were no further editions of the *IHU* published during his lifetime. After political persecutions and the death of Hrushevs'kyi in unexplained circumstances in 1934, the book was blamed for 'bourgeois nationalism' and withdrawn from public circulation in the Soviet Union.

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<sup>84</sup> Lysty Vasylia Stepanenka do Mykhaila Hrushevs'koho, 1901–1913, 56 arkush, 29 lystiv, sprava 771, opys 1, fond 1235, TsDIAUK.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 88–9.

<sup>87</sup> Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyi, *Iliustrovana istoriia Ukrainy* (Kyiv, Viden': Dniprovskyi Soiuz spozhyvchykh soiuzyv Ukrainy "Dniprosoiuz", 1921).

<sup>88</sup> Doroshenko, 'Retsenziia' (see note 79), 69.

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The *Illustrated History of Ukraine* by Mykhailo Hrushevs’kyi played a great role in the spread of the Ukrainian historical narrative in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, before and during the revolutions of 1917. The book gave to its readers ‘our’ own heroes and answered the unspoken question – ‘why are we not the “Russian people”?’ On buying the book, the reader already knew that he or she would be getting ‘true’ Ukrainian history from the best-known historian, whose primacy was never contested by the Ukrainian intelligentsia during his lifetime (and long after his death).

The *IHU* also had a role in the early years of the Soviet Union, and later – though the book had been removed from libraries – its narrative, peculiarly, entered Soviet textbooks. In the 1990s, the *IHU* gained a new popularity. It was republished, and the first textbooks in independent Ukraine were based on the scheme the *IHU* had adopted. One might criticize the book for its essentializing and teleological narrative, for writing the history of the Ukrainian people but not the multi-ethnic history of Ukraine, for the negation of the role of elites in Ukrainian history, etc. All these make the *IHU* behind the times. However, something omitted (intentionally?) in the *IHU* remains relevant for modern researchers. This is an issue that Hrushevs’kyi left unclarified in his anti-elitist narrative, as Ivan Lysiak-Rudnyts’kyi once aptly formulated:

“How can one explain the fact that a movement which at the turn of the century numbered barely several thousand adherents became massive by the year 1905 and exploded in 1917 with the birth of a nation of more than 30 million?”<sup>89</sup>

Right after that, he offered the following:

“There can only be one answer to this (question – V.S.): there were also other forces among the population of Ukraine, which, while not identical to the national movement, had the same direction and goal. And, as if attracted by strong gravity, they eventually became absorbed by it.”<sup>90</sup>

Such an explanation implies that landlords (*pomeshchiki*) in Ukraine, Marxists, liberal *zemstvo* activists, and monarchists were also part of the history of the Ukrainian movement. Are Ukrainian studies now ready to give them legitimacy within their own boundaries?

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<sup>89</sup> Ivan Lysiak-Rudnyts’kyi, ‘Rolia Ukraïny v novitnii istorii’, in *Istorychni ese*, vol. 1 (Kyïv: Osnovy, 1994), 147.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.



ANDRII PORTNOV

## HOW HISTORY WRITING BECAME ‘OFFICIAL’

### SOVIET UKRAINIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY RECONSIDERED

Two historians from L’viv, Iaroslav Dashkevych (1926–2010) and Iaroslav Isaievych (1936–2010), with their encyclopaedic knowledge and broad research interests, determined for decades the overall intellectual level of Ukrainian historiography.<sup>1</sup> Both came from ‘non-proletarian’ families, both started their careers in post-war L’viv and neither was allowed to go abroad until the end of the 1980s. Already in independent Ukraine Dashkevych characterized the Ukrainian historiography of the Brezhnev period as follows:

“the study of the historiography of the so-called Soviet period should be approached in the same way as the study of the dissemination of false ideas, of the psychopathology of pseudoscientific research and of enforced slave labour”.<sup>2</sup>

The assessment of Iaroslav Isaievych was more nuanced: he emphasized the importance of “differentiating between unscrupulous (or ‘ideological’) servants of the regime and those who used the legal opportunities available for saving Ukrainian culture while supporting its national consciousness”. He pointed out that “it is unfair to blame all historians of the Party

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<sup>1</sup> See their comparative intellectual biographies in Andrii Portnov, *Istoriï istorykiv: Oblychchia i obrazy ukraïns’koï istoriografii XX stolittia* (Kyïv: Krytyka, 2011), 201–24. See also Iurii Iasinovs’kyi, ed., *Iaroslav Isaievych: Bibliografichnyi pokazhchyk* (L’viv: Instytut ukraïnoznavstva imeni I. Kryp’iakevycha NAN Ukraïny, 1999); Marharyta Kryvenko, ed., *Iaroslav Dashkevych. Biobibliografichnyi pokazhchyk* (L’viv: L’vivs’ka naukova biblioteka imeni Vasylia Stefanyka, 2006).

<sup>2</sup> Iaroslav Dashkevych, ‘Dorohamy ukraïns’koï Klio: Pro stanovyshe istorychnoi nauky v Ukraïni’, *Ukraïna v mynulomy*, 8 (1996): 55.

without distinguishing between them, because among them were people of very different moral and intellectual convictions”.<sup>3</sup>

What was Ukrainian Soviet historiography during the different stages of its development? When and how did its history begin?<sup>4</sup> What was the Soviet project of ‘official academic scholarship’ about and what were its local (Ukrainian) dimensions? What kind of intellectual product emerged from the interaction between historians and the Soviet government? How did the shared and compulsory but unwritten rules function – from citing the classics of Marxism-Leninism to structuring research for a thesis? Where and why did areas of conformism and dissidence appear?

This article offers a discussion of the questions above, which still require comparative research based both on archival work and on oral history.<sup>5</sup>

### The Collectivization of the Academy of Sciences

One of the consequences of the 1917 Revolutions in Ukraine was the emergence of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, which opened on 27 November 1918 under the government of Hetman Pavlo Skoropads’kyi (1873–1945). The official Soviet foundation date of the Academy was different: 11 February 1919, the day when the Bolshevik People’s Commissariat of Education issued the order under which several buildings in the centre of Kyiv were consigned to the Academy.<sup>6</sup> The pre-Soviet existence of the Academy was not mentioned in Soviet books and its foundation was described as an achievement of the Bolshevik government.

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<sup>3</sup> Iaroslav Isaievych, *Ukraina davnia i nova: Narod, relihii, kul'tura* (L'viv: Instytut ukraїnoznavstva imeni Ivana Kryp'iakevycha NAN Ukraїny, 1996), 301.

<sup>4</sup> On this issue compare Aleksandr Dmitriev, ‘Demon istokov: kak (pozдне)sovetskie gumanitarii utverzhдали v svoem proshlom’, *Neprikosnovennyi zapas* 93, 1 (2014): 11–23.

<sup>5</sup> This article summarizes and develops my previous publications on the topic: Andrei (Andrii) Portnov, ‘Sovietizatsiia istoricheskoi nauki po-ukrainski’, *Neprikosnovennyi zapas* 83, 3 (2012): 245–76 (co-author Volodymyr Masliichuk); idem, ‘Historiografia ukrainska. Doświadczenia sowietyzacji’, *Pamięć i sprawiedliwość* 23, 1 (2014): 401–29 (co-author Volodymyr Masliichuk); idem, ‘Sovietisation et déssoviétisation de l’histoire en Ukraine: Aspects institutionnels et méthodologiques’, *Revue d’études comparatives Est-Ouest (RECEO)* 45, 2 (2014): 95–127.

<sup>6</sup> Oksana Iurkova, ‘Diiachi nauky v poli zoru dyktatury (1921–1928)’, in *Suspil'stvo i vlada v radians'kii Ukraїni rokiv nepu (1921–1928)*, vol. 2, ed. Stanislav Kul'chyts'kyi (Kyiv: Instytut istorii Ukraїny NAN Ukraїny, 2015), 7.

The Academy played an important role in the Soviet arena of nation- and state-building. Moreover, similar 'Republic' Academies emerged soon in all the Soviet republics, except Soviet Russia, where in 1925 the Russian Academy of Sciences was turned into the All-Soviet Academy of Sciences. Initially, the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences (since 1921 the All-Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, VUAN) retained an extended autonomy; but already during the 1920s the government tried consistently to centralize and regulate its work.

A letter from the People's Commissariat of Education of the Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic, Hryhorii Hryn'ko (1890–1938), on 14 November 1921 claimed openly that "the Soviet government does not see it [the Academy] as a centre of so-called 'pure research'."<sup>7</sup> The leadership of the Academy, however, either underestimated or did not understand the extent of the sinister threat in this passage. In the official report on its work in 1924 VUAN asserted proudly that "the Academy is an exceptionally scholarly institution".<sup>8</sup>

The leaders of the Academy did not just deviate from the tasks set by the Soviet government but also started playing dangerous games with the authorities, whom they had also decided to involve in their internal disagreements. The academicians Serhii Iefremov (1876–1939) and Ahatanhel Kryms'kyi (1871–1942) allied against Mykhaïlo Hrushevs'kyi (1866–1934), who had returned from emigration in 1924, and did their best to win over the ruling circles of the republic. Hrushevs'kyi also tried to get close to the Soviet government. The academicians were the losers in their games with the authorities. In 1929, three Party officials were elected as members of the All-Ukrainian Academy of Sciences: Volodymyr Zats'kyi (1888–1938), Mykola Skrypnyk (1872–1933), and Oleksandr Shlikhter (1868–1940). The historians Matvii Iavors'kyi (1885–1937), Mykhaïlo Slabchenko (1882–1952), and Dmytro Iavornyts'kyi (1885–1940) were elected at the same time and offered no protest against this Party campaign.

During the same year the academician Serhii Iefremov and some hundreds of other defendants from among the Ukrainian intelligentsia were arrested during the fabricated case of the fictitious Union for the Libera-

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<sup>7</sup> Pavlo Sokhan', ed., *Istoriia Akademii nauk Ukraïny 1918–1923: Dokumenty i materialy* (Kyïv: Naukova dumka, 1993), 290.

<sup>8</sup> Oleksii Onyshchenko, ed., *Istoriia Natsional'noi akademii nauk Ukraïny 1924–1928: Dokumenty i materialy* (Kyïv: Naukova dumka, 1998), 73.



tion of Ukraine (*Spilka vyzvolennia Ukraïny*).<sup>9</sup> Later, in 1930, all ten periodicals under Hrushevs'kyi's supervision were shut down. In 1933, the Institute of Ukrainian Culture named after Dmytro Bahaliū was closed. On the day before, Dmytro Bahaliū (1857–1932) and other prominent historians who had declared their devotion to Marxism had been denounced by their younger colleagues for “bourgeoisness”, “reactionism” and “the distortion of Marxism”.<sup>10</sup>

What these Ukrainian academicians had considered a manoeuvre or a necessary act of “reconciliation with reality”<sup>11</sup> was one step in an ambitious project of social engineering aimed at creating the new Soviet man. History and other ideological disciplines played a special role in this project. It is for this reason that all the compromises agreed on by the authorities during the 1920s were situational and temporary, whereby apparent retreats and concessions were only preparations for a ruthless offensive. From the very beginning academic institutions were involved, whether under constraint or voluntarily, in the process of repression. Historians bore witness against their colleagues, denounced each other in writing, and took up the vacant positions which arose in consequence. In this way the Soviet historical academy “not only suffered itself, but also caused the suffering of others”.<sup>12</sup> The fired-up flywheel of repressions made the institutional autonomy of the humanities impossible and destroyed corporate solidarity.<sup>13</sup>

At the beginning of the 1930s, the collectivization of the Academy was becoming widespread. In 1930, a decision was made to shut down the Historical-Philological Department. The opponents of Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyi founded the Historical-Archaeographic Institute in its place, but it only existed for less than a year. By the mid-1930s, almost all the staff of

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<sup>9</sup> Volodymyr Prystaiko, Iurii Shapoval, ‘Fars z trahichnym finalom (Do 65-richchia protsesu u spravi “Spilky vyzvolennia Ukraïny”)', *Z arkhiviv VUChK-GPU-NKVD-KGB* 19, 1–2 (1995): 190–8.

<sup>10</sup> T. Skubitskii, ‘Klassovaia bor'ba v ukrainskoï istoricheskoi literature', *Istoriemarkshist*, 17 (1930): 27–40, and others.

<sup>11</sup> Compare Sergei Iarov, ‘Intelligentsia i vlast' v Petrograde 1917–1925 godov: konformistskie strategii i iazyk sotrudnichetsva', *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie* 78, 2 (2006): 7–31.

<sup>12</sup> Iurii Afanasiev, ‘Fenomen sovetskoi istoriografii', in *Sovetskaia istoriografiia*, ed. idem (Moscow: RGGU, 1996), 9.

<sup>13</sup> On Soviet historians as an ‘academic corporation’ compare Aleksandr Dmitriev, ‘“Uchionyi sovet pri Chingizkhane” (poetika i ritorika postsovetskogo akademicheskogo memuara)', *Trudy Russkoi Antropologicheskoi Shkoly* 11 (2012): 80–100.

the Academy had lost their jobs. At the beginning of 1936, the Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR was founded on the basis of the Institute of History of the Communist Academy and a couple of other institutions. Following the example set by Moscow, in 1936 the Soviet authorities created the Institute of the History of Ukraine (after 1953 renamed the Institute of History) with new personnel to replace the demolished institutions of the more self-sustaining VUAN. This was one part of an all-Union policy governing the reform of academic structures.

### The Institute of the History of Ukraine

The Institute consisted of three departments: the Department of the History of Feudalism, the Department of the History of Capitalism, and the Department of the History of the Soviet Period. Initially there were sixteen employees and none of them had an academic degree. The core of the Institute was comprised not of former scholars of the Academy but of staff from the ideological Institute of History of the All-Ukrainian Association of Marxism-Leninism Institutes, established in the late 1920s. The first director was a philosopher, Artashes Saradzhev (1889–1937), who had graduated from Moscow's Institute of Red Professors and who had previously been Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy at the Sverdlov Communist University. Already in December 1936 Saradzhev was arrested and shortly thereafter executed as the member of a "counterrevolutionary organization".<sup>14</sup> A similar destiny awaited most of the other pioneering employees of the Institute. First, they helped to denounce their senior colleagues and a couple of years afterwards the authorities "denounced" them.<sup>15</sup> In January 1937, a historian from an older generation, Mykola Petrovs'kyi (1894–1951), became the Director of the Institute and chose the path of full collaboration with the authorities.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Biographical data on Saradzhev is collected in Oksana Iurkova, 'Artashes Khorenovich Saradzhev', in *Instytut istorii Ukraïny NAN Ukraïny: 1936–2006*, ed. Valerii Smolii (Kyïv: Instytut istorii Ukraïny, 2006), 307–18.

<sup>15</sup> For details see Mykhailo Koval' and Oleksandr Rubliov, 'Instytut istorii Ukraïny NAN Ukraïny: pershe dvadtsiatyrichchia (1936–1956 rr.)', *Ukraïns'kyi istorychnyi zhurnal* 40, 6 (1996): 50–68; Oleksiï Ias', 'Na choli respublikans'koï nauky...' *Instytut istorii Ukraïny (1936–1986): narysy z instytutsiïnoi ta intelektual'noi istorii (Do 80-richchia ustanovy)* (Kyïv: Instytut istorii Ukraïny, 2016).

<sup>16</sup> On Petrovs'kyi see O. Udod and A. Shevchenko, *Mykola Neonovych Petrovs'kyi (1894–1951): Zhyttia i tvorchyi shliakh istoryka* (Kyïv: Heneza, 2005).

At first, the main task of the Institute was the development of programmes on the history of Ukraine and the history of the USSR according to the 1934 directive on ‘teaching civil history’.<sup>17</sup> The educational process required that all programmes, synthetic courses, and monographs be emptied as far as possible of all individual rhetoric. The same de-individuation of style and approach became the priority in later Institute projects, aimed at writing fundamental (‘academic’) histories of Ukraine. While the volumes of *An Outline of the History of Ukraine* were written by only one or two authors at the end of the 1930s, collective works became widespread in the 1960s, where each section was written by several people. Those writing teams were the authors of the main works published by the Institute: twenty-six volumes of *The History of Cities and Villages in the Ukrainian SSR* (1967–83), eight volumes of *The History of the Ukrainian SSR* (1979–85) and three volumes of *The History of Kyïv* (1982–87).

Apart from the Institute of History, the Institute of Material Culture came into being in 1938 (later renamed the Institute of Archaeology). In 1939, one more ideological institute was introduced: the Ukrainian branch of the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute under the auspices of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

The émigré historian Borys Krupnyts’kyi (1894–1956) noted in his book *Ukrainian Historical Science Under the Soviets*, published in 1957 in Munich,

“Nothing demonstrated the dependence of Ukrainian scholarship on Moscow more clearly than the fact that the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences did not have the right to convene a separate historical committee ... If someone wanted to publish his research, he had to send it to Russian publishing houses and to write it in Russian”.<sup>18</sup>

As if the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine had heard this reproach, they started publishing the *Ukrainian Historical Journal* (*Ukrains’kyi istorychnyi zhurnal, UIZh*).<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> V. Santsevich and N. Komarenko, *Razvitie istoricheskoi nauki v Akademii nauk Ukrainskoi SSR* (Kyïv: Naukova dumka, 1986), 33; ‘O prepodavanii grazhdanskoi istorii v shkolakh SSSR’, *Istoriik-marksist*, 37(3) (1934): 83.

<sup>18</sup> Borys Krupnyts’kyi, *Ukrains’ka istorychna nauka pid Sovietamy (1920–1950)* (Munich: Instytut dlia vyvchennia SRSR, 1957), 43.

<sup>19</sup> Oleksandr Hurzhii and Oleksandr Donik, ‘“Ukrains’kyi istorychnyi zhurnal”: pivtolittia v nautsi’, *Ukrains’kyi istorychnyi zhurnal* 51, 6 (2007): 7–8.

Tellingly, around the same time that the *UIZh* was launched, another journal, *The History of the USSR (Istoriia SSSR)* was established in Moscow (notably with the same initial print run of five thousand copies). The situation with the *UIZh* was unique since in 1957 there were no separate historical journals either in Belarus<sup>20</sup> or in any of the other republics. In practice, the decision to publish the *UIZh*, as well as the adoption in 1954 by the Politburo of the Communist Party of the *Theses on the 300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Reunification of Ukraine with Russia*, offered by Ukrainian Party ideologists and written by Ukrainian Soviet historians, meant the recognition of Ukraine as 'second among equals' of the republics of the USSR.<sup>21</sup>

The *Ukrainian Historical Journal* became one of the tools for the further integration of the historians of the republic and was therefore under constant observation by the Party. Even the topics for publication depended on the Party line. Following the directives of the mid-1960s on prioritizing research into 'the experience of socialist and communist construction', the journal focused mostly on Soviet history and featured wholly ideological articles, which were often approved at the level of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine. In 1985, there were 11,500 historians of the Party in the USSR, and around 1,600 historians of the Party worked in Ukraine.<sup>22</sup>

The closeness of the Institute of History to the Party organs mentioned above allowed the Institute to develop its material and technical facilities, as well as expanding its personnel. Between 1956 and 1990, the number of members of research staff more than doubled, from 61 to 165.<sup>23</sup> In 1969, the Institute opened two regional offices: one of the History of European Socialist Countries in Uzhhorod and the other of History and Applied Social Research in Chernivtsi.

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<sup>20</sup> More on Belarusian situation see in Rainer Lindner, *Historiker und Herrschaft: Nationsbildung und Geschichtspolitik in Weißrussland im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (München: R. Oldenbourg, 1999).

<sup>21</sup> Compare Serhy Yekelchuk, *Stalin's Empire of Memory: Russian-Ukrainian Relations in the Soviet Historical Imagination* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004).

<sup>22</sup> Iaroslav Kalakura, 'Noveishaia istoriografiia rukovodiaschei deiatel'nosti KPSS na etapie razvitogo sotsializma', in *Voprosy razvitiia istoriograficheskikh issledovaniĭ v svete reshenii XXVI s'ezda KPSS. Materialy vsesoiuznoi nauchnoi konferencii*, materials of the all-Union conference (Dnipropetrovsk: Izdatel'stvo DGU, 1985), 20.

<sup>23</sup> *Instytut istorii Ukraïny* (see note 14), 20.

Iaroslav Dzyra (1931–2009) recalled how his boss Ivan Hurzhii (1915–71), a respected scholar of Ukrainian economic and social history, would repeat,

“as an academic research employee of the Institute your role is to implement the plans of the state at the appropriate ideological level. In return you are well paid. It was Turgenev who was able to write whatever he wanted”.

Hurzhii would conclude: “We pay you for what we need to have written, and not for what is stated in the documents. Do you think I do not know these documents?”<sup>24</sup>

The reliance of the Institute on the Party line sometimes manifested itself in different ideological slants. In 1963–72, the head of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine was Petro Shelest (1908–96), who was not indifferent to Ukrainian history and liked to praise the Zaporizhian Cossacks. During the period of his leadership the Institute was involved in a series of activities which might be described as ‘Soviet Ukrainian patriotism’. Preparatory work began on *The History of the Cities and Villages of the Ukrainian SSR* in twenty-six volumes, which had no equals in the other republics. Moreover, the construction of the State Historical and Cultural Reserve on the island of Velyka Khortytsia began in 1965 and the Ukrainian Society for the Preservation of Historical and Cultural Monuments was established in 1966. In 1970, Shelest published in Ukrainian the book *Our Soviet Ukraine (Ukraïno nasha radians’ka)*, in which he not only wrote about the “progressive role” of the Zaporizhian Sich, but also described the Cossacks as “heroic defenders of the Ukrainian people”, whose story had been poorly represented in historical literature and fiction.<sup>25</sup>

Shelest’s book was published without the approval of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine, and two years later it was officially denounced as “diverging from the objective of the international education of the workers”. The book was later withdrawn from bookshops, having been criticized for a “lack of attention to the unification of Ukraine with Russia” and for an absence of “references to the positive influence of Russian culture on the formation and development of Ukrainian culture”.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Iaroslav Dzyra, ‘Intelektual z natsionalnoi vdacheiu’, *Spetsial’ni istorychni dystsypyny. Pytannia teorii ta metodyky*, 2 (1998): 467–8.

<sup>25</sup> Petro Shelest, *Ukraïno nasha radians’ka* (Kyïv: Polityvydav Ukraïny, 1970), 20, 22.

<sup>26</sup> ‘Pro seriozni nedoliky odniiei knyhy’, *Komunist Ukraïny*, 4 (1973): 77–82.

Shelest's dismissal in May 1972 and the designation of Valentyn Malanchuk (1928–84) as Secretary for Ideology of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine immediately affected the Institute. Programmes involving the study of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Ukrainian political thought were wound up; publication of the archive of Zaporizhian Sich was stopped; Fedir Shevchenko (1914–95) was dismissed from his position as editor-in-chief of the *UIZh*.<sup>27</sup> In 1973, the Ukrainian-language periodicals *The Middle Ages in Ukraine*, *Historical Sources and their Use*, and *Historiographic Research in the Ukrainian SSR* ceased publication.

The employees of the Institute who were considered unfavourable for ideological reasons were fired during humiliating departmental meetings or at Party conferences with the help of their colleagues. This is what happened to Mykhailo Braichevs'kyi (1924–2001), who wrote in his essay 'Incorporation or Reunification' (1966) that the concept of "the reunification of Ukraine with Russia" takes the Russian nation beyond the pattern of historical materialism because it regards historical phenomena not from a class-specific point of view, but from the perspective of relations with Russia as an entity.<sup>28</sup> It is important to stress that Braichevs'kyi's critique of the 'reunification' concept was based on quotations from Lenin. The author emphasized repeatedly his dedication to Marxist principles of historical research. At the suggestion of his colleagues, the historian was on the point of publishing his work in the official *Ukrainian Historical Journal* when the change of political environment rendered it impossible. Almost immediately afterwards, the text appeared in samizdat form and was published abroad. Whereupon Braichevs'kyi was fired from the Institute of History. The dismissal of Malanchuk in 1979 immediately loosened the Party's control. Translations of Western European sources on Ukrainian history started appearing in the republic's journals. In 1980, the first All-Ukrainian Conference on Regional Historical Studies took place. Many monographs which had previously sat on the back burner were now published.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> See more in Hennadii Boriak, ed., *'Istynu vstanovliuie sud istorii': Zbirnyk na poshanu Fedora Pavlovycha Shevchenka*, vol. 1 (Kyiv: Derzhavnyi komitet arkhiviv Ukraïny, 2004); Valerii Smoli et. al., eds., *Fedir Shevchenko, Istorychni studii: Zbirka vybranykh prats' i materialiv (Do 100-richchia vid dnia narodzhennia)* (Kyiv: Instytut istorii Ukraïny NANU, 2014).

<sup>28</sup> Mykhailo Braichevs'kyi *Vybrani tvory: Istoryko-arkheolohichni studii, Publitsystyka* (Kyiv: KM Academia 1999), 493, 498.

<sup>29</sup> Vitalii Iaremchuk, *Mynule Ukraïny v istorychnii nautsi URSR* (Ostroh: Natsional'nyi uniwersytet "Ostroz'ka Akademiia", 2009), 408–9.

### Another Academic Tradition and Its Limitations

In the post-war Academy of Sciences there were hardly any prominent employees from the pre-war Academy. The city of L'viv, annexed to the USSR in 1939 because of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact and the German–Soviet aggression against Poland, played an important role in the transmission of different academic standards. L'viv had not witnessed the most violent of the Soviet purges but went through a later process of Sovietization, which in this case was designated 'Ukrainianization the Soviet Way'.<sup>30</sup>

There existed a very influential Shevchenko Scientific Society in L'viv, which had functioned since the Austro-Hungarian period. It was to all intents and purposes the Ukrainian Academy which had been run by Mykhaïlo Hrushevs'kyi at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In December 1939, the Shevchenko Scientific Society proposed to the Praesidium of the Academy of Sciences of the Ukrainian SSR that it join and become part of the Academy. This offer was turned down; however, on 1 January 1940, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine adopted a resolution on establishing branches of the Institutions of the Academy of Sciences of the Ukrainian SSR in L'viv.<sup>31</sup> The head of the L'viv branch of the Institute of History was a former student of Hrushevs'kyi, Professor Ivan Kryp'iakivych (1886–1967). Ten out of the eleven employees of the new organization were former members of the Shevchenko Scientific Society. This branch was thus re-established in 1944, but closed after two years because of claims that it had been taken over by 'notorious nationalists'. Nevertheless, at the end of the 1940s a

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<sup>30</sup> For details see William J. Risch, *The Ukrainian West: Culture and the Fate of Empire in Soviet L'viv* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011). For comparison with the Baltic republics and countries of 'people's democracy' see Aurimas Švedas, *In the Captivity of the Matrix: Soviet Lithuanian Historiography, 1944–1985* (Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi, 2014); John Connelly, *Captive University: The Sovietization of East German, Czech, and Polish Higher Education, 1945–1956* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Jan Szumski, *Polityka a historia: ZSRR wobec nauki historycznej w Polsce w latach 1945–1964* (Warszawa: ASPRA-JR, 2016); Tadeusz P. Rutkowski, *Historiografia i historycy w PRL* (Warszawa: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2019); Martin Sabrow, *Das Diktat des Konsenses: Geschichtswissenschaft in der DDR, 1949–1969* (München: R. Oldenbourg, 2001); Francesco Zavatti, *Writing History in a Propaganda Institute: Political Power and Network Dynamics in Communist Romania* (Stockholm: Elanders, 2016), and others.

<sup>31</sup> Iaroslav Isaievych, 'Storinky istorii Instytutu ukraïnoznavstva imeni I. Kryp'iakivycha NAN Ukraïny', *Ukrains'kyi istorychnyi zhurnal* 46, 4 (2002): 6–7.



decision was taken to create a branch of the Academy of Sciences in L'viv by the Party leadership at the central Union level, rather than by the Party leadership at the level of the Republic. That decision was recorded as a permission granted by the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR to the government of the Ukrainian SSR on 21 February 1951.<sup>32</sup> In this way, an Institute of Social Sciences appeared in L'viv and employed the majority of the former staff of the Shevchenko Scientific Society.

After the death of Stalin, Ivan Kryp'iakevych took over as Director of the Institute and stayed in this position until 1962. Kryp'iakevych was a historian, a medievalist who had been deprived of the right to teach at the university and the author of works which fell into the category of 'bourgeois nationalist' publications. In his managerial position Ivan Kryp'iakevych applied the principle of 'fifty-fifty': inevitable compromises with the prevailing ideological environment allowed him to continue with his censored but thorough research.<sup>33</sup>

On the one hand, largely due to the efforts of Kryp'iakevych, the traditions of Hrushevs'kyi were upheld in Soviet L'viv. On the other, L'viv raised particular suspicions of nationalism. The slightest deviations from the Party line, especially in the presentation of contemporary history, were monitored and punished fiercely. In particular, the historical publications of the Galician Marxist Volodymyr Levyns'kyi (1880–1953) caused a storm. The 1971 L'viv University Party Assembly asserted that the publication of Levyns'kyi's article in a special anthology represented the "propagation" of his ideology and caused "irreparable harm to the construction of the communist mindset of the Soviet nation".<sup>34</sup>

The same logic applied to the publication of some documents from the archives. In 1958, the Party Assembly of the Institute of Social Sciences was puzzled when a local historian published in full the Declaration of the Ukrainian National Rada of 1 November 1918. The assembly found it confusing since "the contemporary works of foreign nationalists literally repeat verbatim what was written in that Declaration". Their conclusion was simple: "this is a true nationalist leaflet and it is not appropriate to

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>33</sup> More on Kryp'iakevych see in Iaroslav Isaievych, ed., *Ukraina: kul'turna spadshchyna, national'na svidomist', derzhavnist'*, vol. 8., *Ivan Kryp'iakevych u rodynnii tradytsii, nautsi, suspil'stvi* (L'viv: Instytut ukraïnoznavstva imeni I. Kryp'iakevycha NAN Ukraïny, 2001).

<sup>34</sup> Tamara Halaïchak and Oleksandr Luts'kyi, eds. *Kul'turne zhyttia v Ukraïni: Zakhidni zemli*, vol. 3, 1966–1971 (L'viv: Instytut ukraïnoznavstva imeni I. Kryp'iakevycha NAN Ukraïny, 2006), 563.



include it in academic research”.<sup>35</sup> The authorities intruded into the publishing of various sources, and not only those connected with contemporary history. While preparing *The Documents of Bohdan Khmel'nyts'kyi* (1961) for publication, Ivan Kryp'yiakivych and Ivan Butych were forced to print the letters from the Hetman to the Turkish Sultan and the Crimean Khan in the section entitled “Questionable Source Documents”.<sup>36</sup> Five acts (*akty*) from the books of Luts'k were eliminated from the anthology *The Printing Pioneer Ivan Fedorov and his Followers in Ukraine* (1975) because they portrayed Fedorov as the leader of armed confrontations between groups of peasants, which allegedly undermined his reputation as “the pioneer of printing”,<sup>37</sup> and so on.

It is worth mentioning that the centralized model of the Soviet Academy basically reproduced the structure of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union on a smaller scale. All the important issues in the Academy were resolved by the almighty Praesidium, the analogue of the Politburo. Each Institute was subordinated to its Department, which approved all state topics for research. Every branch of the Institute received instructions from the directorate office. In this system, intellectual autonomy and personal engagement were reduced to a minimum.

### The Soviet University in Ukraine

One of the features of the Soviet system was the division between the academic sphere and the university sphere, between research and teaching, and the separation of the two functions of science – the production of knowledge by means of scholarly research and the reproduction of knowledge through teaching.<sup>38</sup> From the moment the Bolsheviks came to power, they set themselves the goal of ‘removing the reactionary profes-

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 743.

<sup>36</sup> Iaroslav Dashkevych, ‘Ivan Kryp'yiakivych – istoryk Ukraïny’, in *Ivan Kryp'yiakivych: Istoriia Ukraïny*, eds. Fedir Shevchenko and Bohdan Iakymovych (L'viv: Svit, 1990), 14.

<sup>37</sup> Mykola Koval's'kyi, ‘Dzhereloznavchi aspekty istorii kul'tury Ukraïny XVI-XVIII st. u pratsiakh Iaroslava Isaievycha’, in *Ukraïna: kul'turna spadshyna, national'na svid-mosist', derzhavnist'*, vol. 5, *PROSFONYMA. Istorychni ta filolobichni rozvdyky, prysviacheni 60-richchiu akademika Iaroslava Isaievycha*, ed. Bohdan Iakymovych (L'viv: Instytut ukrai-noznavstva imeni I. Kryp'iakivycha NAN Ukraïny, 1998), 324.

<sup>38</sup> D. Aleksandrov, ‘Sovietizatsiia vysshogo obrazovaniia i stanovlenie sovetскоï nauch-no-issledovatel'skoï sistemy’, in *Za zheleznyim zavesom': mify i realii sovetскоï nauki*, eds. M. Heinemann and E. Kolchynskii (Sankt-Peterburg: Dmitrii Bulanin, 2002), 152.

soriate from teaching' and replacing it as soon as possible with a new Soviet ('red') professoriate. At the same time, there was often more research freedom in the academic institutions responsible for pure research. On the one hand, employment at the Academy was perceived as more prestigious and more 'scholarly'. On the other, the scholars of the Academy (especially scholars of the 'old' school) were usually isolated from students.

At the beginning of the 1920s, the universities in Soviet Ukraine (in Kyïv, Odesa, and Kharkiv) were turned into Institutes of People's Education (*Instituty Narodnoi Osvity*, INO). Further INOs were opened in Ekaterinoslav (renamed Dnipropetrovs'k in 1926) and Kamianets'-Podil's'kyï. On 11 February 1921 Lenin signed an order founding the Institute of Red Professors, with departments of philosophy, history, and economics, in Moscow and Petrograd. The historian Mikhail Pokrovskii. (1868–1932) was the head of the Institute in Moscow. The Institute of Red Professors and the Communist University existed until 1938.<sup>39</sup>

At the beginning of the 1930s, the Soviet authorities returned to the problem of reforming higher education and decided to retrieve the term 'university'. They planned to extend and centralize the existing system of institutions, in effect collectivizing higher education. This was exactly the purpose of the Decree of the Central Committee of the USSR of 19 September 1932. The Ukrainian version of this decree was the Decree of the government of the Ukrainian SSR 'On Organizing State Universities', which was issued on 10 March 1933. This decree allowed for the establishment of universities in Kyïv, Odesa, Dnipropetrovs'k, and Kharkiv. More precisely, the pre-existing higher education institutions in these cities were combined into universities. History teaching became obligatory in every faculty.

With the Sovietization of L'viv University in 1940, the social background of students began to be controlled, the freedom to choose specializations or exam dates was eliminated, and attendance was checked by the class representative who then delivered this information to the faculty directorate. All of this reminded the inhabitants of L'viv of rules at primary school.<sup>40</sup> The monitoring of L'viv University carried out towards the end of the 1940s revealed such problems as the admission of

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<sup>39</sup> Larisa Kozlova, 'Institut krasnoi professury (1921–1938 gody)', *Sotsiologicheskii zhurnal*, 1 (1994): 96–112.

<sup>40</sup> Grzegorz Hryciuk, *Polacy we Lwowie 1939–1944: Życie codzienne* (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 2000), 128–35.

the children of “kulaks and Banderites” and the use of old textbooks containing writing by Mykhaïlo Hrushevs’kyi. Foreign languages were taught although this was “out of touch with reality”, students placed an “unhealthy overemphasis” on foreign literature when they defended their written papers and “understated the outstanding role of the great Russian scientists”.<sup>41</sup>

The Ukrainianization of L’viv University, which turned from the University of Jan Kazimierz (the Polish king) into the University of Ivan Franko (the Ukrainian poet), meant not only its de-Polonization but also an intensive battle against the influence of the historical concepts developed by Mykhaïlo Hrushevs’kyi.<sup>42</sup> With the university under the control of the Soviet system, the Institute of Social Sciences was now reassigned to it. Iaroslav Isaievych recalls how

“the atmosphere in the system of higher education was now much tenser, and control by censors, whether self-appointed or appointed from on high, and control by means of ideological ‘isms’, was total and humiliating”.<sup>43</sup>

The main task of any professor at a Soviet university was to teach. On 26 August 1940 the All-Union Committee on Higher Education under the Council of People’s Commissars issued a decree introducing a six-hour working day, starting from 1 January the following year. The academic workload of the teaching staff was now 720–840 hours a year.<sup>44</sup> The decree adopted in ‘wartime’ became the blueprint for estimating teaching workload not only after the end of the war, but also after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

In 1990, there were twenty-one history faculties in the institutions of higher education of the Ukrainian SSR. The graduates of history faculties were often employed in Party organs and the KGB, which guaranteed the

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<sup>41</sup> All quotes are given in: Iuriï Slyvka, ed., *Kul’turne zhyttia v Ukraïni: Zakbidni zemli. Dokumenty i materialy*, vol. 1, 1939–1953 (Kyïv: Naukova dumka, 1995).

<sup>42</sup> For details see Iaroslav Dashkevych, ‘Borot’ba z Hrushevs’kym ta ioho shkoloiu u L’vivs’komu universyteti za radians’kykh chasiv’, in *Mykhaïlo Hrushevs’kyi i ukrains’ka istorychna nauka*, eds. Iaroslav Hrytsak and Iaroslav Dashkevych (L’viv: Instytut istorichnykh doslidzhen’ LNU, 1999), 226–66.

<sup>43</sup> Iaroslav Isaievych, ‘Ukrains’ka istorychna nauka: orhanizatsiï na struktura i mizhnarodni kontakty’, in *Ukrains’ka istoriobrafiiia na zlami XX i XXI stolit’: zdobutky i problem*, ed. Leonid Zashkil’niak (L’viv: L’vivs’kyi natsional’nyi universytet imeni I. Franka, 2004), 9.

<sup>44</sup> Iuliia Chekushyna, ‘Vyshchi navchal’ni zaklady Dnipropetrovs’koï oblasti u 1939–1941 rr.’, *Humanitarnyi zhurnal*, 3 (2005): 4.

prestigious status of these faculties and a high level of preparation on the part of prospective students.

Dnipropetrovsk State University (DSU) retained a special status. Thanks to the strategic importance of its Faculty of Physics and Technology, which trained specialists in top-secret rocket engineering, the university was subordinated directly to the Ministry of Education in Moscow, rather than to the Ministry in Kyiv. This created more opportunities for ideological manoeuvres. In particular, professors at DSU could print their work at their own publishing house, as opposed to using the 'Higher School' publisher controlled by both the Kyiv Ministry for Higher and Further Vocational Education and the State Committee for Publishing.

The right to publication at this internal university press was well used by Mykola Koval's'kyi (1929–2006), a graduate of L'viv University and holder of the Chair of Source Studies and Historiography at DSU. This chair was established in 1972 as a counterpart to the Chair for Source Studies at Moscow State University and its first analogue in Ukraine, the Chair for Historiography and Source Studies at Kharkiv University, established in 1964. Koval's'kyi turned his chair into Ukraine's leading centre for source studies on the history of early modern Ukraine, which was widely known in the Soviet Union and often called the Koval's'kyi School.<sup>45</sup> The phenomenon of the Koval's'kyi School cannot be ascribed solely to the closed status of Dnipropetrovsk and the direct subordination of its university to Moscow. It has a lot to do with Koval's'kyi's personal and professional qualities: his academic motivation and his style of teaching, his interest in working with younger colleagues, and his wide-ranging academic knowledge and contacts. As a result, Mykola Koval's'kyi managed not only to survive several regime changes and ideological 'turns', but also to become the leader of probably the only Soviet Ukrainian school of historical studies.

### The Higher Attestation Commission and the Granting of Academic Degrees

The Decree of 1 October 1918 of the Council of People's Commissars entitled 'On Some Changes in the Structure and Organization of State

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<sup>45</sup> See more in Andrii Portnov and Tetiana Portnova, 'Soviet Ukrainian Historiography in Brezhnev's Closed City: Mykola / Nikolai Kovalsky and His "School" at the Dnipropetrovsk University', *Ab Imperio*, 4 (2017): 265–91.

Academia and the Institutions of Higher Education in the Russian Republic' abolished Doctoral and Master's degrees and the academic degrees of adjunct and *privat-dozent*. It dismantled the hierarchy of pre-revolutionary titles of the professoriate. Everyone teaching in universities automatically received the title of professor, whereas all the rest acquired the status of teachers.<sup>46</sup>

It took a long time to decide how Soviet academic degrees should be granted. In 1922, the academic degree of 'Doctor of the History of Ukrainian Culture' was introduced in Soviet Ukraine, which was an honorific recognition of scientific achievements but did not influence employment or salary. Candidates for this degree had to send their academic writing to the Scientific Committee of the People's Commissariat for Education in Kharkiv or to its subsidiaries in Kyiv, Odesa, or Dnipropetrovsk. The Committee would organize special panels, depending on the subject of the research. In addition, the Committee would appoint reviewers who decided whether to allow the candidate a public defence. The defence took the form of an open discussion. Based on the results of the defence, the panel would grant a doctoral degree, while the Scientific Committee issued a corresponding diploma.<sup>47</sup>

This arrangement involved a relatively high degree of independence on the part of the specialized panels, which is why it was not sustainable in a centralized state with an official ideology. In 1932, the decision was taken at the all-Union level to establish the Higher Attestation Commission (*Vyshaia Attestatsionnaia Komissia*, VAK) as a state agency affiliated with the Ministry of Higher and Further Vocational Education of the USSR. At the request of university committees and academic institutions the VAK was meant to grant the degrees of *kandidat nauk* (the first degree corresponding to a PhD), *doktor nauk* (the second and highest academic degree), professor, docent, and senior research fellow, and in addition to control the proceedings of the academic committees. The VAK started work in 1934.

There were several crucial features introduced with the establishment of the VAK and the first of these was the two-level structure of academic degrees (*kandidat* and *doktor nauk*). The whole system was centralized to

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<sup>46</sup> Larisa Kozlova, '“Bez zaschity dissertatsii”: statusnaia organizatsiia obschetvennykh nauk v SSSR, 1933–1935 gody', *Sotsiologicheskii zhurnal*, 2 (2001): 145–58.

<sup>47</sup> For details see Oksana Iurkova, 'Naukova atestatsiia istoriiv v Ukraïni: normatyvna baza ta osoblyvosti zakhystu dysertatsii (druha polovyna 1920-kh–1941 rr.)', *Problemy istorii Ukraïny: fakty, sudzhennia, poshuky* 19, 2 (2010): 126–41.

the fullest possible extent and the Praesidium of the VAK was created according to the example of the all-powerful Praesidium of the Academy of Sciences and the Politburo. Requirements for dissertations were all formalized, from the arrangement of references and citations to ideological control over conclusions and stylistics. Specialized panels for the defence of theses were now introduced, with each one attached to only one institution and including permanent members. A list of VAK-approved publishing houses was created, and the publication of work there was considered an appropriate endorsement of a piece of research. From the moment of its founding until the end of the USSR, the VAK was an all-Union structure. Attestation commissions at the level of the individual republics were not allowed.

Obtaining an academic degree was relatively hard in the post-war USSR, especially the degree of *doktor nauk*. From time to time, the authorities introduced reforms which stiffened administrative or bureaucratic regulations. In particular, the decree of the all-Union VAK of 28 May 1986 'On the Utilization of Research Findings from Scientific Theses' required that each research had some 'practical importance'. In the sphere of the humanities, this requirement meant clichéd claims by researchers about the relevance of their work to the 'building of Communism' and its value for schoolbooks or syllabuses.

It was rather uncommon, but possible, to defend a *doktor nauk* thesis several times, highlighting the exceptional nature and prestige of the degree. A future full member of the Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, the Kyiv archaeologist and historian of Ancient Rus' Petro Tolochko (born 1938), defended his thesis four times – the first one in 1975 and the last (successful) one in 1980.<sup>48</sup> Vitaliĭ Sarbei (1928–99), a Kyiv historian specializing in 19<sup>th</sup>-century history, had to defend his thesis twice because he was careless enough to mention that the "anti-tsarist publications" of Mykhailo Drahomanov "resonated to a certain degree with articles written by some of the pioneers of Marxism".<sup>49</sup>

Since history faculties were preparing ideological personnel, they welcomed prospective students who were recommended by Party struc-

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<sup>48</sup> Serhiĭ Bilokin', *Na zlamakh epokhy: Spohady* (Bila Tserkva: Oleksandr Pshonkiv-s'kyĭ, 2005), 215.

<sup>49</sup> Vitaliĭ Sarbei, *Osnovopolozhniki makrsizma-leninizma i dooktiabr'skaia istoriografiia Ukrainy: Avtoreferat dissertatsii doktora istoricheskikh nauk* (Kyiv: Institut istorii AN USSR, 1971), 24–5. The second version of *Avtoreferat* published in 1972 contains no point like that.

tures, had experience of Komsomol work or had just worked after graduating from school. After obtaining their degrees, they had first to work in their field of studies for a couple of years in schools, archives, or museums. Only after that could they start their scholarly and teaching careers. The *kandidat nauk* thesis was most commonly defended after the age of 30. The average age of *doktor nauk* candidates was normally past 55.

### The Singularity of Ukraine in the Soviet Historiography of the 1960s–1980s

The experience of the collectivization of academic history during the 1920s–30s showed that one way to avoid the purges was to move to Moscow, Leningrad, or another university city in Russia. Pavlo Matviiivs'kyi (1904–87), a graduate of Dnipropetrovsk INO, moved from Kharkiv to Orenburg, where he became a professor at a local pedagogical institute. The head of the Kyiv Central Archives of Ancient Documents (*Akty*), Viktor Romanovs'kyi (1890–1971), first moved to Karaganda and later to Stavropol', where he also became a professor at a local pedagogical institute. After having left Ukraine, in 1955, the researcher of Podilia, Valentyn Otamanovs'kyi (1893–1964), published a monograph in Saratov focusing on the cities of Right Bank Ukraine in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. This monograph served as the basis for his defence of his doctoral dissertation in 1956 at Leningrad State University.

Whereas in the 1930s one had to go to Moscow or Leningrad in order to survive, in the 1960–70s individuals moved in order to defend a *doctor nauk* dissertation which was suspected of nationalism in Ukraine or not allowed for personal reasons. In 1961, Mykhailo Marchenko (1902–83) defended in Moscow a dissertation based on his book *Ukrainian Historiography from Ancient Times to the Mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century* (Kyiv, 1959). In 1963, Fedir Shevchenko defended his dissertation at the Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR. As a starting point he used a monograph on Russian–Ukrainian relations in the 17<sup>th</sup> century which had received criticism in Kyiv. In the 1970s, two graduates of L'viv University, Mykola Koval's'kyi and Iaroslav Isaievych, defended their *doctor nauk* dissertations on source studies at Moscow State University.

The main feature of the Ukrainian historiography of the 1970s was its isolation from international scholarship. In Ukraine there was no professional institution dealing with world history. 'Elitist' areas of historical research (Western European medieval studies, Byzantine studies, Oriental

studies, American studies<sup>50</sup>) were all located in institutions in Moscow or Leningrad. Historians in the republics had to deal with the history of the republics. This deformation of topics and methods, as well as the absence of a connection with international historiography, would become especially evident in the late 1980s, when Ukrainian historical scholarship and its institutions would become independent from the Union centre.

During the Brezhnev years, many of the classics of Ukrainian historiography were transferred to special library 'funds' with limited access rights. At the same time, thousands of copies of classic works of Russian history by Nikolai Karamzin, Sergei Solov'ev, and Vasilii Kliuchevskii were reissued. This publishing policy in fact caused the Ukrainian intelligentsia to 'return to its roots' and revisit the central works of the national historical tradition in these special reserve funds, access to which was now restricted by the 'administrative-command system'. Thus, Soviet censorship shaped in many ways the process of the 'discovery' of national history in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

The singularity of the historical institutions of the republic was especially evident at the end of the 1980s when Ukrainian historians would rush to change the conclusions they drew so that they concurred with the opinions not only of their colleagues from Moscow, but also of the local party apparatus. In other words, as George Grabowicz noted: "what started as a consequence of terror and administrative pressure gradually turned for many into a pattern of thinking and behaviour".<sup>51</sup>

### The Social Status of the Historian and the Non-Conformist Arena

The social status of the professional historian in late Soviet society was relatively high, even though somewhat diminished in comparison with the 1960s. Until the early 1970s the average salary of docents was equal to the salary of middle-ranking party officials, while the directors of academic institutions could earn more than a minister. In the 1970s, the salary of research and teaching staff was lower than incomes in construction, transport, or production.<sup>52</sup> One of the reasons for that was a notable

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<sup>50</sup> More on Soviet American studies see in Sergei I. Zhuk, *Soviet Americana: The Cultural History of Russian and Ukrainian Americanists* (London, New York: Tauris, 2018).

<sup>51</sup> Hryhorii (George) Grabowicz, 'Sovietyzatsiia ukrains'koï humanistyky', *Krytyka* 1, 2 (1997).

<sup>52</sup> Iaremchuk, *Mynule Ukraïny* (see note 29), 139.



increase in the number of research staff. In 1956, there were only 10 *doktors nauk* in the Ukrainian SSR, whereas in 1971 there were already 154 of them. In the same year, the number of history *kandidats* reached 1,265.<sup>53</sup>

A decent salary, the chance of an additional job on the side or grace-and-favour housing, the possibility of being recruited into Party structures, and, simultaneously, the notably strict degree of Party control over scholarly activities and teaching – all this created a situation where, according to Serhii Bilokin', working on history was as difficult as for the biblical "camel to pass through the eye of a needle".<sup>54</sup>

Ukrainian historians with troublesome biographies or even slightly unconventional views were forced to defend their *kandidat nauk* theses in fields complementary to history (for example, Serhii Bilokin' and Oleh Kupchyns'kyi wrote their dissertations in philology in Moscow and Odesa respectively) or to leave Ukraine in order to obtain their degree (like Iaroslav Dashkevych, who returned to Ukraine after a spell in Stalin's labour camps and defended his thesis *Armenian Colonies in Ukraine Based on 15–16<sup>th</sup>-Century Resources and Literature* in 1963 at the Academy of Sciences of the Armenian SSR in Yerevan).

Even though during Brezhnev's period of stabilization there were some societal currents appearing which were conducive to the creation of an academic environment, they were insufficient to prevail over a centralized and still highly ideological system. Moreover, within this system, non-conformism as well as existence as an 'independent researcher' were in practice not possible. Soviet 'disclosed' reviews had little in common with the practice of anonymous peer review. Nevertheless, there was still some space for different compromises and games with the system and this prevented the total uniformity of research strategies.

Important aspects of writing history during the Brezhnev period included the common practices of academic trips, internships in archives or museums (including the Central Archives of the USSR), and a well-organized system of shipping books and book exchange between libraries. Each of these aspects of academic life promoted academic mobility and developed communication between different centres of research.

These trends intertwined with the political and ideological demands made on history. On the one hand, a Soviet historian had to rely on the

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 153.

<sup>54</sup> Serhii Bilokin', 'Chy maiemo my istorychnu nauku?', *Literaturna Ukraïna*, 10 January 1991.

classics of Marxism-Leninism and the formal resolutions of the most recent Party congress, or at least to make a show of having done so. He or she did not have free access to some books and archival documents. On the other hand, there were strict controls over the formal quality of research. The practice of multiple editing and manuscript review not only standardized the style of writing but also minimized factual mistakes and simple negligence.

Basic principles of intra-departmental standards and hierarchy were also forming among and between certain historians. As remembered by a Moscow researcher of French history, Pavel Uvarov, even though positivism was officially criticized, it was still considered the measure of scientific dignity, whereas "the public saw an ideological message in the very choice of Byzantine aesthetics as a subject of study".<sup>55</sup> Nikolai Koposov called this feature of Soviet history writing "the ideology of professionalism", according to which exemplary research was characterized by a technically flawless empirical analysis. While giving credit to this standpoint, Koposov insisted that the ideology of professionalism encouraged the development of empirical studies, but also nearly paralyzed intellectual theoretical work and resulted in a compromise which protected not only the scholars from the system, but also the system from the scholars.<sup>56</sup> In contrast with neighbouring socialist Poland, in Soviet Ukraine neither methodological pluralism nor attempts at a critical reassessment of Stalin's version of Marxism re-emerged after the end of the cult of Stalin.<sup>57</sup>

Nevertheless, during the Brezhnev era if one knew the rules of the ideological games in operation, one could choose to break them. A book printed in the Nazi-occupied territories might be referenced if the author intentionally 'made a mistake' with the date of publication. The works of colleagues who had been denounced (especially translations) were published under the names of those authors who were allowed to publish. "Covert opposition to an exclusive focus on the 'Russian brother' involved researching the relations of the non-Russian peoples between

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<sup>55</sup> Kirill Kobrin and Pavel Uvarov, "Svoboda u istorikov poka jest": Vo vsiakom sluhaie – jest' ot chego bezhat', *Neprikosnovennyi zapas* 55, 5 (2007): 39, 44. Compare the same observation about post-Stalinist Polish historiography in Rafał Stobiecki, *Historiografia PRL: Ani dobra, ani mądra, ani piękna... ale skomplikowana. Studia i szkice* (Warszawa: TRIO, 2007), 193, 209.

<sup>56</sup> Nikolai Koposov, *Khvatit ubivat' koshek! Kritika sotsial'nykh nauk* (Moscow: NLO, 2005), 168–9, 192.

<sup>57</sup> Stobiecki, *Historiografia PRL* (see note 55), 66.

themselves”.<sup>58</sup> These methods of survival and this Aesopian language are important topics for special research. No less important were individual instances of a more open non-conformism. Iaroslav Dzyra, sacked from the Institute of History, wrote proudly about himself: “I have not worked a single day for eleven years, and for seventeen years I have not written a single line without submitting to the KGB threats of becoming a secret informant”.<sup>59</sup> Iaroslav Dashkevych conveyed a similar thought in a different way:

“Even though seven of the best years of my youth were spent in prisons and special camps, they are what formed me as a citizen. Even though sixteen years were lost to unemployment, paradoxically it is this that made me a scholar.”<sup>60</sup>

Examples of such obvious opposition are rare. Iaroslav Isaievych said of Fedir Shevchenko, dismissed from the position of Director of the Institute of Archaeology in 1972, that he “was good at making only the most necessary concessions” and “at standing up for questions of fundamental importance as much as possible”.<sup>61</sup> One of the tools used for standing up for certain views were quotations from Lenin – another aspect of ‘dialectical tightrope walking’. On 30 May 1959 Ivan Kryp’iakevych wrote to Shevchenko: “Lenin should be used sparingly and only for the most important points, not on practically every page”.<sup>62</sup>

Even though the games historians played with the authorities had evident limitations and the majority of researchers were not involved in them, it seems important to highlight their existence and the existence of this dialogue, even if it was unequal.<sup>63</sup> When it comes to the Sovietization

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<sup>58</sup> Iaroslav Isaievych, *Ukrain’s’ke knyhovydannia*, (L’viv: Instytut ukrainoznavstva imeni I. Kryp’iakevycha NAN Ukraïny, 2002) 181.

<sup>59</sup> Iaroslav Dzyra, ‘Chvert’ stolittia poruch’, in *Istoryk Olena Kompan: Materialy do biohrafiï*, ed. Iaroslav Kompan (Kyïv: Kyievo-Mohylians’ka Akademiia, 2007), 457.

<sup>60</sup> Iaroslav Dashkevych, ‘...Uchy nelozhnymy ustamy skazaty pravdu’: *Istorychna eseïstyka (1989–2008)* (Kyïv: Tempora, 2011), 295.

<sup>61</sup> Iaroslav Isaievych, ‘Fedir Pavlovych: spohady i rozdumy’, in *‘Istynu vstanovliuie sud istorii’* (see note 27), 177.

<sup>62</sup> *Ukraïna*, vol. 8., (see note 33), 525.

<sup>63</sup> More on subjectivity of Ukrainian Soviet intelligentsia in its dialogue with the authorities see Serhy Yekelchuk, ‘How the “Iron Minister” Kaganovich Failed to Discipline Ukrainian Historians: A Stalinist Ideological Campaign Reconsidered’, *Nationalities Papers* 27, 4 (1999): 579–604; Serhy Yekelchuk, ‘Stalinist Patriotism as Imperial Discourse: Reconciling the Ukrainian and Russian “Heroic Pasts”, 1939–45’, *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 3, 1 (2002): 51–80.

of scholarship, returning to the matter of choice poses the very important question of the responsibility of historians, both individually and collectively. This is only possible when one steps aside from the simplistic (though morally convenient) image of the authorities as holistic, alien, antagonistic forces concentrated in one place, the borders of which are fixed and not in doubt.<sup>64</sup> Posing the question about responsibility and choice should not detract from the obvious fact that the writing of history, just like the whole of Soviet society, fell victim to the communist system. The research problem and the moral problem lies in the fact that it became *not only* a victim.

### The Challenges of Perestroika

Rapid social and political processes of the end of the 1980s created circumstances for historians which made it difficult to keep up with the changing political climate. At the same time, the freedom to express one's thoughts (if any) now arose. In 1991, a leading Soviet medievalist, Aron Gurevich (1924–2006), described the methodology of Soviet historiography as “a hybrid of poorly-understood Marxism with the positivism which preceded it”.<sup>65</sup>

The methodology of Ukrainian Soviet historiography constituted an even more interesting mixture: elements of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century populist movement and of Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyi's historical scheme, adapted in the Soviet manner and forced to conform not only to the strictures of Marxism-Leninism but also to a very particular 'Russo-centrism', by means of which the history of the Ukrainian nation was viewed through its “logical development” towards “reunification” with Russia, which was always described as “progressive”.<sup>66</sup>

Most Ukrainian historians could not keep pace with Perestroika. Recalling those years, Stanislav Kul'chyts'kyi (born 1937) wrote honestly that he himself and most of his colleagues lagged behind in this rapidly evolving environment and their works were out of date before they ever

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<sup>64</sup> Aleksandr Etkind, *Non-fiction po-russki Pravda: Kniga otzyvov* (Moscow: NLO, 2007), 243.

<sup>65</sup> Aron Gurevich, 'O krizise sovremennoi istoricheskoi nauki', *Voprosy istorii*, 2–3 (1991): 24.

<sup>66</sup> For more details see Stepan Velychenko, 'Perebudova ta mynule nerossi's'kykh narodiv', *Ukrains'kyi istorychnyi zhurnal* 36, 4 (1992): 93.

reached the reader.<sup>67</sup> The first positive article about Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyi was published not in Ukraine, but in the Moscow newspaper *Izvestiia* (12 February 1988).<sup>68</sup> The very fact of the Great Famine of 1932–3 was first recognized in the Moscow journal *Communist* in November 1987.<sup>69</sup>

Ukrainian historians would drastically change their evaluations and topics of research in the course of a few months.<sup>70</sup> They were unable to satisfy the enormous public interest in history. In practice they gave way to their predecessors, whose works had been prohibited during the Soviet period. A real bestseller, with more than a hundred thousand copies printed, was *Ukraine: A History* by the Canadian scholar Orest Subtelny (1941–2016), published in English in 1988. This most modern and accurate *History* by Subtelny became a basic school and university textbook for several years.

Important historical source materials were printed in the newspaper *Literary Ukraine*, published by the Writers Union of Ukraine. The famous article by Serhii Bilokin' (born 1948), 'Do We Have Such a Thing as Academic History?', was first published in this newspaper.<sup>71</sup> The author of the work, a major bibliographer and a source study specialist, was not accepted into the graduate school of the Institute of History in the 1970s; in 1978, he defended a PhD thesis in philology in Moscow on the topic *The Subject and Objectives of Literary Source Studies*. Later, he was fired from the Central Scientific Library of the Academy of Sciences of the Ukrainian SSR.

In his programmatic article Serhii Bilokin' openly and ruthlessly acknowledged the severe centralization of academic history and noted that it had turned into a part of the state machinery of repression. He did not, however, offer any integral institutional solutions. In the section of the article headed "Is there hope?", Bilokin' intuitively highlighted the critical importance of the "self-development of academic research" and its liberation from the suffocating dictates of ideology. He simultaneously under-

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<sup>67</sup> Stanislav Kul'chyts'kyi, 'Istoriia i chas. Rozdumy istoryka', *Ukrains'kyi istorychnyi zhurnal* 36, 4 (1992): 10.

<sup>68</sup> S. Tsikora, 'K chitateliiu cherez polveka', *Izvestiia*, 12 February 1988.

<sup>69</sup> V. Danilov, 'Oktiabr' i agrarnaia politika partii', *Kommunist* 64, 16 (1987): 28–38.

<sup>70</sup> See more in Henadii Iefimenko, 'Rol' "Ukrains'koho istorichnoho zhurnalnu" u vysvitleni "bilykh pliam" istorii Ukraïny (1988–1991 rr.)', *Ukrains'kyi istorychnyi zhurnal* 51, 6 (2007): 93–118.

<sup>71</sup> Bilokin', 'Chy maiemo' (see note 54).

lined that “the sole warrant for the existence of Ukrainian academic history is a national state. Without a Ukrainian state there can be no Ukrainian history”.<sup>72</sup>

This intellectual oppositionist made an accurate diagnosis of the disease afflicting scholarship, but he was perplexed about possible methods of treatment. He expressed hope in the self-organizing and emancipatory role of “sacred liberty”, although he himself wrote that any attempt by a Ukrainian Soviet historian to rise from empiricism to generalization meant “inevitable ideologization”. Most historians had “never failed the system” they faithfully served. Bilokin’ did not see the risks in preserving the institutional structure of late Soviet academia and nor did he mention the VAK (the Higher Attestation Commission) or university autonomy. Neither did the Ukrainian diaspora offer a deliberate programme of institutional reform when it took over from Moscow the role of mediator between Ukrainian historians and international academia during the first years of independence. The grant programmes of foreign Ukrainian institutions (to begin with, the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute and the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies in Edmonton) were aimed at forming the new scholarly elite of Ukraine. The first grant-holders started to play key roles in Ukrainian intellectual life.

The events of 20–24 August 1991 had a decisive influence on the legal formalization of the dissolution of the USSR. On 26 August 1991 the Praesidium of the Supreme Soviet decided to discontinue the work of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union on the territory of Ukraine. On 30 August the Communist Party was banned. Numerous historians of the Party were no longer needed and many of them quickly redirected their career paths into researching and promoting the ‘Ukrainian national idea’. Within a year-and-a-half to two years, former historians of the Party blended in with the rest of the historians in Ukraine. The appeal from Orest Subtelny not to give up Marxism in too much haste<sup>73</sup> was not heeded by anyone.

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Ukrainian Soviet historiography was heterogeneous and dynamic despite all attempts by the authorities (especially in the era of Stalin) to collectiv-

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Orest Subtelny, ‘The Current State of Ukrainian Historiography’, *Journal of Ukrainian Studies* 18, 1–2 (1993): 42.

ize and ideologize it. On the one hand, the history of Ukraine, as well as the very words 'Ukraine' and 'Ukrainian' were finally legitimized within the Soviet system. On the other hand, this legitimization took place under strict control involving physical repression and bans on the mention of certain names and books. Despite the severity of the battle against 'Ukrainian bourgeois nationalism', the Soviet version of Ukrainian history was national history wrapped in Marxist-Leninist packaging. The history of the Ukrainian SSR was studied and taught as the history of the Ukrainian nation from prehistoric times to the present.<sup>74</sup>

The Soviet authorities managed to eliminate academic solidarity and to make the universities and the Academy not simply dependent on the government, but rather an organic part of the state machinery. Even though we should in no way minimize the scope and extent of state repressions, it would be unfair to turn a blind eye to the academicians' involvement in and sometimes even their initiation of certain government actions. In this context, the image of Soviet academia as a collective victim of totalitarianism must be seriously reviewed.

Having inherited centralized academic institutions divided into the two separate branches of universities and research institutes, Ukraine chose the path of filling them with new ideological content rather than implementing painful systemic institutional reforms. It was this choice which explains the readiness to change flags and which was hastily and snobbishly characterized by most historians as a change in research methodology alongside the maintenance of a deeply Soviet institutional status quo. Recent dissidents were almost painlessly reintegrated back into the system that had previously excluded them. Deprived of any mechanisms of internal control, historical studies preferred not to reflect on its complex Soviet past. The historical profession rapidly lost its social status and now faced the challenges of physical survival and interaction with an increasingly commercialized international scientific community.

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<sup>74</sup> For comparative perspective on the same tendencies in socialist Polish, Czech, and East German historiographies see Maciej Górny, *Przede wszystkim ma być naród: Marksistowskie historiografie w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej* (Warszawa: TRIO, 2007).

ÉRIC AUNOBLE

## “TO REFLECT THE HISTORY OF THE PARTY AS IT WAS”<sup>1</sup>

### THE UKRAINIAN BRANCH OF THE MARX-ENGELS-LENIN INSTITUTE IN CRITICAL TIMES (1945–1949)

In the Soviet Union, Party history was indeed official history as the Communist Party had “the role of organizer and leader of the proletarian revolution” in 1917 and then “direct[ed] the first Socialist State of Workers and Peasants in the world”.<sup>2</sup> These lines are taken from *The Short Course of History of The Communist Party of The Soviet Union (Bolsheviks)* which became compulsory reading for millions of Soviet people when it was published in 1938 and until it was repudiated in 1956. In dealing with such an important subject, Party historians set themselves apart from their colleagues.

Since the 1920s they had worked within the framework of several Commissions for the History of the October Revolution and of the Communist Party (Istpart).<sup>3</sup> These commissions became institutes in the 1930s when they merged with the bodies responsible for the publishing of official Marxist literature and with those managing Lenin’s legacy. They were eventually centralized as a Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute (IMEL) with

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<sup>1</sup> Savchuk, 14 January 1948, F. 319, op. 2, s. 11, ark. 8, Central State Archive of Public Organizations of Ukraine (hereinafter: TsDAHO-U).

<sup>2</sup> *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks): Short Course* (New York: International Publishers, 1939), 1, 355. [Editor’s note: The titlepage of the *Short Course* can be found on the cover of this anthology.]

<sup>3</sup> Eric Aunoble, ‘Commemorating an Event That Never Occurred: Russia’s October in Soviet Ukraine in the 1920s’, in *Echoes of October International: Commemorations of the Bolshevik Revolution 1918–1990*, eds. Jean-François Fayet, Valérie Gorin, and Stefanie Prezioso (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2017), 26–53.



local branches.<sup>4</sup> The leaders of these institutions seem to have been the watchdogs of state power in the field of historiography. In Ukraine, for instance, Mykhailo Rubach, the head of the local Istpart, stood against the “Revision of the Bolshevik scheme concerning the driving forces and the character of the 1917 revolution in Ukraine” in 1930 and put an end to the influence of Matviï Iavors’kyï in historiography.<sup>5</sup> In 1944, Fedir Ienevych, the would-be director of the Ukrainian Branch of the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute, attacked Maksym Ryl’skyï, a famous poet, for his supposedly nationalist views on “Kyïv in the history of Ukraine”.<sup>6</sup>

Besides that, what do we know about Party historians? Those who handled the books they published would notice a relatively up-market quality and a bigger circulation than was normal for Soviet academic books, regardless of the real interest of these works. These publishing privileges could be linked with social privileges as the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute appears to have been a department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party.

Hence their members stood in the official gallery on Labour Day or on 7 November<sup>7</sup> because they belonged to the high *nomenklatura*. They were certainly conscious of it. “People say of us: because you work in the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute that means you are on the gravy train and that you do not do anything”. This last quotation is from the minutes of the Kyïv branch of the IMEL Party cell meeting in September 1947. The file is among dozens of others issued by the Communist Party organiza-

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<sup>4</sup> “Institut marksizma-leninizma pri TsK KPSS (IML)” & “Istpart”, in *Bol’shaia Sovetskaia Entsiklopediia*, ed. Aleksandr Prohorov, 3rd ed. (Moskva: Sovetskaia Entsiklopediia, 1969–78), vol. 10, 293–4; Nataliia Moskovchenko, ‘Dvoznachnist poniattia “iedynyi derzhavnyi arkhivnyi fond” (rol’ Istpartu v rozvytku arkhivnoi spravy Ukraïny)’, *Studii z arkhivnoi spravy ta dokumentoznavstva* 13 (2005), available at [https://web.archive.org/web/20190315101604/http://www.archives.gov.ua/Publicat/Studii/Studii\\_2005.13.01.php](https://web.archive.org/web/20190315101604/http://www.archives.gov.ua/Publicat/Studii/Studii_2005.13.01.php) (last visited 3 July 2020); Iuriï Shapoval, ‘Instytut Istorii Partii pry TsK Kompartii Ukraïny’, in *Entsyklopediia istorii Ukraïny*, ed. Valerii Smoliï (Kyïv: Vydavnytstvo Naukova dumka, 2005), vol. 3, 489–90.

<sup>5</sup> Mykhailo Rubach, ‘Proty revizii bil’shovyts’koï skhemy rushiinykh syl ta harakteru revol’iutsii 1917 roku na Ukraïni’, *Litopys revoliutsii*, 5 (1930), 5–98. See also TsK KP(b)U, ‘Dokladnaia zapiska istorika M. A. Rubacha o diskussii po voprosam istorii Ukraïny’, 1929, F. 1, op. 20, s. 2920, TsDAHO-U.

<sup>6</sup> Serhy Yekelchuk, *Stalin’s Empire of Memory: Russian-Ukrainian Relations in the Soviet Historical Imagination* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 56.

<sup>7</sup> Spiski vydelennykh sotrudnikov na poluchenie propuskov na torzhestvennye zasedaniia i pravitel’svennuiu tribunu v sviazi s revoliutsionnymi prazdnikami, 1 May to 7 November 1947, F. 319, op. 1, s. 41, ark. 1, 4, TsDAHO-U.

tion within the Institute since 1944.<sup>8</sup> These archival records have never been perused by historians,<sup>9</sup> which means that our knowledge of Party historians may be quite superficial.

This paper therefore aims to fill this gap by considering the Kyiv IMEL as an institution defined both by its function and the way in which it functioned. It is focused on the crucial 1945–9 period. These five years encompass the Institute's recovery from the war and the tightening of Stalin's rule in the form of Zhdanovism. This short period had a particular resonance in Ukraine in redefining the entanglement of national and Soviet identities especially in the field of history. This paper will first tackle historiographical questions, shedding light both on the working methods of historians and on the conceptual debates between them. Then the focus will shift to their activities, from writing books and reviews to participating in social agitation.

Finally, the staff of the institute will be studied because the role of individual characters and their career interests appears to be as important as their ideological motives. This paper will also shed light on the major crisis faced by the Kyiv IMEL during these years, a crisis which obliged the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine to intervene, with the personal involvement of Lazar' Kaganovich and Nikita Khrushchev.

### A Ukrainian Soviet Post-War Institution

The Kyiv IMEL was set up in March–April 1945, a few weeks before the capitulation of Nazi Germany. It was one of the bodies which local Soviet power wanted to restore as an attribute of Ukrainian statehood.<sup>10</sup> In this respect it indicated the special rank of the republic: it seems that only in Moscow and Kyiv the Party History Institute officially retained the name of 'Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute' from 1945 whereas in Belarus it quickly

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<sup>8</sup> Pervynna orhanizatsiia Kompartii Ukraïny Instytutu istorii partii pry TsK KPU – filialu Instytutu marksyzmu-leninizmu pry TsK KPRS, Kyïv, 1944–87, F. 319, TsDAHO-U.

<sup>9</sup> With the exception of a Moscow-based historian who ordered two files in the early 1970's.

<sup>10</sup> For a similar phenomenon, see Éric Aunoble, 'Ukrkinokhronika: ispytanie voïnoi', in *Perezhit' voïnu: Sovetskaia kinoindustriia 1939–1949*, ed. Valérie Pozner (Moskva: Rosspeñ, 2018), 130–43.

lost this title.<sup>11</sup> It was a real renaissance for the Ukrainian Istpart which had previously gone through troubled times. Like many Ukrainian cultural institutions, the Istpart was on the brink of collapse in 1933. Its journal, *The Chronicle of Revolution (Litopys Revoliutsii)*, had ceased publication and its activity thereafter appeared negligible. Only in 1939, when Ukrainian history became a main concern in order to justify the Sovietization of the ‘new western regions’, could a certain revitalization be felt. The Istpart took the name of the Ukrainian Branch of the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute and it appointed a new group of collaborators.<sup>12</sup>

It was no easy task to restore such an institution in 1945. The gathering and hiring of staff took a whole year, judging by Party membership figures: from 10 people in March 1945 and 20 in December, it reached 35 in September 1946 and did not rise afterwards although it still lacked qualified technical employees such as typists. The living conditions of those involved in the work of the Institute were appalling, as were those of other Kyïv city dwellers. People had to live in overcrowded rooms in strangers’ flats. The Institute had to organize people to collect wood and potatoes so that they could have heat and food. This deprivation lasted at least until 1947<sup>13</sup> and it had consequences for the work itself. The Institute, which was organized into three departments (one for the archive, one for the translation of Marxist-Leninist classics, and one for history<sup>14</sup>), also suffered from material precarity although it was housed in the building of the Central Committee: there were no locks on the archival depositories, basic furniture was lacking or in poor condition, and there was no maintenance worker.<sup>15</sup> Staff compared their conditions to those in other

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<sup>11</sup> The *Filial Instituta K. Marksa, F. Engel'sa, V. Lenina*, Minsk existed from February 1945 until August 1946. Then it took back its pre-war name: *Institut istorii partii pri Tsentral'nom komitete Kommunisticheskoi partii (bol'shevikov) Belorussii (TsK KP(b)B)*. See the description of the F. 1440 fond of the National Archive of Belarus, available at <http://fk.archives.gov.by/fond/108475/> (last visited 24 April 2018).

<sup>12</sup> Shapoval, ‘Instytut Istorii Partii’ (see note 4), 489.

<sup>13</sup> Protokoly zasiedanii partiinogo biuro, 11 June 1945, F. 319, op. 1, s. 4, ark. 4, TsDAHO-U; *ibid.*, 4 March 1946, F. 319, op. 1, s. 17, ark. 2, TsDAHO-U; *ibid.*, 10 Feb. 1947, F. 319, op. 1, s. 32, ark. 13, TsDAHO-U; *ibid.*, 17 Jan. 1947, F. 319, op. 1, s. 31, ark. 11, TsDAHO-U; *ibid.*, 14 Aug. 1947, F. 319, op. 1, s. 32, ark. 53, TsDAHO-U.

<sup>14</sup> Materialy k protokolam Politbiuro TsK KP(b)U, K sessii 20.06.1947, ‘Otchet o rabote Ukrainskogo filiala Instituta Marksa-Engel'sa-Lenina pri TsK VKP(b) – Insituta Istorii Partii pri TsK KP(b)U’, F. 1, op. 6, s. 1121, ark. 3-9, TsDAHO-U.

<sup>15</sup> Protokol i rezoliutsii obshchego partiinogo sobraniia, 21 June 1945, F. 319, op. 1, s. 3, ark. 18-21, TsDAHO-U; Stenogramma partiinogo sobraniia, 5-8 September 1947, F. 319, op. 1, s. 30, ark. 62, TsDAHO-U; Vypiska iz protokola biuro gorkoma KP(b)U po

institutes; some were disappointed and inferred a radical moral: "The stomach comes first and the rest afterwards".<sup>16</sup>

### The Soviet Organization of Work

Despite this situation, the activity of the Ukrainian Branch of the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute was organized as in any other Soviet enterprise, according to a model of integrated production and work planning. In order to accomplish the task of developing "Party historical scholarship",<sup>17</sup> the Institute was set up as a *kombinat* encompassing a complete process from raw material to ready-to-use end-product. The Party archive was kept under the control and authority of the Institute<sup>18</sup> as the basis for research by Institute historians who were the only ones allowed to work with it. Even though translations of the works of great revolutionary thinkers and leaders had essentially an agitational character for the masses, they also provided useful guidelines for Party historians who were sure to find the books they needed in the Institute's library.

Like all Soviet workers, Party historians were dispatched in brigades (*brigady*) headed by a brigadier (*brigadir*). Each brigade was dedicated to a specific task, usually the preparation of a book, a chapter of which was assigned to every member of the brigade.<sup>19</sup> This meant that writing was not a matter of individual creation but a collective process consisting of standardized phases. The author of a chapter had first to submit theses of his future work, which were discussed by the brigade or even by the entire collective. When the manuscript was completed, it had to go through a similar vetting process: colleagues reviewed material and then

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voprosu vypolneniia postanovleniia TsK KP(b)U 'O politicheskikh oshibkakh i neudovletvoritel'noi rabote Instituta istorii Ukrainy AN USSR', 12 July 1947, F. 319, op. 1, s. 26, ark. 53, TsDAHO-U.

<sup>16</sup> Stenogramma partiinogo sobraniia, 5-8 September 1947, F. 319, op. 1, s. 33, ark. 15, 27, TsDAHO-U.

<sup>17</sup> As in the title of this study: S. S. Dibrova, *U istokov istoriko-partiinnoi nauki na Ukraine* (Kyiv: Politizdat Ukrainy, 1984).

<sup>18</sup> This seems not to have been the case in Belarus, see the description of the F. 551-P Fund of the Party archive (*Tsentral'nyi partiinyi arkhiv Glavarkhiva Respubliki Belarus'*, Minsk), available at <http://fk.archives.gov.by/fond/85558/> (last visited 24 April 2018).

<sup>19</sup> For instance see *Protokoly zasedanii partiinogo biuro*, 7 December 1948, F. 319, op. 2, s. 11, ark. 85, TsDAHO-U; *ibid.*, 22 March 1949, F. 319, op. 2, s. 26, ark. 14, TsDAHO-U.

meetings and special commissions gave their opinion. Some collaborators asserted that writing theses was a waste of time, which sounds sensible considering the long process involved. However, it was regarded by the Institute as a necessity, thereby implying that historians should work collectively and that they must accept criticism.<sup>20</sup>

Indeed, a Party historian had to be ready for criticism as his work could be controlled in detail at any stage. He would even have to report at a meeting how he had noted down quotations from archival sources and how he stored his papers in folders and so on. “There is no need to request from every author a unique method for work and systematization, but research work and systematization work should correspond according to strictly scientific principles”.<sup>21</sup> Alongside this kind of control seeking to improve the historian’s skills, there was also a proposal to implement personal work plans as a means of steering research work at an all-Institute level. It would have been a way of ensuring that everyone would participate in tackling certain ideologically important issues.<sup>22</sup>

### The Historians’ Method

During these numerous Party meetings and production conferences, historians had the opportunity to exchange views both about methods and about key points of revolutionary history. Since they took place when Stalinism was at its height, recurrent remarks about the use of references and quotations are particularly interesting in helping us to understand how historians worked. Lenin’s and Stalin’s works were considered as the “Holy of Holies (*sviataia sviatykh*) of our Party”. Hence their translation had “an enormous and decisive importance in the struggle of the whole KP(b)U for the further education of the Ukrainian peo-

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<sup>20</sup> Protokol zasedaniia partiinogo biuro, 20 November 1946, F. 319, op. 1, s. 17, ark. 42, TsDAHO-U; Protokol i rezoliutsii obshchego partiinogo sobraniia, 17 January 1947, F. 319, op. 1, s. 31, ark. 1–3, TsDAHO-U; Protokol zasedaniia partiinogo biuro, 10 January 1947, F. 319, op. 1, s. 32, ark. 1, TsDAHO-U; Stenogramma partiinogo sobraniia, 5–8 September 1947, F. 319, op. 1, s. 30, ark. 5, 54, 94, TsDAHO-U.

<sup>21</sup> Protokol zasedaniia partiinogo biuro, 3 February 1948, F. 319, op. 2, s. 11, ark. 11, TsDAHO-U; *ibid.*, 23 March 1948, F. 319, op. 2, s. 11, ark. 27, TsDAHO-U for another case of checking individual work.

<sup>22</sup> Stenogramma partiinogo sobraniia, 5–8 September 1947, F. 319, op. 1, s. 30, ark. 12, TsDAHO-U.

ple in the spirit of the most advanced Marxist-Leninist ideology".<sup>23</sup> One can guess how careful an historian must have been with quotations.

As Institute colleagues criticized one another sharply, there was dangerous innuendo in saying that someone "distorted quotations and articles by Vladimir Il'ich Lenin".<sup>24</sup> General methodological advice could also have political meaning. When reading that it is necessary "to check quotations carefully, to check the surnames of participants in the struggle and of political figures in order to avoid political mistakes",<sup>25</sup> one had to bear in mind that Bolsheviks who would later be qualified as 'enemies of the people' should not be mentioned and should be absent from all history books. Actual knowledge of the purges was essential even though 1937 as such was never mentioned.

Still, political correctness was not enough for the writing of a good paper and some 'professional ethics' were recognized as such by the institution. This is made obvious by the case of Il'ia Premysler, a Party historian who appears to be in a marginal situation. He is one of four out of thirty scientific colleagues who were not affiliated to the Communist party. He was criticized for that, with one of his colleagues saying that his depiction of the past was "classless" and that his positions about "October in Ukraine" were "non-Party" ones. While questioning his right to write about political topics, she repeated that she "respected" him.<sup>26</sup> And Premysler must have been respected by the institution indeed for he worked there immediately before the war and was employed again in 1946.

Notwithstanding his weak institutional position, Premysler could defend his position against ideological conformism as late as 1949, stating that "one must not write a monograph only by relying on material by Lenin, but on the contrary one should peruse all the available factual material", including "factual material from enemy sources", as he added on another occasion. He concluded that "it is hard to evaluate a piece of

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<sup>23</sup> Otchet o rabote biuro partorganizatsii ukrainskogo filiala IMEL (...) za period s noiabria 1946 g. do dekabria 1947 g., December 1947, F. 319, op. 2, s. 3, ark. 12, TsDAHO-U.

<sup>24</sup> Protokol zasedaniia partiinogo biuro, 2 March 1949, F. 319, op. 2, s. 26, ark. 9, TsDAHO-U.

<sup>25</sup> Protokol i rezoliutsii obshchego partiinogo sobraniia, 17 January 1947, F. 319, op. 1, s. 31, ark. 1, TsDAHO-U.

<sup>26</sup> Stenogramma partiinogo sobraniia, 5–8 September 1947, F. 319, op. 1, s. 30, ark. 41, TsDAHO-U.

work by arithmetically counting quotations”.<sup>27</sup> As the acknowledgement of the importance of archival materials did not outweigh the need for political correctness, the Party historian faced a double bind. This can be felt in a statement about the making of a book to be entitled *Lenin and Stalin Inspiring and Organizing the Victory of Soviet Power in Ukraine*. A chapter was devoted to the Sovietization of western Ukraine in 1939. Real issues about the Communist movement in Galicia and Volhynia were taboo. For instance, the existence of a Communist Party of Western Ukraine (KPZU), which had been disbanded by the *Komintern* with the Communist Party of Poland in 1938, is never mentioned. Still, this blindness to facts may have had other causes than mere political correctness.

In the immediate post-war period, there was as yet no historian from western Ukraine. Party historians still had an outside view on western Ukraine in 1949. This may explain why this chapter is described as “reaching a dead end with archival material which is not examined (even including our own archive). There should be direct (or at least indirect) evidence of the way Stalin’s name did mobilize workers from western regions for the struggle”.<sup>28</sup> One may doubt that such evidence existed. More than Stalin’s influence, historians tended to show “the idea of liberating western Ukraine as submission to the military and strategic interests of the Soviet state”. This was surely closer to historical truth, but it was considered as politically incorrect by the reviewer.<sup>29</sup>

These discussions about the use of sources show that things were a bit more subtle than one might expect. In a previous research paper, I studied how Ukrainian newsreel makers perceived their job during the same period. Shooting ‘real people’ in their own environment, they crafted news reports far from journalistic naturalism but nonetheless excluding any *instsenirovka*, i.e. obvious staging.<sup>30</sup> Historians faced the same double

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<sup>27</sup> Protokol zasedaniia partiinogo biuro, 10 May 1949, F. 319, op. 2, s. 26, ark. 2, TsDAHO-U; Protokol obshchego partiinogo sobraniia, 28 June 1949, F. 319, op. 1, s. 25, ark. 21, TsDAHO-U.

<sup>28</sup> Protokol obshchego partiinogo sobraniia, 28 June 1949, F. 319, op. 1, s. 25, ark. 21, TsDAHO-U.

<sup>29</sup> Protokol zasedaniia partiinogo biuro, 7 December 1948, F. 319, op. 2, s. 11, ark. 87, TsDAHO-U. See also: Jan T. Gross, *Revolution from Abroad: The Soviet Conquest of Poland’s Western Ukraine and Western Belorussia* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002).

<sup>30</sup> Éric Aunoble, ‘Faire de l’étranger un Soviétique grâce au cinéma: La soviétisation de l’Ukraine occidentale aux actualités filmées (1939–1949)’ in *L’Étranger dans la littérature et les arts*, ed. Marie-Christine Autant-Mathieu (Lille: Les presses du Septentrion, 2014), 145–6.

bind as they were obliged to comply both with an *a priori* narrative and to rely on real sources such as archival material.

### Historiographical Debates

We saw that Party historians were on a slippery slope, trying not to fall over the precipice into professional ineptitude or mechanical dogmatism. This should lead us to consider their arguments over historical analysis quite seriously. As in the 1920s, the nexus of all disputes is the relative importance of the Ukrainian factor in the revolution which occurred in 1917–21. Some proposed insisting on the relationship between the “national-liberation movement and bourgeois nationalism” but the official line, voiced by Director Ienevych, was to highlight the “protracted character of the October Socialist Revolution in Ukraine”. A series of lectures for the working collective was scheduled, including one about “the specificities of the formation and development of the bourgeoisie and of the proletariat in Ukraine” implying that social development could explain “the conditions and difficulties of the struggle” for the socialist revolution, as another lecture is titled.<sup>31</sup>

This approach was a way to avoid tackling the national question as a decisive factor in the revolution and corresponded with the analysis officially promoted since the publication of Rubach’s article in 1930. It also answered the need to renew the fight against ‘bourgeois nationalism’. Western Ukraine had recently been Sovietized but was not yet under total control as the Banderist guerrilla struggle continued for years after 1945. Hence in 1947, a special publication was planned, a collection of documents about *The Struggle of the KP(b)U Against Bourgeois Nationalism*.<sup>32</sup> Still, a fundamental question remained: what is nationalism and where does it begin? Obviously, the definition was so broad under Stalin that even an orthodox communist was at risk of contamination. In discussion over a book on *The Struggle for the Creation of the RSDRP and of Working-Class Organizations in Ukraine*, a radical point of view was voiced: “Is it

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<sup>31</sup> Protokol zasedaniia partiinogo biuro, 3 July 1947, F. 319 op. 1, s. 32, ark. 60, TsDAHO-U ; Plan raboty partiinoi organizatsii, March–December 1947, F. 319, op. 1, s. 29, ark. 8, TsDAHO-U.

<sup>32</sup> Protokol zasedaniia partiinogo biuro, F. 319, op. 1, s. 32, ark. 55, TsDAHO-U. On the same topic, see also Protokol obshchego partiinogo sobraniia, 28 April 1947, F. 319, op. 1, s. 31, ark. 19, 21, TsDAHO-U.



possible to speak about the eradication of nationalism and induce / infer that we fought to a certain extent for social-democratic organizations in Ukraine apart from the RSDRP? ... This smells like nationalism.”<sup>33</sup>

One can therefore understand the reason why some “just fear to raise the question of nationalism”.<sup>34</sup> This kind of discussion could not proceed much further, as any form of Ukrainian agency was considered nationalist. No specific Ukrainian revolutionary history could exist. For instance, to claim that “the agrarian question in Ukraine was solved somehow differently from the agrarian question in Russia” was a “wrong statement”.<sup>35</sup> There is no evidence that such a ‘hard-line’ stance on the national question resulted from the pressure of Moscow colleagues. The fact that some historians were Civil War veterans (as will be shown later) is a more convincing reason: except for *Borotbist* grafting, the first generation of Ukrainian communists was insensitive to Ukrainianness.

### Publications and Activities

The description of an integrated research centre practising planned and collective work might sound positive. However, just as in the Soviet economy as a whole, the picture of real activity is quite different when one looks beyond the front window. Besides translation of Marx, Engels, and Lenin, and the works of Stalin, the Institute planned the publication of at least nine jointly-written books between 1945–9:

*A Short History of the KP(b)U*

*Resolutions and Documents of the KP(b)U*

*Bolshevik Organizations in Ukraine in the Struggle for the Victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution*

*October in Ukraine*

*Lenin and Stalin Inspiring and Organizing the Victory of Soviet Power in Ukraine*

*Lenin and Stalin. Speeches About Ukraine*

*The Struggle of the KP(b)U Against Bourgeois Nationalism in Ukraine*

*The KP(b)U During the Great Patriotic War,*

and a journal, *Nauchnye Zapiski IMEL*.

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<sup>33</sup> Stenogramma partiinogo sobraniia, 5–8 September 1947, F. 319, op. 1, s. 30, ark. 40, TsDAHO-U.

<sup>34</sup> Protokol i rezoliutsii obshchego partiinogo sobraniia, 28 April 1947, F. 319, op. 1, s. 31, ark. 20, TsDAHO-U.

<sup>35</sup> Protokol zasedaniia partiinogo biuro, 7 December 1948, F. 319, op. 2, s. 11, ark. 87, TsDAHO-U.

Of these, only two were actually published: *Bolshevik Organizations in Ukraine in the Struggle for the Victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution* in 1949 and *Volodymyr Il'ich Lenin and Iosyp Visarionovych Stalin: Organizers and Leaders of the Great October Socialist Revolution* in 1951. We can also include two brochures not mentioned in the plan: *The Agrarian Programme of Social-Democracy in the First Russian Revolution, 1905–1907* (1947) and *Iskra Organizations in Ukraine: A Collection of Documents* (1950).<sup>36</sup> Approximately a mere 36% of the plan was carried out.

An easy rationalization of this low productivity would be to blame the numerous meetings, as if there was too much talk and not enough action. In fact, the problem seems to have depended not on formal organizational processes requiring discussion and review of the manuscripts but on their actual circulation. They were never passed from colleague to colleague but only via the central administration of the Institute. When the theses or the draft of a chapter were completed, they had to be passed to the director who appointed a reviewer. As the director did not always show willing, this implied a huge loss of time. Reviewers were appointed in haste after manuscripts had been locked for several months in the director's office. Afterwards, reviews and corrections had to be made in very short order.<sup>37</sup> Work schedules were also disrupted for another reason: the director constantly changed the tasks he delegated, switching priorities from one project to another and redistributing the chapters between the different members of staff.<sup>38</sup>

This disorganization had a profound impact on the collection of essays titled *Bolshevik Organizations in Ukraine in the Struggle for the Victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution*. In fact, this book which was eventually published in early 1949 had been ready for print in October 1941. Of course, the war froze the project and in 1946 it was decided to improve the material with a new foreword. After a conflict rose between the author of a new foreword and the Director, the whole project went through a series of negative peer reviews implying the rewriting of several chapters. From this point on, the project management seems erratic. A

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<sup>36</sup> All published in Ukrainian by Derzhpolitydav publishing house.

<sup>37</sup> Protokol zasiedaniia partiinogo biuro, 6 March 1949, F. 319, op. 2, s. 26, ark. 8, TsDAHO-U; Protokol i rezoliutsii obshchego partiinogo sobraniia, 17 January 1947, F. 319, op. 1, s. 31, ark. 1, TsDAHO-U.

<sup>38</sup> Stenogramma partiinogo sobraniia, 5–8 September 1947, F. 319, op. 1, s. 30, ark. 96, TsDAHO-U.

draft of the book was even sent to the Central Committee before being corrected and approved, giving an impression of offhandedness.<sup>39</sup> This shows how loose internal control was in an institution supposed to exert a totalitarian monitoring over historical scholarship.

Yet Institute authors did participate as historians in ideological policing at different levels. They were asked to review articles and books written by non-Party colleagues. Sources on this are scarce, maybe due to Stalinist compartmentalization: as in the Institute itself, direct dialogue was avoided or kept under strict control. It is difficult to determine, however, whether review by IMEL historians was a form of political censorship or a relatively normal type of academic relationship.<sup>40</sup>

The only document commenting at length on an essay is titled ‘Remarks About the Material Prepared by Profesor Petrovs’kyi on the “Dismemberment and Enslavement of Ukrainian Land in the Historical Past”’.<sup>41</sup> It is particularly interesting because it concerns a renowned modern-era historian<sup>42</sup> and it tackles historical events far outside the realm of Party history, beginning with Bohdan Khmelnyts’kyi’s revolt. Nevertheless, the comments mainly concern form rather than politics and their tone is far milder than it might have been on the subject of papers written by colleagues at the Institute.

Ambiguity between political activism and professional involvement in other duties did not exist for Party historians. They were fully committed as agents of official propaganda, especially during elections to the Supreme Soviet. They gave lectures outside the Institute about the 1936 Constitution, the role of the Communist Party, the status of women, the international situation and the ‘friendship of nations’. They were also required to

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<sup>39</sup> Protokol zasiedaniia partiinogo biuro, 31 July 1946, F. 319, op. 1, s. 17, ark. 20, TsDAHO-U; *ibid.*, 29 May 1947, F. 319, op. 1, s. 32, ark. 33, TsDAHO-U; *ibid.*, 3 July 1947, F. 319, op. 1, s. 32, ark. 41, TsDAHO-U; Stenogramma partiinogo sobraniia, 5–8 September 1947, F. 319, op. 1, s. 30, ark. 9, 48, 54, 94, TsDAHO-U; Protokol obshchego partiinogo sobraniia, 1 February 1949, F. 319, op. 1, s. 25, ark. 6, TsDAHO-U.

<sup>40</sup> Protokol obshchego partiinogo sobraniia, 20 Jan. 1948, F. 319, op. 2, s. 10, ark. 3a, TsDAHO-U; Protokol zasiedaniia partiinogo biuro, 7 December 1948, F. 319, op. 2, s. 11, ark. 85, TsDAHO-U.

<sup>41</sup> Protokol zasiedaniia partiinogo biuro, 7 December 1948, F. 319, op. 2, s. 11, ark. 90a–94, TsDAHO-U.

<sup>42</sup> Iurii Pinchuk, ‘Petrovs’kyi Mykola Neonovych’, in *Entsyklopediia Istorii Ukraïny*, available at [http://www.history.org.ua/?termin=Petrovskiy\\_M](http://www.history.org.ua/?termin=Petrovskiy_M) (last visited 24 April 2019).

officiate at polling stations.<sup>43</sup> Inside the Institute, too, colleagues were subject to the propaganda they also helped to disseminate. Appearing under the name of 'conferences on theory', it may seem difficult to distinguish them from further academic meetings. The main difference lay in the agenda, which did not rely on the Institute's work plan but depended closely on themes promoted by the regime.

In 1947–8, they had to study the life of Stalin and chapters of the first volume of his *Collected Works* were distributed among the Institute's authors in order to organize a special conference on the topic. Stalinism did not consist only of the Stalin personality cult. One reads repeated warnings against "servility toward western bourgeois culture". In 1949, the political atmosphere became even more suffocating when a lecture was planned on "the anti-popular essence of cosmopolitanism".<sup>44</sup>

### Career Strategies

The anti-semitic campaign which began in early 1949 could indeed have had severe consequences in an Institute where there were four Jews out of 30 research staff. There were no consequences, however, at least until the end of the year. In a workplace where the question of anti-semitism was twice raised publicly in 1946–7, as a result of professional or family squabbles, this sounds astonishing. It indicates that the human factor might ultimately have been of more importance than 'high politics' and is a spur to look more closely at the persons comprising the staff.

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<sup>43</sup> Protokol zasedaniia partiinogo biuro, 31 Oct. 1945, F. 319, op. 1, s. 4, ark. 5, 9, TsDAHO-U; *ibid.*, 31 October 1945, F. 319, op. 1, s. 3, ark. 13, TsDAHO-U; Protokol obshchego sobraniia sotrudnikov instituta, politinformatsiia, (...) po vyboram v verkhovnyi sovet, 2 Januray–27 February 1946, F. 319, op. 1, s. 10, TsDAHO-U; Protokol obshchego partiinogo sobraniia, F. 319, op. 1, s. 16, ark. 1–6, TsDAHO-U; Protokol zasedaniia partiinogo biuro, 21 Nov. 1947, F. 319, op. 1, s. 32, ark. 78, TsDAHO-U; Protokol obshchego partiinogo sobraniia, F. 319, op. 1, s. 31, ark. 37–39, TsDAHO-U.

<sup>44</sup> Protokol zasedaniia partiinogo biuro, 20 March 1947, F. 319, op. 1, s. 32, ark. 21, TsDAHO-U; Politinformatsiia o priniatii pis'ma tovarishchu Stalinu ot Ukrainского naroda. Tematicheskii plan o provedenii teoriticheskikh konferentsii, 25 October–6 November 1947, F. 319, op. 1, s. 34, ark. 3, TsDAHO-U; Protokol obshchego partiinogo sobraniia, 29 June 1948, F. 319, op. 2, s. 10, ark. 31, TsDAHO-U; Stenogramma partiinogo sobraniia, 5–8 September 1947, F. 319, op. 1, s. 30, ark. 12, 109, TsDAHO-U; Plan raboty, March 1949, F. 319, op. 2, s. 24, ark. 2, TsDAHO-U.

A list of research staff of the three departments established in 1947<sup>45</sup> is made up of 9 women and 21 men. It indicates that the oldest was 51 years old and the youngest 26, the mean age being 40. Ukrainians were an overwhelming majority of 22, compared with four Jews, three Russians, and one Belarusian (while one *tsygan* – Romani – worked as an historian but at another period). All except four were members of the Party or of the Komsomol. Except for one archivist, all had higher education, though for two translators it was incomplete. These figures bear witness to a great sociological homogeneity: the average scientific collaborator was a Ukrainian male in his forties with a postgraduate degree.

The main discrepancies among the staff concerned career. A third of the staff (10 people) were *kandidaty nauk* (PhD) and nearly half had the status of lecturers. Rank and status issues created tension inside the institution, especially among historians.

The “improvement of academic qualifications” was claimed to be a priority and it concerned mainly the junior research staff. Out of twelve historians, there were four of them. They were required to be helped to learn at least one foreign language and particularly in preparing for a PhD and needed to work under the guidance of a senior researcher, a *konsul'tant*. Despite this wishful thinking, the reality was very different: they were usually busy with purely technical tasks in the archive; besides that, junior research staff were pressured just like the others to return theses and papers and they were switched from project to project, each time changing their *konsul'tant*. This is why only one or two junior researchers at the Kyïv IMEL were actually preparing for a PhD.<sup>46</sup>

Senior researchers who already enjoyed a better position could be inclined to look for further sources of income, even at the expense of the Institute. Four of them taught at university, some conducting seminars at the Evening University of Marxism. The Director wanted to prevent any researcher from teaching more than four hours a week, which was a full-time position. However, it seems that at least one collaborator held two

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<sup>45</sup> Materialy k protokolam zasedanii Politbiuro za avgust 1947, F. 1, op. 6, s. 1130, ark. 53, TsDAHO-U.

<sup>46</sup> O povyshenii nauchnoi kvalifikatsii, 12 June 1946, F. 319, op. 1, s. 16, ark. 36–9, TsDAHO-U; Protokol zasedaniia partiinogo biuro, 20 November 1946, F. 319, op. 1, s. 17, ark. 42, TsDAHO-U; Protokoly obshchego partiinogo sobraniia, 17 January 1947, F. 319, op. 1, s. 31, ark. 3, TsDAHO-U; *ibid.*, 14 October 1947, F. 319, op. 1, s. 31, ark. 33, TsDAHO-U; *ibid.*, 8 December 1947, F. 319, op. 2, s. 3, ark. 4, TsDAHO-U; O rabote mladshikh nauchnykh sotrudnikov, 2 March 1948, F. 319, op. 2, s. 11, ark. 20–2, TsDAHO-U.

full-time teaching positions besides his research work at the IMEL. Consequently, he was unable to "provide quality content" and his attitude was compared to an "Italian strike", meaning here a go-slow at work. As mentioned above, the post-war period was a time of deprivation and it seems that teaching was indeed a welcome source of additional income even though 'slashing' (*sovместitel'stvo*) was considered harmful for the Institute.<sup>47</sup>

There was another way to earn more money without receiving censure: historians could publish newspaper articles popularizing their research.<sup>48</sup> This reveals an interesting aspect of their activities about which very little is said in Party meetings. Alongside collective work, Institute researchers published essays and monographs under their own names. Even though this content is barely discussed, it surpasses by far the official publication output of the Institute. Over the same period when the Kyiv IMEL issued only four books, its historians published seven.<sup>49</sup> Party historians seemed to do just as Soviet peasants did: while working little for the collective farm, they showed much greater energy on their private allotments.

### The Individual's Role in Historiography

Once the importance of personal motives has been highlighted, it might be interesting to see how individual characters interacted with the institu-

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<sup>47</sup> Stenogramma partiinogo sobraniia, 5–8 September 1947, F. 319, op. 1, s. 30, ark. 84, TsDAHO-U; Protokol obshchego partiinogo sobraniia, 16 November 1948, F. 319, op. 2, s. 10, ark. 42, TsDAHO-U; *ibid.*, 1 February 1949, F. 319, op. 1, s. 25, ark. 5, TsDAHO-U; *ibid.*, 17 February 1949, F. 319, op. 1, s. 25, ark. 8, TsDAHO-U; Protokol zasedaniia partiinogo biuro, 30 May 1949, F. 319, op. 2, s. 26, ark. 32, TsDAHO-U.

<sup>48</sup> Protokoly obshchego partiinogo sobraniia: 28 April 1947, F. 319, op. 1, s. 31, ark. 22; *ibid.*, 23 September 1947, F. 319, op. 1, s. 31, ark. 29; *ibid.*, 14 October 1947, F. 319, op. 1, s. 31, ark. 34.

<sup>49</sup> I. D. Nazarenko, ed., *Na dopomohu propahandystam* (Kyiv: Derzhpolityvdav, 1945); I. T. Kulyk, *Borot'ba robotnykiv i selian za vstanovlennia i zmitsnennia Radians'koï vlady na Ukraïni 1917–1920* (Kyiv: Derzhpolityvdav, 1947); I. P. Bystrenko, *Kyïvskyi 'Soiuz borot'by za vyzvolennia robotnychoho klasu'* (Kyiv: Derzhpolityvdav, 1947); I. M. Premisler, *Lenins'ka Iskra na Ukraïni* (Kyiv: Derzhpolityvdav, 1950); V. M. Samofalov, *Peremoha Lenins'ko-Stalins'koï stratehii i taktyky u velykii Zhovtnevii Sotsialistychnii Revoliutsii: Stenogramma lektsii* (Kyiv: Derzhpolityvdav, 1950); F. Los' and I. M. Premisler, eds., *Revoliutsiia 1905–1907 rr. na Ukraïni: Zbirnyk dokumentiv* (Kyiv: Derzhpolityvdav, 1950); I. T. Kulyk, *Borot'ba trudiashchych zakhidnoi Ukraïny za Radians'ku vladu i vozz'iednannia z Radians'koiu Ukraïnoi* (Kyiv: Derzhpolityvdav, 1951).

tional administration. Since the Kyïv IMEL faced a major crisis stemming from a conflict between the director Fedir Ienevych and the historian Anna Stankevich, it seems logical to shed light on these two. For comparison, the trajectory of one historian who did not suffer from this conflict will be described.

The latter historian is Ivan Tykhonovych Kulyk, who managed to publish two books during this troubled period, one in 1947 about the 1917 Revolution and the Civil War and the other in 1951 about the 1939 Sovietization of western Ukraine. Born in 1902, he was one of the old guard: he was a factory worker who had participated in the Civil War and had duties in the Cheka in the early 1920s. He joined the Party in 1924 during the ‘Lenin levy’ and soon became a full-time Young Communist League and Union representative. He started to teach history at Dnipropetrovsk University in the 1930s. He started working at the Institute in 1937 and defended his PhD in 1940. That same year he published two books on the political agenda, one about the Denikin expedition in Ukraine in 1919 and the other about the Soviet–Polish war in 1920.<sup>50</sup> Having fought once again, in the Great Patriotic War, he returned to the IMEL. He was admitted in 1950 to the Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences where he finished his career in 1963.<sup>51</sup>

This professional success seems paradoxical given the archival documents about him. There he appeared to be a very rude and awkward person who did not fit well into the collective. Six months after returning to the Institute from the war he was expelled from the Communist Party for personal misbehaviour: he wanted to abandon his wife and daughter. When asked to justify his behaviour toward his wife, Kulyk answered that he “would not live with a Kike” (*zhidovka*). When his daughter went to live in Kyïv, he even refused to take her in and she slept on a sofa at the Institute or was housed by some of his colleagues. He was also regularly criticized for his professional selfishness, not participating in collective work and publishing papers or giving lectures without permission.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> I. T. Kulyk, *Pokhid Denikina i joho rozhrom* (Kyïv: Derzhpolityvydav, 1940); idem, *Proval pol'skoho planu v 1920 r* (Kyïv: Derzhpolityvydav, 1940). The topicality of the latter is self-evident. The former book was also politically acute in 1940 in praising the Red Army.

<sup>51</sup> *Ukrains'ki Istoryky. Biobibliografichnyi dovidnyk. Vypusk I. Vcheni Instytutu Istorii Ukraïny. (Do 60-richchia ustanovy)* (Kyïv: Instytut istorii Ukraïny NAN Ukraïny, 1996), 126.

<sup>52</sup> Protokol obshchego partiinogo sobraniia, 3–6 April 1946, F. 319, op. 1, s. 16, ark. 22–32, TsDAHO–U; Protokol zasedaniia partiinogo biuro, F. 319, op. 1, s. 17, ark. 21–2, TsDAHO–U; Protokol obshchego partiinogo sobraniia, 17 January 1947,

Why was he allowed to stay at the Institute after being denied ideological work following his anti-semitic statement? Why was he reinstated in the Party against the decision of the *Raïkom* (the district Party committee)? It seems that Director Ienevych saved him. As for criticism about his professional behaviour, he could always say that at least he really was working, with a colleague confirming that he was one of only two Institute researchers busy digging through material in the archive.<sup>53</sup> Apart from that, one might think that his career path and political rectitude were his best features.

Even if Kulyk was a true Stalinist,<sup>54</sup> this 'virtue' does not suffice to explain his career success, for people with a similar profile had a much less desirable fate. Anna Nikolaevna Stankevich was born in 1897 near Minsk. Even though information about her early years is unavailable, we are inclined to believe that she was deeply committed to Bolshevism, due to the fact that she became a Party member in 1920, which also earned her social promotion in the 1920s–30s. In 1936, she graduated from the Institute of Red Professors and entered the Ukrainian IMEL in 1940. That same year, she published a guide to the Kyïv Lenin Museum. In March 1945, she was one of the first to be appointed to the restored Kyïv IMEL. At the same period, she was appointed as secretary to the Institute Party cell, thereby becoming the number two in the institution. She was chosen to write the foreword for *Bolshevik Organizations in Ukraine in the Struggle for the Victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution*, which confirms her leading role.<sup>55</sup>

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F. 319, op. 1, s. 31, ark. 3, TsDAHO-U; *ibid.*, 10 February 1948, F. 319, op. 2, s. 10, ark. 10, TsDAHO-U; *ibid.*, 17 March 1948, F. 319, op. 2, s. 10, ark. 14, TsDAHO-U; *ibid.*, 1 June 1948, F. 319, op. 2, s. 10, ark. 27, TsDAHO-U; *ibid.*, 16 November 1948, F. 319, op. 2, s. 10, ark. 47, TsDAHO-U; *Otchet o rabote biuro partorganizatsii za dekabr' 1947 – noiabr' 1948*, F. 319, op. 2, s. 10, ark. 70, TsDAHO-U; *Protokoly zasedaniia partiinogo biuro*, 2 March 1949, F. 319, op. 2, s. 26, ark. 8–11, TsDAHO-U; *ibid.*, 22 March 1949, F. 319, op. 2, s. 26, ark. 15, TsDAHO-U.

<sup>53</sup> Stenogramma partiinogo sobraniia, 5–8 September 1947, F. 319, op. 1, s. 30, ark. 107, 128–9, TsDAHO-U; *Protokol obshchego partiinogo sobraniia*, 8 December 1947, F. 319, op. 2, s. 3, ark. 5, TsDAHO-U.

<sup>54</sup> The fact that he was dismissed from the History Institute of the Academy of Science in 1963, officially due to overstaffing (compare *Ukrains'ki Istoryky* (see note 51)), inclines us to think that he was a 'victim' of destalinization.

<sup>55</sup> *Protokol zasedaniia partiinogo biuro*, F. 319, op. 1, s. 4, ark. 1, TsDAHO-U; *Protokol obshchego partiinogo sobraniia*, F. 319, op. 1, s. 3, ark. 14, TsDAHO-U. Her name does not appear as author of *Muzeï V. I. Lenina: Filial pri TsK KP(b)U – Putevoditel'* (Kyïv:



This paper would become a bone of contention between the Party Secretary and the Institute Director. In Spring 1946, she was late in submitting her first draft. She had serious health problems which forced her to resign from her leading Party position in September. As she was not able to work on her paper, Director Ienevych succeeded in having her officially censured. He tried to have her removed from the task of writing the foreword for the prestigious collection of essays and even stated that she should be dismissed. Some colleagues tried to advocate on her behalf. One said that she suffered from “harassment” (*izdevatel'stvo*) and another was “wondering where Comrade Stankevich could find the willpower to work, but for the fact that she is an old Bolshevik”. This was not enough to ensure her position. Even though she stayed for a while at the Institute, she never recovered her earlier status of an acknowledged collaborator.<sup>56</sup> The director who harassed her had a very similar profile to hers. Born in 1905 into a poor peasant family, Ienevych became a Komsomol activist and entered the Party in 1928. Almost like Stankevich, he graduated from the Institute of Red Professors in 1937 and joined the Ukrainian IMEL in 1940. As a philosopher, he published a book about the influence of Communist adult education on political consciousness (1940)<sup>57</sup> and in 1941 defended his PhD on the Marxist theory of concepts. During the war, he held high positions in the ideological field in civilian institutions.<sup>58</sup> When the Kyïv IMEL was restored, he was appointed as director.<sup>59</sup>

The harshness of Director Ienevych toward Anna Stankevich is obvious and it seems that they hated each other for years.<sup>60</sup> However, one might receive the impression that he used this enmity as a diversion. As soon as March 1946, Party meetings started to become a “people’s trial”

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Gospolitizdat, 1940). Protokol zasedaniia partiinogo biuro, 29 May 1947, F. 319, op. 1, s. 32, ark. 33–6, TsDAHO-U.

<sup>56</sup> Protokol zasedaniia partiinogo biuro, F. 319, op. 1, s. 32, ark. 33–6, TsDAHO-U; *ibid.*, 16 September 1946, F. 319, op. 1, s. 17, ark. 25, TsDAHO-U; Stenogramma partiinogo sobraniia, 5–8 September 1947, F. 319, op. 1, s. 30, ark. 29–30, 43, 45, 57, 93–115, TsDAHO-U.

<sup>57</sup> *Komunistychnye vykhovannia trudiashchykh i podolannia perezhlytkiv kapitalizmu v svidomosti liudei* (Kyïv: Polityvydav, 1940).

<sup>58</sup> He published a brochure about the 1812 Patriotic War: Fedir Ienevych, *Vitchyzniana viïna 1812 roku* (Kyïv: Polityvydav pry TsK KP(b)U, 1941).

<sup>59</sup> O.S. Rubl'ov, ‘Ienevych Fedir Fedorovych’, in *Entsyklopediia istorii Ukraïny*, available at [http://www.history.org.ua/?termin=Enevych\\_F](http://www.history.org.ua/?termin=Enevych_F) (last visited 24 April 2019).

<sup>60</sup> Otchet o rabote biuro partorganizatsii s noiabria 1949 po dekabr' 1947, F. 319, op. 2, s. 3, ark. 27, TsDAHO-U.

against him. He was accused of "considering the Institute as his fiefdom", behaving as though he did not have to obey Party instructions. The Institute found itself at an impasse as permanent delays with translations and publications made the situation more obvious. In June 1947, Lazar' Kaganovich, then First Secretary of the Communist Party of Ukraine, paid a visit to the Institute, as a neighbour working in the same Central Committee building, and visited every department.<sup>61</sup>

In July, the Central Committee of the KP(b)U listened to the Director and issued a resolution. It incriminated the management of the Institute, namely Ienevych, in quite general terms, only urging them to fulfil the publication plan.<sup>62</sup> Since Ienevych stayed in position, nothing changed. He even felt strong enough not to tell the staff about the resolution. When a special Party meeting was called in September, Ienevych had to endure two days of criticism from everybody (even from the Assistant Director) but he did not change his mind or his approach. He was forced to resign in November, but since he became Assistant Director, he retained much of his influence and could let things continue to rot: inner conflicts carried on while Ienevych even ceased to pay his Party membership fee. In any case, the Party cell was also in decline, unable to come to terms with the dismissal of Anna Stankevich and Ienevych's unrelenting doggedness.<sup>63</sup>

He finally lost power in November 1948 when Khrushchev himself intervened after Ienevych's brother had made an official complaint. The fact that the two brothers had been living together (with their families) since the war apparently helped Fedir Ienevych move to a bigger flat. When he had had enough, he tried to force his brother's family out of the joint household by breaking the door and the heaters.<sup>64</sup> As one colleague commented: "Comrade Ienevych thinks he is a Marxist theoretician and he can lecture anyone about communist morality, but he is always break-

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<sup>61</sup> Protokol obshchego partiinogo sobraniia, 8 October 1946, F. 319, op. 1, s. 16, ark. 58, TsDAHO-U; Stenogramma partiinogo sobraniia, 5-8 September 1947, F. 319, op. 1, s. 30, ark. 28, 31, 45, 110, TsDAHO-U.

<sup>62</sup> Protokol zasedanii Politbiuro, 11 July 1947, F. 1, op. 6, s. 1057, ark. 6-11, TsDAHO-U.

<sup>63</sup> Stenogramma partiinogo sobraniia, 5-8 September 1947, F. 319, op. 1, s. 30, ark. 111, TsDAHO-U; Protokol zasedaniia partiinogo biuro, 7 October 1947, F. 319, op. 1, s. 32, ark. 61, TsDAHO-U.

<sup>64</sup> Otchet o rabote biuro partorganizatsii za dekabr' 1947 - noiabr' 1948, F. 319, op. 2, s. 10, ark. 70, TsDAHO-U.

ing the most basic rules of Party ethics.”<sup>65</sup> At this point, he was finally issued with a warning.

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Once Ienevych was no longer a leading figure the productivity of the Institute improved and “the [work] collective entered the complex phase of writing monographs”.<sup>66</sup> there were plans for new books about the dissemination of Marxism in Ukraine, about the establishment of Soviet power in Ukraine in 1919, and about collectivization.<sup>67</sup> The crisis was over. Still, against a background of high Stalinism, Ienevych’s step back would not solve all their problems. For instance, the collection of Party resolutions since its foundation in 1918 was issued only for the Party’s 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary and the *Short History of the KPU* was published in 1961, at the climax of Khrushchevian thaw when it was possible to ‘wash out’ some ‘white stains’ of history.<sup>68</sup>

Nevertheless, the deep crisis that the Kyiv IMEL faced at its post-war rebirth was not directly one of politics, ideology, or historiography, but one of management. As a director, Fedir Ienevych used what we would call today a policy of workplace harassment. He used administrative procedures and the individual failures of others in order to strengthen his own power, even though this approach prevented the Institute from working properly. His ability to counteract Party decisions and to survive

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<sup>65</sup> Protokol zasiedaniia partiinogo biuro, 11 May 1948, F. 319, op. 2, s. 11, ark. 41, TsDAHO-U. See also *ibid.*, 11 May 1948, F. 319, op. 2, s. 11, ark. 42–3, 55, 59–62, TsDAHO-U.

<sup>66</sup> Protokol obshchego partiinogo sobraniia, 28 June 1949, F. 319, op. 1, s. 25, ark. 22, TsDAHO-U. See also *ibid.*, 1.02.1949, F. 319, op. 1, s. 25, ark. 6, TsDAHO-U about six publications being ready for print. A new director, Giller, was appointed, he was not from the team established in 1945 (Vypiska iz protokola..., 12 July 1949, F. 319, op. 1, s. 26, ark. 53, TsDAHO-U).

<sup>67</sup> Plan raboty p/o na fevr. 1949, F. 319, op. 2, s. 24, ark. 1, TsDAHO-U; Protokoly zasiedaniia partiinogo biuro, 6 March 1949, F. 319, op. 2, s. 26, ark. 5, TsDAHO-U; *ibid.*, 30 May 1949, F. 319, op. 2, s. 26, ark. 35, TsDAHO-U.

<sup>68</sup> *Institut istorii partii TsK KP Ukraïny – filial Instytutu marksyzmu-leninizmu pry TsK KPRS, Komunistychna partiia Ukraïny v rezoliutsiakh i rishenniakh z’izdiv i konferentsii, 1918–1956* (Kyiv: Polityvydav URSR, 1958); I. D. Nazarenko, ed., *Instytut istorii partii TsK KP Ukraïny – filial Instytutu marksyzmu-leninizmu pry TsK KPRS, Narysy istorii Komunistychnoi partii Ukraïny* (Kyiv: Derzhpolityvydav URSR, 1961). This book was reissued for a third time in 1972. See also Iu. V. Bab’ko, *Soldat Partii (Pro O. M. Skrypnyka)* (Kyiv: Derzhpolityvydav URSR, 1961).

sanctions proves that he had support from the apparatus, even though archival sources do not reveal enough evidence to draw a precise portrait of those who backed him. Still, he had proved his harshness was useful when he attacked Ryl's'kyi in 1944 and he would serve again as a Party watchdog in order to maintain control in the field of history.<sup>69</sup>

That being said, the link between Stalinist ideology and everyday Stalinism appears. The administrative procedures of compartmentalization allowed Ienevych to handle the Kyiv IMEL like a personal fiefdom. Even the Moscow IMEL seemed to challenge his intellectual authority, not to mention Ukrainian non-Party historiographical institutions. Inside the Kyiv IMEL, strict centralization and compartmentalization of tasks also gave exorbitant power to Director Ienevych. Finally, his roughness, not to say brutality, appears as one of the required qualities of a Stalinist cadre. Besides ideology, many factors helped Ienevych to behave like a little Stalin within the framework of the Institute.

If Ienevych can be described as implementing official history in post-war Ukraine, the same cannot be said about the Ukrainian Branch of the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute as a whole. Its collaborators' commitment to the Communist Party was real but it also suited their research interests. It coexisted alongside methodological concerns and what can be considered the professional ethics along the lines of which they really sought to 'reflect the history of the Party as it had been'. As a matter of fact, they rarely intervened beyond their actual historiographical expertise. They did promote the Stalinist *Weltanschauung*, as they obviously shared it, which is not surprising in an institution directly linked with the highest local political body. Nonetheless, the propagation of the Party's historical policy was not their task as IMEL collaborators. Moreover, when they participated in it as lecturers, they did it not for ideological reasons but for financial ones.

This confirms the importance of the professionalization of their career path. Most of the IMEL historians were typical *vydvizhentsy*, people from the lower layers of society promoted by the Soviet regime during the 1920s–30s. Their commitment to the regime was strengthened by their participation in harsh social conflicts such as the Civil War and the 'Great Turn' (including presumably Collectivization). This might explain both why they considered the national question as subsidiary to the social one

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<sup>69</sup> Oleksii Ias', *'Na choli respublikans'koï nauky...'. Instytut Istorii Ukraïny (1936–1986): Narysy z instytucional'noi ta intelektual'noi istorii (Do 80-richchia ustanovy)* (Kyiv: NAN Ukraïny. Instytut istorii Ukraïny, 2016), 216–7.

and why they endorsed violent action as a means to change the course of history. One key event, the Sovietization of western Ukraine in 1939, is all the more praised since all the Party historians were from eastern Ukraine.

Even though the beginning of their promotion was due to political involvement, their social rise coincided with the acquisition of the technical skills of the historian's craft. Lecturing at university and / or graduating from the Institute of Red Professors did transform their career trajectories. Before they had been Party or Union *apparatchiki*, but only afterwards did they become professional historians. Even though the IMEL was part of the Central Committee's apparatus, they worked only as historians and not as Party activists. Even when they participated in the ritual of Soviet electoral campaigns, there was a clear difference between the conferences they gave as historians and the polling stations they ran as activists.

This professionalization is evident when summing up the way Party historians worked. We can assert that they relied on the benevolence of a supervisory authority which appointed researchers and provided subsidies. They complied formally with bureaucratic procedures which were supposed to enhance intellectual production, including participation in criticism and in the evaluation of colleagues' work. One can understand why their research did not run counter to the dominant stream of thought. However, despite management pressure and personal enmities, they tried to complete research relevant to their area of interest. Far from fitting into the production plan, they fundamentally implemented strategies to promote their own careers and self-interest. One might say *nihil novi sub sole*.

ESTELLE BUNOUT

## EMBEDDED REVISIONS?

### PAST RELATIONS WITH EASTERN EUROPE AT THE POLISH INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS (PISM) (1947–1965)

After 1948, the question of the former territories of eastern Poland, now western Ukraine, western Belarus and Vilnius, disappeared from public discourse in the Polish People's Republic (PRL). It was replaced by a dominant focus on the western Polish borderlands, the so-called regained territories and on friendship with the Soviet Union. In contrast, this change to the eastern border was the subject of an intense debate in the Polish community in exile, with the journal *Kultura* playing a prominent role in promoting the acceptance of the new borders, in opposition to the Polish government-in-exile and the circle of intellectuals supportive of it.

At the same time, criticism of historic German expansion into Eastern Europe, used by the Nazis as motivation for their brutal conquest of the region, rapidly became the basis of a dialogue between different Eastern bloc historians. It was a convenient topic unifying the countries of the region who could all participate in contesting the German claim on their culture and territories.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See the conference proceedings of the Soviet Academy of Science: *‘Drang nach Osten’ i istoricheskoe razvitiie stran Tsentral’noi, Vostochnoi i Iugo-Vostochnoi Evropy: Stat’i i materialy Mezhdunarodnogo simpoziuma po probleme ‘Drang nach Osten’ i istoricheskoe razvitiie stran Tsentral’noi, Vostochnoi i Iugo-Vostochnoi Evropy*, 20–23 aprelia 1966 g. (Moscow: Nauka, 1967). This was also thematized in an East German exhibition shown in Poland: Rudi Goguel, *Wystawa ‘Nauka w służbie “Drang nach Osten”’* (Berlin, 1960). Western German scholars prepared some response to that intense Eastern scientific activity: Wolfgang Wippermann, *Der “deutsche Drang nach Osten”: Ideologie und Wirklichkeit eines politischen Schlagwortes* (Darmstadt: WBG, 1981); Hans-Heinrich Nolte, *Drang nach Osten: Sowjetische Geschichtsschreibung der deutschen Ostexpansion* (Köln: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1976).

The question of the shift on the Polish eastern border was hence caught between the omnipresence of the German question and the proscribed discussion of the relationship between Poland and the Soviet Union. It did not fit in the narrative of the denunciation of Nazi ideology or the celebration of the newly gained territories, dominating the public political discourse. Nonetheless, there seems to have been a social need to create a collective narrative on this issue, that would go beyond the private memories. We propose to have to look at semi-public spheres, in the interstices of the official political discourse, and restricted discussion between experts, to ask what form the discussion about the acceptance of the new borders, especially on the eastern side of the country, could have taken in the Polish People's Republic.

To discuss this topic, we will consider an institution which was active in the PRL in the field of historiography and had an explicit mission to shape and promote a new official discourse, especially on the history of foreign relations: the Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM). We wish to focus on three levels of activity, starting at an institutional level, in order to understand comprehensively the constraints on the discourse on Eastern Europe in Poland between 1948–65. Next, looking at a conference organised in 1959, we shall see how the historiographical debate on Polish–German relations from 1933–8 created cover for some discussion on Polish relations with Eastern Europe. Finally, we will focus on one intermittent associated of the PISM, Stanisław Zabiełło, who published in 1958 one of the first books dealing with this subject in post-war Poland. We will see how he formulated his approach to the border issue within the framework of official propaganda.

### Establishing a New Norm on the History of Polish Foreign Relations After 1948

The Polish Institute of International Affairs was created in 1947 in Warsaw and was from the start an ambivalent institution. It was created on the model of the Royal Institute of International Affairs of London, known as Chatham House, with its eponymous rule. The British institute was created in 1920 in the aftermath of WWI to foster transatlantic discussions beyond the realm of diplomacy. According to the 'Chatham House rule', participants of a meeting cannot quote its discussions. Thanks to this rule, participants felt freer to speak their minds and meetings could serve as informal exchanges without official state involvement. This

model inspired several other institutions across Europe, for instance, the German Association of Foreign Affairs (*Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik*, DGAP). The goal of such institutions is to create a grey area for contacts mainly between diplomats and politicians but also with civil society and the academic world, among others. This kind of grey area surrounding diplomacy could not function in the Polish People's Republic, especially under Stalinization, and the PISM served rather as an amplifier of the official discourse of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych*, MSZ). It operated officially under the umbrella of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and functioned as a kind of centre of expertise, insofar as it was predominantly a conformist institution dedicated to international issues. Its mission was therefore more one of diversifying the channels of communication of the MSZ, allowing for the additional legitimizing contextualization of a given official position, inside as well as outside Poland, as was explained in 1963 to a guest of the PISM from a sibling organisation in the German Democratic Republic (GDR), Stefan Doernberg, then Director of the German Institute for Contemporary History (*Deutsches Institut für Zeitgeschichte*, DIZ).<sup>2</sup>

The situation of the PISM was very unstable in the 1950s, because of material difficulties in a city still largely devastated after WWII. More notable was the wide range of profiles among the employees of the PISM. Some, like Kazimierz Sidor, had spent the war in Poland and even fought in the resistance, or were veterans of the Red Army, like Kazimierz Rozen-Zawadzki. Later, the PISM welcomed Polish survivors of Soviet camps, such as Józef Berger, who had been secretary of the Polish Communist Party from 1929 to 1931<sup>3</sup> and who found a position at the PISM after his liberation in 1956.<sup>4</sup> The PISM was thus directly affected by the political tensions which marked Polish society in 1956 and a few years later in 1968 it was affected by the wave of anti-semitism that struck Poland.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Bericht über einen Besuch des PISM in Warschau, Direktor. Aktennotizen und Berichte Dienstreise. 1962–1969. Stefan Doernberg, 27 December 1963, DC 201 / 50, Deutsches Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Bundesarchiv, Berlin (hereinafter: DIZ, BArch).

<sup>3</sup> Stéphane Courtois et al., *Le livre noir du communisme: Crimes, terreur et répression* (Paris: Laffont, 1997), 304.

<sup>4</sup> Mieczysław Tomala, *Z dni chmurnych i górnych w Polskim Instytucie Spraw Międzynarodowych* (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 2002), 64.

<sup>5</sup> These crucial events are however silenced in the archives, as the records have been transferred first in 1971 and then in 1981, that is to say, following pivotal moments in Polish political life. See: Sekretariat Dyrektora. Spisy zdawczo-odbiorcze PISM. 1958–1993,



Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the PISM was characterized by a significant turnover of staff, with many employees using the PISM as a stepping-stone or rather a waiting-room before moving on either to academia or to the diplomatic service.<sup>6</sup> This may shed light on the reasons for the strong conformist culture of the institution, even if its personnel came from very diverse backgrounds. The PISM's ambivalence is best embodied by its directors, who themselves were often 'double-hatted', having both a political function and an academic profile.<sup>7</sup> Both Juliusz Katz-Suchy, director from 1951–7, and Julian Hochfeld, director from 1957–60, taught at the University of Warsaw. They contributed to the transformation of the status of the PISM, making it less dependent on the MSZ, and giving it a more academic feel. The mission of the PISM was then reframed with a change in the statutes governing it in 1959 and with the creation of a formal scientific council,<sup>8</sup> but at its core it remained the same: the knowledge produced by the Institute was required to serve the interests of Polish foreign policy.<sup>9</sup> Then in the 1960s, gradually, the PISM became a point of contact not only for sibling organisations in the Eastern Bloc but also further afield, notably in preparation for the *Ostverträge* in 1970 and even more so during the period of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe in the 1970s and the 1980s. But before becoming a centre of expertise in issues of international security, the PISM made its focus the history of Poland's international relations.

Indeed, from the first years of activity of the PISM, the Department for the History of International Relations was by far the most dominant in terms of employees and subsequently in terms of publications. This department was dissolved in 1966, its employees moving on to several different sections of the Polish Academy of Sciences (mainly to the Institute of History and the Institute of Socialist Countries). Between 1948 and 1966, this department conducted several activities: it established chronologies of historical events, reviewed historical newspapers, and collected

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118, Polski Instytut Spraw Międzynarodowych, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw (hereinafter PISM, AAN).

<sup>6</sup> Tomala, *Z dni chmurnych* (see note 4), 10.

<sup>7</sup> Grzegorz Sołtysiak, 'Historia Polskiego Instytutu Spraw Międzynarodowych w latach 1947–1993: pierwsze przybliżenie', *Polski Przegląd Dyplomatyczny* 42, 2 (2008): 104.

<sup>8</sup> Protokół z zebrania ogólnego pracowników PISM – dnia 30 grudnia 1958, Sekretariat Dyrektora. Protokoły z zebrań pracowników PISM w latach 1958, 1962–1963, 1972, 1986, 1988, 30.12.1958, 104, PISM, AAN.

<sup>9</sup> Perspektywy roku 1959 w świetle doświadczeń roku 1958, 1959, 132, PISM, AAN.

archives, mainly from the MSZ in Warsaw. Its core activity was focused on WWI, the negotiations of the Treaty of Versailles, and international relations during the interwar period and until 1945.<sup>10</sup>

The German question was not set as a priority subject for the PISM because German Studies were done by institutions like the Institute of the West (*Instytut Zachodni*), based in Poznań. The question nevertheless became increasingly central, at the expense of other fields such as the analysis of Soviet policy. This deficiency was subject to repeated criticism during the PISM's early years, mainly on the part of the political institutions on which the PISM depended. For instance, there was criticism at a conference of historians organized at the PISM in 1950<sup>11</sup> and dedicated to the different orientations of the history of international relations as a basis for reflection on Polish foreign policy, or later, during a discussion on the 'scientific' priorities for the PISM for 1951.<sup>12</sup> During that meeting, one representative of the MSZ regretted in the remarks on the scientific work plan for 1951 that the majority of resources are devoted to the German question, and that questions about the Soviet Union and the countries of 'people's democracy' are completely ignored. He consequently advised the PISM to complete the work plan by focusing on current issues and, in relation to the USSR, on its role in defending peace in the light of the protocols of international meetings, on the economic development of the USSR since WWII, and finally on the economic cooperation of the USSR with the countries of people's democracy.

These priorities were a direct reproduction of the official discourse of the Polish state at the time. It seems there was no room for research on that topic, as shown in a comment by professor Stanisław Edward Nahlik at another similar meeting between the MSZ and the PISM leadership on 13 December 1951.<sup>13</sup> As reported, Stanisław Nahlik did not see the need for original analyses and simply advised the translation of the relevant Soviet analyses. These repeated calls for more institutional activity dedicated to the USSR did however not shift the weight of the PISM away from research on the Germanies. The conformism of that institution

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<sup>10</sup> For the list of projects in the index of the department's archive see <https://szukajwarchiwach.pl/2/1738/0/32#tabJednostki> (last visited 15 February 2017).

<sup>11</sup> Protokół z konferencji historyków odbytej w PISM w dniu 20 lutego 1950, 1950, 31, PISM, AAN.

<sup>12</sup> Uwagi departamentu I o planie pracy PISM, 10 June 1950, 126, PISM, AAN.

<sup>13</sup> Protokół z konferencji kierowniczego aktywu MSZ z dyrekcją PISM odbytej u MSZ dnia 13 grudnia 1951, 4.01.1952, 254, PISM, AAN.

consisted not simply in producing documentations and analyses on the themes of the official state discourse but reflects the needs identified by its employees and the attractivity of given topics.

The difficulties in the 1950s in establishing a Polish–Soviet dialogue on historiography was not specific to the PISM and it is notable that the PISM did not have a particular role in them. This dialogue rested rather in the hands of the Parties and the Academies of Sciences of both states. The first contacts between Polish and Soviet historians at the institutional level took place in the context of the Committee on Labour History.<sup>14</sup> This cooperation consisted mainly of an exchange of historical documentation. After 1954, it was the Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences (IH PAN) which sought to establish institutional cooperation with the USSR.

In May 1959, a delegation of Polish historians from the IH PAN travelled to Moscow to discuss the joint publication of documentation on Polish–Soviet relations and proposed on this occasion the creation of a bilateral commission. Their Soviet counterparts accepted and proposed involving representatives of the Ukrainian and Belarusian Academies of Sciences. However, the difficulties of finding suitable Soviet historians specializing in Polish issues slowed down the establishment of the commission. As a result, the first meeting took place only in 1963 although the creation of the commission had been agreed in October 1959.

The 1960s witnessed a sensible acceleration of the study of Eastern Europe, including the Soviet Union, in Poland with the creation of dedicated institutions within the Polish Academy of Sciences. First, in January 1961, a department for the History of Polish–Soviet Relations (*Pracownia Historii Stosunków Polsko–Radzieckich*) was established, becoming in 1965 the unit for the History of Polish–Soviet Relations (*Zakład Historii Stosunków Polsko–Radzieckich*). This formed the basis for the creation of the Institute of Socialist Countries of the Polish Academy of Sciences in 1972 (*Instytut Krajów Socjalistycznych*, IKS PAN). In parallel, within the Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences, a unit for the study of the History of the USSR and the Countries of Central Europe (*Zakład Historii ZRRS i Europy Środkowej*) was created. These institutions participated in the scientific supervision of the PISM, notably of the work of Włodzimierz T. Kowalski on the ‘Curzon Line’ in the interwar

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<sup>14</sup> Jan Szumski, ‘U źródeł powstania Komisji Historyków Polski i ZSRR’, *Klio Polska* 6 (2012): 55–74.

period<sup>15</sup> and after the dissolution of the history department at the PISM, several of its employees joined the IKS PAN.

The PISM was one of the creators and dissemination channels of the official discourse of the Polish state at the time, both in commenting on current international affairs and in shaping official historiographical discourse. The institution was subject to the general political context prevailing in Poland and reflected in its activities the growing weight in the public discourse of the German issue and the reluctance to deal with the Soviet Union, because of the potential pitfalls the topic entailed. The PISM retained the function of defining and propagating official discourse on the history of international relations in Poland. This was a particularly difficult task because of the intricate situation in post-war Poland of having lost territory to the Soviet Union and gained territory from pre-war Germany. The issues of both border changes were interdependent but while the western border change occupied the front pages in Poland, the eastern one was remarkable by its absence.

Now that we sketched out the institutional frame, we will see next how the discussion on German history provided a frame and even a blueprint for addressing the issue of the Polish past in Eastern Europe at the PISM.

### Embedded Revisions: A Cautious Opening of the Polish Eastern Question (1959)

On 27–28 April 1959, the PISM hosted a conference dedicated to Polish–German relations between 1933–9.<sup>16</sup> A focus on this particular conference gives us an insight into the range of official historiographical voices in post-1956 Poland and shows some early signs of a research trend in the Polish Eastern European historiography of the 1960s. Moreover, this conference seems to have had a relatively wide distribution<sup>17</sup> and was

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<sup>15</sup> Linia Curzona, Stosunki Polski z zagranicą, 1960, 785, PISM, AAN.

<sup>16</sup> For the transcript of the conference, see Józef Marian Chudek, ed., *Sesja naukowa poświęcona stosunkom polsko-niemieckim w latach 1933–1939, 27–28 kwietnia 1959 r.: referaty i dyskusja* (Warsaw: Polski Instytut Spraw Międzynarodowych – Zakład Historyczny, 1959) and a recension of the conference: Jan Kremer, ‘Sesja naukowa poświęcona stosunkom polsko-niemieckim w latach 1933–1939’, *Wiadomości Historyczne* 2, 4 (1959): 258–9.

<sup>17</sup> Although in manuscript form, it seems to have been distributed to the university libraries of Cracow, Poznań, Toruń, Warsaw and Wrocław, according to the NUKAT catalogue (National Universal Central Catalogue).

covered by the journal for teachers of history.<sup>18</sup> The conference was transcribed and the transcription distributed with a restriction notice on the cover, containing both the five presentations and notes of the discussion following each panel, with the names of the fourteen commentators.

One noticeable contribution was made by Kazimierz Piwarski, then Director of the Institute of the West (Poznań), providing a state-of-the-art report on the issue of Polish–German relations between 1933–9.<sup>19</sup> In doing so, he highlighted the dominant historiographical trends at the time in Poland, or rather the main targets of official historiography. He focused his presentation on the publications which seem to have interested him the most: the ones from the Polish emigration in the West, mostly from London<sup>20</sup> and Paris.<sup>21</sup> As for Soviet publications, he merely mentioned them in passing, which hints at the relative unattractiveness of Soviet historiography on this matter. The publications from the Polish emigration were criticized for their support for the legacy of the Second Polish Republic, with a strong focus on the German–Polish Non-Aggression Pact of 1934.

This resonates with Rafał Stobiecki's study of the historiography of Russia in Poland.<sup>22</sup> Stobiecki states that during the 1960s, the ongoing fight between Polish historians from Poland and their fellow-countrymen in emigration was mainly about acceptance of the post-1945 situation. Polish historians in emigration rejected the current status quo in terms of borders and the political system, whereas the official historians defended and legitimized them. Piwarski used the Teschen crisis of autumn 1938, when Poland occupied a portion of the Czech territory, to discredit the émigré discourse, a classic element of communist criticism towards the pre-war Polish government.

The second major target was the West German historians of Eastern Europe. Referring to two recent books published in West Germany by

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<sup>18</sup> Kremer, 'Sesja naukowa' (see note 16).

<sup>19</sup> Kazimierz Piwarski, 'Stan badań w zakresie stosunków polsko-niemieckich w latach 1933–1939', in *Sesja naukowa* (see note 16), 26–39.

<sup>20</sup> Among others, the London counterpart of the PISM, Polski Instytut Badania Spraw Międzynarodowych, and its quarterly *Sprawy międzynarodowe*.

<sup>21</sup> Or rather Maison-Laffite where the Institute of Literature (*Instytut Literacki*) was based, and its journal *Kultura*.

<sup>22</sup> Rafał Stobiecki, 'Rosja i Rosjanie w polskiej myśli historycznej XIX i XX wieku', in *Katalog wzajemnych uprzedzeń Polaków i Rosjan*, ed. Andrzej de Lazari (Warsaw: Polski Instytut Spraw Międzynarodowych, 2006), 159–202.

the prominent historians Richard Breyer and Hans Roos,<sup>23</sup> he concluded that there was an ongoing mobilization in West Germany in order to attack the post-1945 alliance between Poland and the Soviet Union by highlighting the common ‘negative relationships’ of Poland and Germany with the Soviet Union during the interwar period.

Piawski provides us with a textbook example of the ideological framing of historical debate in the context of the Cold War. His practice of using official history as a legitimization of the current regime is set within transnational historiographical debate notably dominated by Western sources. Even though he does not quote Soviet historiography significantly, this discourse blending Poland with Germany, both as variations of ‘imperialism’ turning to fascism, echoes the Soviet approach at the time.

Another contributor was Jarosław Jurkiewicz, then Director of the Department for the History of International Relations at the PISM, who was preparing a book on the Oriental Pact of 1934.<sup>24</sup> This planned treaty, often described as the ‘Locarno of the East’, resulted from a French diplomatic proposal to agree a multilateral non-aggression pact in Eastern Europe securing the mutual recognition of post-WWI borders. Jurkiewicz makes a classic presentation of French ambitions linked to the Pact and German efforts to torpedo it, but without using Stalin-era vocabulary like ‘imperialism’.

The main target of Jurkiewicz’s text is neither Western countries nor Nazi Germany but, as in the case of the previous example, the pre-war Polish Republic. This becomes evident when he addresses the issue of national minorities in the Second Polish Republic, linking the admission of the Soviet Union to the League of Nations in 1934 with the League’s growing pressure on Poland to respect national minorities, especially in the east of the country. This echoes Soviet discourse on its role as defender of the repressed minorities of the Second Polish Republic, especially in the eastern part of the Second Polish Republic.

According to Jurkiewicz, the Polish rejection of the Pact is founded on three “fictions”: a fantasy of marginalizing the Soviet Union away from European affairs, of a possible normalization of relations with Nazi Ger-

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<sup>23</sup> Richard Breyer, *Das Deutsche Reich und Polen 1932–1937: Außenpolitik und Volksgruppenfragen* (Würzburg: Holzner, 1955); Hans Roos, *Polen und Europa: Studien zur polnischen Außenpolitik 1931–1939* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1957).

<sup>24</sup> Jarosław Jurkiewicz, ‘Polska wobec planów Paktu Wschodniego 1934–1935’, in *Sesja naukowa* (see note 16), 65–117.

many, and a recurrent dream of Poland becoming a regional power.<sup>25</sup> Of course, all this resonates with the contemporary situation in Poland in 1959 and the promotion of collective border security under the Soviet umbrella. Jurkiewicz argues implicitly for the acceptance of the premise of the new borders and the new regime.

This connexion between ‘borders and regime’ was picked up by several commentators reacting to Jurkiewicz’s presentation. One such was Stanisław Zabięłło, a former diplomat and aristocrat working as a freelance historian at the PISM. Zabięłło addresses what in his eyes is the core problem: the anti-Soviet attitude of the Polish government. He proceeds to expand on his own analysis of that period, reminding his audience of the politics of the alliance between Germany and the Soviet Union under the Rapallo Treaty (1926) which had set out to unite the two anti-Versailles states. In Zabięłło’s eyes this was the core challenge for the Polish diplomacy, as Germany led a revisionist policy on the western border of Poland but at the same time:

“on the other side of that same Poland ... existed the real fact of momentarily hidden, held under lock-and-key but nonetheless continuously existing tendencies to complete the history of national unification for Belarus and Ukraine.”<sup>26</sup>

Zabięłło emphasizes that the Polish government had a window of opportunity to build an equilibrium between the two bigger neighbours but its latent anti-Soviet attitude and the sense that the Soviet system would eventually collapse paved the way to “materializing eastern expansion plans under the flag of the so-called Jagiellonian idea”.<sup>27</sup> This is a rare mention of this part of Polish political heritage from pre-war political debate: Prometheism. The historian Andrzej Garlicki defines Prometheism as a

“conception of actions in favour of separating from Russia those territories inhabited by non-Russian peoples and in support of the creation of new states in those regions. These states in return, since they will feel threatened by Russia, will become natural allies for Poland, thereby increasing Poland’s weight in the region.”<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 111–12.

<sup>26</sup> Quoted in Chudek, *Sesja naukowa* (see note 16), 155.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Andrzej Garlicki, *Siedem mitów Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 2013), 62.

This Polish political tradition was in the Polish People's Republic equally an easy target and quite a tricky topic to deal with. The topic gained in attraction in the 1960s, with several studies made,<sup>29</sup> but in 1959 it still remained marginal, especially in the context of this kind of official historiography.

One up-and-coming researcher on the topic was Józef Lewandowski, then preparing his PhD on the Polish socialist conception of federalism, which was published in 1962.<sup>30</sup> In April 1959, he had just published two articles in the journal of the Political Military Academy on the topic of Prometheism, which he mentions in his comments during the PISM conference without giving their titles or any indication of their content. In his comment, Lewandowski deplores the fact that the Polish government tried to use its alliance with Nazi Germany to pursue its own agenda:

"It is not by chance that the most heated and extreme proponents of the Polish-German alliance are to be found among the supporters of the doctrine of Prometheism, or, frankly speaking, of eastern expansion: Adolf Bocheński, Włodzimierz Bączkowski, Stanisław Mackiewicz-Cat."<sup>31</sup>

The choice of names of course is not fortuitous either, since these were major figures of the Polish emigration. Lewandowski's criticism of Polish fantasies of regional influence in Eastern Europe became the leitmotif of his later book, *Imperialism of Weakness*, published in 1967.

In summary, these four interventions all communicated the legitimization of the current situation, more explicitly in relation to Germany and the western border and more covertly in relation to the post-war eastern Polish border. Within that validation of the contemporary situation, we can still discern four distinct dimensions in that chorus of criticism directed against the pre-war Polish government and its heirs. Piwarski stands for the legitimization of the current situation without really even mentioning the role of the Soviet Union, while Jurkiewicz underlines the

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<sup>29</sup> Józef Lewandowski, *Imperializm słabości: kształtowanie się koncepcji polityki wschodniej państw 1921–1926* (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1967); Sergiusz Mikulicz, *Prometeizm w polityce II Rzeczypospolitej* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1971); Ryszard Torzecki, *Kwestia ukraińska w polityce III Rzeszy: 1933–1945* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1972).

<sup>30</sup> Józef Lewandowski, *Federalizm: Litwa i Białoruś w polityce obozu belwederskiego: XI 1918–IV 1920* (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1962).

<sup>31</sup> Quoted in Chudek, *Sesja naukowa* (see note 16), 209. The latter had returned to Poland in 1956.



role of the Soviet Union in collective European security as a basis for Polish national security. In their comments, Zabięłło refers to the Ukrainians and the Belarusians as the driving force behind changing the borders, whereas Lewandowski assimilates Polish Prometheism with ‘imperialistic expansionism’. What all these attacks obliterate are the on-going debates in the Polish emigration, intensely so within *Kultura*, led by Jerzy Giedroyc, who was then striving for a change of approach towards Eastern Europe, which had started in the 1950s.

The conference expressed an implicit conformism on the part of historians in Poland to Soviet discourse on international history. By reviewing historiography on the subject, the participants set the norms for it and designated forbidden references, namely Western scholars and the publicists of the Polish emigration. The commentators on the other hand opened up the well-defined frame of the German question to sketch out a connection with the particular Polish past in Eastern Europe. This public and relatively well-publicized event captures the results of individual reflections and research and gives us an indication of the appropriation of new official norms. We now suggest lifting the curtain and taking a closer look at the path of Stanisław Zabięłło, starting on his career as a diplomat in the Second Polish Republic before joining the choir of official voices of the People’s Republic of Poland.

### The Tribulations of Stanisław Zabięłło on the Discussion of the Eastern Border of Poland (1950–64)

Stanisław Zabięłło returned to Poland in August 1947 after having spent the war in occupied France and survived the deportations to Buchenwald (January 1943) and Bergen-Belsen (April 1945).<sup>32</sup> He was arrested for his activities as a representative of the Polish state in France, helping Polish citizens to flee France.<sup>33</sup> He had undertaken this mission as a diplomat of the Second Polish Republic, for which he had also spent five years in the Soviet Union (1929–34) before working as a specialist on Eastern Europe in Warsaw until 1939. He was born in the region of Minsk into an old aristocratic family.

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<sup>32</sup> Stanisław Zabięłło, ‘Byłem w Dorze. Wspomnienia z obozu koncentracyjnego w 25 rocznicę wyzwolenia Buchenwaldu’, *Życie i Myśl* 20, 3 (1970): 75–85.

<sup>33</sup> Stanisław Zabięłło, *Na posterunku we Francji* (Warsaw: Instytut Wydawniczy PAX, 1967).

Despite this very inadequate profile, upon his return Stanisław Zabięłło soon started to do some independent work for the PISM in the context of the aforementioned shortage of experts on international relations. Even though he seemed primarily to have been recruited for his expertise on France, he soon started to work on the events of the war which had led to the contemporary Polish situation, both from a territorial and a political angle. He started to prepare the publication of documentation on Polish diplomacy during the Second Republic, in the form of an inventory, with a commentary, of sources available in Poland at the time.<sup>34</sup> His proposal was accompanied by a note on methodology.<sup>35</sup>

Stanisław Zabięłło, familiar with the Soviet-style Marxist rhetoric he had witnessed in his pre-war professional functions, now needed to adopt it himself. On this occasion, he comprehensively demonstrated his ideological anchoring in the new Poland, emphasizing the need to develop an interpretation “according to the reasons of State of the People’s Poland” of these “tendentious” sources “defending the politics and the interests of propertied elites”. In his proposal, he listed a series of themes on the history of pre-1939 Polish foreign relations, organized chronologically and structured around major events in Polish foreign relations.

Some keywords and short comments gave some indication about the interpretation he would offer of these events. For instance, on the subject of the Treaty of Riga, he aimed to show that Polish claims were in fact determined by the Western powers.<sup>36</sup> On the Lithuanian question, Polish aristocratic expansionism was justified by “pseudo-historical slogans” and served the logic of an anti-Bolshevik “cordon sanitaire”. Generally speaking, Zabięłło presented Poland as a tool of French imperialism. Tensions with Czechoslovakia over the Teschen question are also an important element in understanding the anti-Soviet stance of the Polish government after 1918. Another phase in Polish foreign policy identified by Zabięłło is that of the years 1933–8, labelled “within the orbit of German imperialism”.<sup>37</sup> The shadow of Germany looms over all aspects of Polish diplo-

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<sup>34</sup> Historia polskiej polityki zagranicznej i dyplomacji w latach 1918–1939 oraz chronologiczny spis wydawnictw związanych z polską polityką zagraniczną z lat 1917–1932. Opracowanie Stanisława Zabięłły (1949–1963), *Stosunki Polski z zagranicą w latach 1817–1939*, no date, 774, PISM, AAN.

<sup>35</sup> Notatka, *Stosunki Polski z zagranicą w latach 1817–1939*. Stanisław Zabięłło, 12.12.1950, 774, PISM, AAN.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

macy, including relations between Poland and Japan and Polish promethean anti-Soviet attempts at cooperation with that distant country.

His proposal was reviewed, in the manner typical of the period, both politically and academically.<sup>38</sup> His reviewers criticized him for not respecting his own chronological limits, not sufficiently integrating economic conditions into his analysis, and treating the question of Lithuania separately from the question of the rest of the Baltic. Alongside these remarks, on a more political level, some corrections of vocabulary were suggested: “German imperialism” instead of “German bourgeoisie” and the question of “Spisz and Orawa” instead of Teschen. As for the Ukrainian question, Zabięłło was advised to treat it by focusing on the attempts by Western powers to mobilize Ukrainian nationalism against Poland and the USSR. Stanisław Zabięłło revised his strategy and moved away from archival and press sources to the memoirs of the wars then gradually being published in France, Great Britain, the USA, and West Germany.<sup>39</sup> He started to translate some of them fully<sup>40</sup> and some in part. This collection of fragments of memoirs of WWII are the material on which he based his book on the Polish question during the war, published in 1958 by the PISM,<sup>41</sup> the first of a longer series.

In this first book, quotations from Western politicians as well as from the Polish government-in-exile are organized chronologically and presented with very few comments. The use of memoirs allowed Zabięłło to integrate the political interpretations given by actors in the war, otherwise discredited for being ‘imperialist’ but nevertheless quoted directly in this book. This is a strategy appreciated in the context of censorship, when it offers this possibility of direct quotation.<sup>42</sup> By the nature of the sources, the book has a lively tone, with politicians mixing their retrospective

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<sup>38</sup> Zbigniew Romek, *Cenzura a nauka historyczna w Polsce 1944–1970* (Warszawa: Neriton, 2010), 175.

<sup>39</sup> Materiały do zbioru ‘Sprawa polska w okresie II wojny światowej w świetle pamiętników’. Opracował Stanisław Zabięłło. 1949–1963, Stosunki Polski z zagranicą. Sprawa polska w latach 1939–1945, no date, 816, PISM, AAN.

<sup>40</sup> Leon Noël, *Agresja niemiecka na Polskę* (Warsaw: Instytut Wydawniczy PAX, 1966); André François-Poncet, *Byłem ambasadorem w Berlinie: Wrzesień 1931 – październik 1938* (Warsaw: Instytut Wydawniczy Pax, 1968); Jules Laroche, *Polska lat 1926–1935: Wspomnienia ambasadora francuskiego* (Warsaw: Instytut Wydawniczy PAX, 1966); Anthony Eden, *Pamiętniki 1923–1938* (Warsaw: Instytut Wydawniczy Pax, 1970).

<sup>41</sup> Stanisław Zabięłło, ed., *Sprawa polska podczas II wojny światowej w świetle pamiętników* (Warsaw: R.S.W. Prasa, 1958).

<sup>42</sup> Romek, *Cenzura* (see note 38), 172.

interpretation into the facts of the story. It is a patchwork text, providing no global or explicit interpretation.

The reviews were overall very positive: Henryk Batowski, in the magazine *Przegląd Historyczny*,<sup>43</sup> considered it “interesting and useful” and even “exciting”, “fruitful”, and “convincing” in its methodology. In another review, published in the *Wiadomości Historyczne*,<sup>44</sup> Zabięłło’s book received a significant validation as a good source for secondary school teachers in Poland, because it provided direct access to sources and was parsimonious with comments. In all his books, Stanisław Zabięłło joined in the general attack on the contemporary Polish emigration as we have already seen in relation to the 1959 conference. He was accordingly criticized by the Polish intellectuals in emigration, notably his former colleague at the pre-war Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tytus Komarnicki.<sup>45</sup> The latter published on this occasion a letter that Stanisław Zabięłło sent him when returning to Poland in 1947.<sup>46</sup>

Notwithstanding this great “scientific and political” success recognized by the management of the PISM in the person of Juliusz Hochfeld,<sup>47</sup> the books which followed on the issue of the diplomatic discussion on the fate of Poland during the war were published outside the PISM.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, it seems that this ambiguous mixture of historical documentation and personal memories did not meet the standards of the PISM in terms of official clarity. The PISM even published competing documentation in the same year as Zabięłło’s second publication.<sup>49</sup> The documentation follows

<sup>43</sup> Henryk Batowski, ‘“Sprawa polska podczas II wojny światowej w świetle pamiętników”’. Opracował Stanisław Zabięłło. Warszawa 1958. [recenzja], *Przegląd Historyczny* 50, 2 (1959): 404–7.

<sup>44</sup> Jerzy Myśliński, ‘Sprawa polska podczas II wojny światowej w świetle pamiętników’, *Wiadomości historyczne* 2, 1 (1959): 63–4.

<sup>45</sup> Rafał Stobiecki, ‘Rosja i Rosjanie w polskiej myśli historycznej XIX i XX wieku’, in *Katalog wzajemnych uprzedzeń Polaków i Rosjan*, ed. Andrzej de Lazari (Warsaw: Polski Instytut Spraw Międzynarodowych, 2006), 197.

<sup>46</sup> Tytus Komarnicki, ‘Rosja zawsze miała rację’, *Polemiki* 2, 4 (1965): 7–32.

<sup>47</sup> Protokół z zebrania ogólnego pracowników PISM – dnia 30 grudnia 1958, Sekretariat Dyrektora. Protokoły z zebrań pracowników PISM w latach 1958, 1962–1963, 1972, 1986, 1988, 30.12.1958, 104, PISM, AAN.

<sup>48</sup> Zabięłło, *Sprawa polska* (see note 41); Stanisław Zabięłło, *O rząd i granice: walka dyplomatyczna o sprawę polską w II wojnie światowej* (Warsaw: Instytut Wydawniczy PAX, 1964), reedited and augmented in 1965 and again in 1970; idem, *W kregu historii* (Warsaw: Instytut Wydawniczy Pax, 1970).

<sup>49</sup> Tadeusz Cieślak et al., eds., *Sprawa polska w czasie drugiej wojny światowej na arenie międzynarodowej: Zbiór dokumentów* (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Naukowy, 1965).

a similar structure to Zabiello's publication but is framed in a classical academic style, introduced with texts written by historians of the PISM and the Polish Academy of Sciences.

Stanisław Zabiello's publications and departure from the PISM exemplify the relative diversity in the official historiography on Polish foreign relations. Zabiello was able to bring a reflection on the changed borders to a wider audience, blaming the government-in-exile for this situation. In using the quotes, he was able to offer a certain appropriation of the situation by other voices while staying within the framework of the legitimation of the new borders. The success evidenced by several re-editions of Zabiello's books indicate some public interest for the type of tone he adopted, even if the core message is ultimately relatively aligned with the official norm as expressed, for instance, at the PISM.

### Embedded Revisions: Three Paths Towards a New Discourse on Polish Relations with Eastern Europe

Looking at how the issue of the history of Polish foreign relations with Eastern Europe was dealt with within the PISM, we have identified three approaches. The first one, dominant in the 1950s, consisted in the mere translation and import of Soviet discourse on these foreign relations. It was the product of the delicate situation in which the Polish state found itself after the war, with a strong dependency on the Soviet Union for its existence, both in terms of regime and borders. The second one, which emerged after 1956, consisted in the use of the frame of the German issue to raise questions about Poland's own past relations with Eastern Europe. This approach is also strongly embedded in Soviet convention but relies on original research or, in other words, results from an appropriation of that Soviet convention. The third, embodied by Stanisław Zabiello, used the authorized discourse of criticism of the Polish emigration to create some distance from the pre-war conception of foreign policy on Eastern Europe.

Officially sanctioned discourse moved from silence to a restrained and implicit reflection on the changes to the border. The topic did stay concealed under more prominent elements of public discourse. However, this slight change in approach should be noted and contrasted with sources from less official venues. The PISM appears to be an interesting focus of observation for the creation of the official historical narrative on the eastern border change as it had a strong conformist culture while still

involving a variety of individuals. Context like this can help with our study of how some intellectual traditions might be transmitted within such an institutional environment without leaving many traces in official publications.



KORINE AMACHER

## HISTORY TEXTBOOKS IN RUSSIA (1992–2019)

### BETWEEN MULTISIDED AND IMPERIAL PERSPECTIVES

In present-day Russia the teaching of Russian history is considered to be essential for the education of future citizens. Many politicians, teachers, and historians believe that its most important mission is to contribute to children's patriotic education. The narrative of school history is devised on the basis of a number of institutional instructions given to textbook authors via recommendations from the Ministry of Education, the body that 'authorizes' or 'recommends' a given textbook after it has passed through a number of reviews: scientific, educational, and public (*obschestvennaia*).<sup>1</sup> The history textbook thus transmits a system of values to younger generations and shapes their view of the past. As such it is a major bone of contention for all those in Russia who oppose the official vision of history and the political use of history by the Russian government.

No study of Russian history textbooks should be seen as an overview of the whole of Russian historiography. The relationship between academic history and scholarly research on the one hand and didactic and official history on the other is a complex one. However, history textbooks remain one of the few educational sources that can be used to identify the processes of re-evaluating history underway in Russia since the collapse of the USSR, outside the circle of scholarly historiography. Moreover, because of their educational purpose, textbooks confine histor-

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<sup>1</sup> On the textbook review procedure see [http://273-фз.рф/akty\\_minobrnauki\\_rossii/prikaz-minobrnauki-rf-ot-05092013-no-1047](http://273-фз.рф/akty_minobrnauki_rossii/prikaz-minobrnauki-rf-ot-05092013-no-1047). The procedure is often controversial, especially because of its lack of transparency. See for example <http://www.sib-science.info/ru/ras/akademiki-utochnili-kuda-vpadaet-vo-18042018> and <https://theins.ru/opinions/140359>. In March 2019, the Ministry of Education announced its intention to make new rules for textbook reviews: <https://rg.ru/2019/03/20/minprosveshcheniia-anonsirovalo-novyj-poriadok-ekspertizy-uchebnikov.html> (all last visited 30 October 2019).



ical representations to a simplified interpretative scheme to make them more widely readable. A long-term analysis of textbooks makes it possible to grasp the underlying changes in the official view of history and so textbooks deserve the attention of historians working on the fabrication of official national history.<sup>2</sup>

The first part of this article traces the general development of Russian history textbooks since they appeared in 1992 up to the present day, the major points of discussion that have arisen, and the controversies caused by some books within a shifting political context. It covers federal textbooks of Russian history for secondary schools, which in Russia comprise the sixth to eleventh classes. In these texts, history is told chronologically: the youngest learn early Russian history and the older pupils Soviet history. Russian history textbooks, as their name suggests, sometimes written by a single author, but more often by a team of authors that may vary from one edition to the next,<sup>3</sup> deal solely with Russian history. Pupils learn about international history from 'general history' (*vseobshchaia*

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<sup>2</sup> A number of articles and books have been devoted specifically to post-Soviet textbooks, in Russia and Western countries. See for instance in French Wladimir Berelowitch, 'Les manuels d'histoire dans la Russie d'aujourd'hui: entre les vérités plurielles et le nouveau mensonge national', in *Un 'mensonge déconcertant'? La Russie au XXe siècle*, ed. Jean-Philippe Jaccard (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2003), 203–22; Annie Tchernychev, *L'enseignement de l'histoire en Russie: De la Révolution à nos jours* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2005); Korine Amacher, 'Les manuels d'histoire dans la Russie postsoviétique: visions multiples et nouvelles tendances', *Le cartable de Clio* 9 (2009): 117–27; eadem, 'Héros ou ennemis de la patrie? Les révolutionnaires russes du XIXe siècle dans les manuels d'histoire de la Russie', in *Le retour des héros: la reconstitution des mythologies nationales à l'heure du postcommunisme*, eds. Korine Amacher and Leonid Heller (Louvain-la-Neuve: Academia Bruylant, 2009), 215–38; eadem, 'L'empire russe dans les manuels d'histoire de la Russie', in *L'école et la nation*, eds. Benoît Falaize, Charles Heimberg, and Olivier Loubes (Lyon: ENS éditions, 2013), 329–40, available at <http://books.openedition.org/enseditions/2310> (last visited 7 July 2020); and Olga Konkka's doctoral thesis on 20<sup>th</sup>-century history textbooks *À la recherche d'une nouvelle vision de l'histoire russe du XXème siècle à travers les manuels scolaires de la Russie postsoviétique (1991–2016)* (Bordeaux: Université Michel de Montaigne-Bordeaux III, 2016), available at <https://tel.archives-ouvertes.fr/tel-01383230> (last visited 30 October 2019).

<sup>3</sup> Textbooks are regularly republished with changes, often minor, in historical narrative or visual presentation. The authors, who may work on more than one different textbook, are historians. However, among these only a small part actively engages in scientific research. Some of the best known are Andreï Levandovskii, Sergeï Mironenko, and Aleksandr Chubarian. It must be noted that the overwhelming majority are men. Although it is impossible to read the entire vast production of history textbooks, we have analysed a wide range of secondary-school textbooks on Russian and Soviet history for all classes, published between 1992 and 2019. The references note only those from which citations are drawn, and not all the many other textbooks that contain the same idea or even the same citation.

*istoriia*) textbooks used alongside the Russian history textbooks, and which are also chronological in approach.

The second part of the article analyses two topics in history textbooks that are central to Russian and Soviet history: for the tsarist period – how the Russian Empire is presented, its construction, and the integration of non-Russian peoples; for the Soviet period – how the August 1939 German–Soviet Pact is described, with its secret protocols that divided up the territories to be annexed by Germany and the USSR. Although these two topics may seem at first sight far apart, they are in fact closely linked. In both cases the central issue is the annexation / integration of foreign territory. Can we perceive a change between 1992 to 2019 in the way the successive integration of non-Russian peoples into the Russian Empire, as well as annexations of foreign territories at the beginning of the Second World War, is being explained to schoolchildren? What place does the schoolbook narrative give to these events and how are they interpreted? The analysis of the general trend of history textbooks, followed by the study of a topic that is dealt with in all history textbooks, will allow us to offer some concluding thoughts on the official vision of history in present-day Russia.

### I. From Pluralism to a Single View? Russian History Textbooks (1992–2019)

#### From the Single History Book of the Soviet Period to the Freedom for History Textbooks in the 1990s

The Perestroika years (1985–91) marked a break at all levels: political, economic, cultural, and national. Historiography was no exception. The disappearance of Soviet ideology brought with it a rejection of earlier historical representations, which had combined elements of nationalist ideology with simplified Marxist models. Swathes of the past that had been censored were now the subject of new historical research. Russia rediscovered its tsarist past, huge numbers of books were published by literary figures, historians, philosophers, politicians, and thinkers – whether liberal, conservative, or religious – who had previously been censored or discredited by the Soviet authorities. In 1990, even the Soviet government recognized its responsibility for the Katyn' Massacre (over 20,000 Polish citizens killed by the NKVD in 1940). Access to the archives, albeit still restricted for certain topics, provided a continual stream

of discoveries leading to new interpretations and lively discussion: the extent of the Great Terror of 1937–8, Stalin's role in the decisions taken, Lenin's personality, etc.

The disappearance of the previous explanatory models and the constant re-examination of history left history teachers at a loss. In May 1988, history examinations and compulsory curricula were abolished in schools. A single history textbook for the entire Soviet territory, with some national variants, was no longer used. Some teachers prepared their lessons from the latest historical interpretations, using documents retrieved from the archives and published in journals.

In the early 1990s, in a now post-Soviet Russia where Boris Yeltsin's pro-Western government professed a deeply anti-Soviet, anti-revolutionary discourse, it was a vision of tsarist Russia moving smoothly in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century along a path of reform and Western modernization that was presented in best-selling popular history books and films. One example was the historian and playwright Ėdvard Radzinskii's *The Last Tsar: The Life and Death of Nicholas II*,<sup>4</sup> reprinted several times. Stanislav Govorukhin's film, emblematically entitled *The Russia We Lost* (1992), describes the pre-revolutionary period as a golden age and the murder of the imperial family as the start of Russia's misfortunes. These were years of idealization of the Romanov dynasty, and the tragic history of Nicholas II's family gave rise to numerous popular history books, biographies, films, documentaries, exhibitions, and scholarly conferences.<sup>5</sup>

Such was the background to the publication from 1992 of the first post-Soviet Russian history textbooks. New publishers emerged and broke the monopoly of the Prosveshchenie publishing house.<sup>6</sup> But it was in 1994, following the Ministry of Education's authorization to publish more than one textbook on the same subject, that the market really took off and dozens of textbooks were published for all classes. During the 1990s, schools and teachers were free to choose their textbooks. The Ministry of Education's approval ('recommended' or 'authorized by the

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<sup>4</sup> Ėdvard Radzinskii, *'Gospodi... spasi i usmiri Rossiia'. Nikolai II: zhizn' i smert'* (Moscow: Vagrius, 1993).

<sup>5</sup> Maria Ferretti, 'Usages du passé et construction de l'identité nationale dans la Russie post-communiste: la métamorphose de l'image d'Épinal du dernier tsar et de son époque', in *Le retour des héros* (see note 2), 191–214.

<sup>6</sup> Prosveshchenie (Enlightenment) was founded in 1930 as Uchpedgiz (acronym for 'educational publishing'). It was the sole publishing house allowed to issue school textbooks during the Soviet era, and was privatized in the 2000s. It remains the largest and most influential school textbook publisher in Russia.

Ministry') did not make the use of a textbook compulsory, but only made its publication more financially worthwhile.

Most history textbooks reflected the rejection of the revolutionary model in Russia at that time and the fascination with the liberal, reformist, Western model. More generally, revolutionary violence and extremism were rejected, in favour of reforms, presented as the only acceptable way of transforming society.<sup>7</sup> However, unlike the popular history books and films depicting the pre-revolutionary period as a golden age and the Romanovs in an idealized light, this condemnation of revolutionary violence did not mean a rehabilitation of tsarism. The excessive conservatism of the tsarist government and its political obtuseness were often accused of causing Russian radicalism. Both government leaders and revolutionary extremists were criticized, as terror from the government led to revolutionary terror: "The police arrested the monarchy's opponents, but in this way aggravated the situation, because the radical and dogmatic elements came to lead the revolutionary movement", pupils were told in a textbook of Russian 19<sup>th</sup>-century history.<sup>8</sup>

As for Stalinism, no author would have dared defend it in the highly anti-Stalinist atmosphere of the early 1990s. The term 'totalitarianism' was widely used to describe the Stalin years, and Stalin himself was presented as responsible for the development of a system described as profoundly criminal.<sup>9</sup> Admittedly, some authors were quite radical in their criticism of Stalinism, while others were more prudent.<sup>10</sup> But in those years no history textbook presented Stalinism with any justification, and from this point of view it is easy to see a convergence between the historical vision contained in the textbooks and that advanced by Boris Yeltsin's pro-Western government.

By the mid-1990s, Russia was undergoing a serious social and economic crisis that peaked in 1998: rising prices, unpaid wages and pensions, deval-

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<sup>7</sup> On representations of revolutionaries in Russian history textbooks, see Amacher, 'Héros ou ennemis' (see note 2).

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 232.

<sup>9</sup> See for example L.N. Zharova and I.A. Mishina, *Istoriia otechestva: 1900–1940* (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 1992).

<sup>10</sup> The textbook of Soviet history most critical of Stalinism is without doubt that by the historian and history teacher Igor' Dolutskii: I.I. Dolutskii, *Otechestvennaia istoriia XX vek, 10–11<sup>th</sup>-years textbook*, 2 vols. (Moscow: Mnemozina, 2001–2). First published in 1994, this best-seller had its 'recommended by the Ministry of Education' status withdrawn in 2003. Dolutskii has for years regularly appeared on the Ėkho Moskvyy radio station to talk about Russian history textbooks.

ued savings, instability, loss of social privileges, generalized corruption, and seizure of wealth by a minority. The Western values of liberalism and democracy on which Boris Yeltsin had based his legitimacy were no longer operative. Opinion polls showed that from the mid-1990s Russians were increasingly turning away from the Western socio-political model and once more perceived the West as a hostile entity. A sign of the times, by the end of the 1990s, monarchist textbooks were being published. Their representation of the past was similar to that under the tsars, and the history of the Orthodox Church stood centre stage. The 19<sup>th</sup>-century revolutionaries, whether moderate or radical, were all presented as enemies of the Russian state. The Decembrists, for example, were described as “disciples of Robespierre” and traitors to the Motherland. The revolutionaries of following generations took over their extremist, violent methods and caused “endless misfortune” for Russia at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As for the Westernizers, they were described as men who despised Russia, and idealized a Europe that was bourgeois, individualistic, and socially egotistical. The positive heroes in these textbooks were the tsars: generous, brave, excellent soldiers, deeply religious, unwearied workers, not to mention loving husbands and fathers. The use made of revolutionaries and tsars in these textbooks indicates what values the authors intended to emphasize in building pupils’ common identity.<sup>11</sup>

Although these textbooks were always a minority in the flood of textbooks available on the market at that time, they were ‘recommended’ by the Ministry of Education and published under the auspices of the prestigious Institute of Russian History of the Russian Academy of Sciences in Moscow. The authors were historians well known to the Russian public. Aleksandr Bokhanov’s books on the Russian monarchy<sup>12</sup> and his biographies of tsars were received enthusiastically by Orthodox reviewers and sarcastically by liberal ones.<sup>13</sup> And Andrei Nikolaevich Sakharov was Director of the Institute of Russian History from 1993 to 2010.

As these pro-monarchy textbooks were being published, the country’s Soviet past was also beginning to be seen less darkly than before. A num-

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<sup>11</sup> A.N. Bokhanov, *Istoriia Rossii (XIX–nachalo XX v.)*, 8<sup>th</sup>-year textbook, 5th ed. (Moscow: Russkoe slovo, 2005), 57–67 (1st ed. 1998); A.N. Sakharov and A.N. Bokhanov, *Istoriia Rossii, XVII–XIX veka*, 4th ed. (Moscow: Russkoe slovo, 2006), 291–304 (1st ed. 2003).

<sup>12</sup> Aleksandr Bokhanov, *Sumerki monarkhii* (Moscow: Voskresen’e, 1993); idem, *Rossiiskaia Imperiia: Obraz i smysl* (Moscow: FIV, 2012).

<sup>13</sup> A.Iu. Polunov, ‘Romanovy: mezhu istoriei i ideologiei’, in *Istoricheskie issledovaniia v Rossii: Tendentsii poslednih let*, ed. G.A. Bordiugov (Moscow: AIRO-XX, 1996).

ber of researchers have shown that many groups in Russia who had fallen into social and economic hardship in the late 1990s gradually began to recall other images that seemed less dark as they receded. First, it was the 1970s, the Brezhnev years, which became “for most of the population still hankering after paternalism, the embodiment of the egalitarian Socialist ideal and nostalgia for order”.<sup>14</sup> Increasingly, voices were heard from the various opposition groups and some close to Communist party structures that proposed another conception of history, an updated version of Sovietism, cleansed of its communist rhetoric, in which the national aspect once more stood centre stage. The Soviet period was being integrated into the long march of the history of the Russian state.

### The Slow Return of the State’s Firm Hand (2000–16)

As soon as he came to power in 2000, Vladimir Putin presented himself as the man to restore the tradition of a strong Russian state and offered his fellow citizens the image of a great country “which remains great in every age and honourably casts aside every misfortune”.<sup>15</sup> He soon showed an interest in history textbooks. In August 2001, during a government meeting, he recommended that great attention be paid to their content. In 2003, in a meeting with historians, he explained that textbooks should arouse in pupils a sense of pride in their history and their country. And while there had been a time when historians stressed the “negative aspects of the old system, since the aim was to destroy it”, the task was now to be “constructive”.<sup>16</sup> The same year a development took place that was seen as a clear sign of the changes occurring: following a letter from veterans, the Ministry of Education removed the ‘Ministry recommended’ notice from a textbook on Soviet history that called the Stalinist regime “a terrorist regime”, compared Stalin to Ivan the Terrible and described the status of the Baltic states during and after the Second World War as an “occupa-

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<sup>14</sup> Boris Doubine, ‘Habitue, incompatibilite, incompatibilite habituelle: Le rapport à “soi” et aux “autres” dans la Russie d’aujourd’hui’, *Transitions* 46, 1 (2006): 153.

<sup>15</sup> Arsenii Roginskii, ‘La mémoire du stalinisme dans la Russie contemporaine’, in *Le retour des héros* (see note 2), 253–62.

<sup>16</sup> Boris Dolgin and Vitalii Leïbin, ‘Gordost’ vmesto pravdy. Istoricheskaja i ideologicheskaja programma vlasti’, available at <http://www.polit.ru/culture/2003/11/28/gordost.html> and <http://www.vremya.ru/2003/223/4/86037.html> (both last visited 30 October 2019).

tion".<sup>17</sup> From then on the major features of Stalinist policy were increasingly described, particularly in the official media, in a manner that justified them. However, this positive reassessment of Stalin peaked in 2007–8 with the publication of history textbooks under a plan to formulate new education standards at federal level, comprising teachers' manuals and textbooks for 11<sup>th</sup>-year pupils.<sup>18</sup>

The authors – the historian Aleksandr Danilov, member of the Institute of Russian History of the Russian Academy of Sciences, author of many previous textbooks, and Aleksandr Filippov, a specialist in political communication with no training as a historian – explained that these books had a threefold purpose: describe the government's policies positively, arouse national pride (history lessons must teach pupils to "love their Motherland") and not "exaggerate" the extent of the purges.<sup>19</sup> Political violence, the Stalin purges, the 1932–3 famine, and the 1937–8 Terror were presented as unavoidable "distortions" caused by the country's "forced modernization", thanks to which the USSR was able to defeat Nazi Germany. The conclusion Filippov draws in the teacher's manual is a clear one:

"To solve the main problems of economic modernization and moral self-preservation, the country must rely on the experience of its ancestors, thanks to whose sacrifice we now have a precious freedom of choice... All of Russia's

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<sup>17</sup> Dolutskii, *Otechestvennaia istoriia* (see note 10), vol. 1, 257; vol. 2, 8. See Olga Zaharova, 'Uchebnik istorii. Pravitel'stvo v kachestve cenzora?', *Liceiskoe i gimnazicheskoe obrazovanie*, 3 (2004). There were many negative reactions to this sanction in the Russian media, especially online. See for example [www.vremya.ru/2003/223/4/86037.html](http://www.vremya.ru/2003/223/4/86037.html) (last visited 30 October 2019).

<sup>18</sup> A. F. Filippov, *Novejšaia istoriia Rossii, 1945–2006: metodicheskoe posobie* (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 2007); A. A. Danilov, *Istoriia Rossii, 1900–1945, metodicheskoe posobie*, 11<sup>th</sup>-year textbook (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 2008); A. A. Danilov and A. V. Filippov, *Istoriia Rossii, 1940–1945*, 11<sup>th</sup>-year textbook (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 2009); A. A. Danilov, A. I. Utkin, and A. V. Filippov, *Istoriia Rossii, 1945–2008*, 11<sup>th</sup>-year textbook (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 2008); A. A. Danilov, *Istoriia Rossii, 1945–2008*, 11<sup>th</sup>-year textbook (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 2008).

<sup>19</sup> Aleksandr Filippov and Aleksandr Danilov, 'Ratsional'nyi podchod', 17 September 2008, available at [http://www.ng.ru/politics/2008-09-17/4\\_history.html](http://www.ng.ru/politics/2008-09-17/4_history.html) (last visited 30 October 2019). This was one of the criticisms made of Dolutskii's textbook. One historian from the Russian Military History Centre of the Academy of Sciences claimed that the author of this 'russophobic' book was echoing ideas propagated by the CIA to weaken Russia by exaggerating, for example, the scale of the purges. See Ol'ga Dashovskaia, 'Igor' Dolutskii: "Retsenzenty v shtatskom moi uchebnik kritikovali postoianno"', 6 December 2003, available at <http://ps.1september.ru/article.php?ID=200308604> (last visited 30 October 2019).

good leaders stand out for their awareness of their country's special nature: a harsh climate and vast territories hard to join together. This explains the role of the state, of great importance in all developed countries, but critically essential in Russia. As in the past, our country now needs real strength."<sup>20</sup>

A centralized and authoritarian government, a strong state, whose interest prevails over that of individuals, and which can at any time require sacrifices from its citizens, such are the guarantees for Russia, besieged today as in the past by enemies within and without, to remain powerful. The Stalin period is described as a period of sacrifice, but above all of greatness, success and glory, while the post-Stalin years are depicted as a period of slow weakening for the country, due to errors by its political leaders, ending under Gorbachev in the collapse of the USSR.<sup>21</sup>

At the same time, opinion polls showed that Stalin's popularity in Russian society was rapidly rising. In late 2008, a competition was held, broadcast by the leading Russian television channel, to choose Russia's national hero. After leading for some weeks and being generally forecast as the winner, Stalin finally only came third, behind Aleksandr Nevskii, victor over the Swedes in 1240 and the Teutonic Knights in 1242, and Pëtr Stolypin, Tsar Nicholas II's authoritarian prime minister. Given the controversy aroused by the competition, the organizers apparently preferred not to take the risk of naming Stalin national hero for 2008.<sup>22</sup>

On 19 May the following year, a presidential decree was issued setting up a commission to combat attempts to "falsify historical facts and events with the aim of adversely affecting Russia's interests".<sup>23</sup> Then in August, an inscription to Stalin in the Kurskaia metro station in Moscow was restored: "Stalin brought us up to be loyal to the nation, inspired us to labour and great deeds", a horrifying expression when one thinks of the human cost of the "great deeds" of the Soviet period.<sup>24</sup> In the view of a large number of Russian historians, sociologists, political scientists, and journalists, these events and the size of the festivities held on each anniversary of victory on 9 May 1945 were clear evidence of the government's desire to define the guidelines for the historical narrative, propose a posi-

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<sup>20</sup> Filippov, *Novejšhaia istoriia* (see note 18), 485.

<sup>21</sup> For more details on those textbooks see Amacher, 'Les manuels d'histoire' (see note 2).

<sup>22</sup> About Name of Russia project see <http://www.nameofrussia.ru/>; Liubov' Borusiak, '“Imia Rossii”: 100 minut nenavisti', 13 October 2008, available at <http://polit.ru/article/2008/10/13/nameofrussia> (both last visited 30 October 2019).

<sup>23</sup> See <https://polit.ru/article/2009/05/19/komissia/> (last visited 11 July 2020).

<sup>24</sup> These words are taken from the 1944 Soviet anthem, removed in the 1977 revision.



tive vision of Stalin, and emphasize the grandeur of Russian and Soviet history. Considerable work to great effect was then done by those opposed to this creeping rehabilitation of Stalin – a wide range of historians, intellectuals, teachers, professors, journalists, and the Memorial association. In large numbers of publications and public statements, in lectures and conferences as well as in the media, they prevented that vision from triumphing.<sup>25</sup>

Admittedly, the alteration of historical memory in Russia during those years is still clearly perceptible in history textbooks: the term ‘totalitarianism’, for example, widely used to qualify the Stalinist regime in 1990s textbooks, became less frequent a decade later. Other examples abound. However, analysis of history textbooks from the 2000s shows that the dark sides of the Soviet regime, particularly under Stalin, continued to be shown.<sup>26</sup> Consequently, Danilov and Filippov’s history textbooks were only a minority of the many available in bookshops, used in schools, and officially approved by the Ministry of Education. Nevertheless, Danilov and Filippov’s books scandalized a section of the historian community. When the government appeared to want to impose a positive vision of Stalinism, the fierce controversy caused in the media by these books almost gave the impression that the only 20<sup>th</sup>-century history textbooks available in Russia were by Danilov and Filippov.

### A Smaller Market, But No Single Textbook

As a result of the multiplicity of textbooks, endless controversies about Soviet history, and increasing politicization of history itself, especially what should be taught in schools, there began to be talk once more of having one single textbook as in Soviet times. Finally in 2013, after a number of official statements, none of which indicated any clear, decisive government view, after meetings of commissions and working groups, a *Concept for New Standards for Teaching National History (konceptsiia novogo uchebno-metodicheskogo kompleksa po otechestvennoi istorii)* was produced under the auspices of the highly official Russian Historical

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<sup>25</sup> See for example the 100-volume series *History of Stalinism (Istoriia stalinizma)* published by Rosspen.

<sup>26</sup> See for instance V. P. Ostrovskii, *Istoriia Rossii, XX vek*, 11<sup>th</sup>-year textbook (Moscow: Drofa, 2004); A. A. Levandovskii, Iu. A. Shchetinov, and S. V. Mironenko, *Istoriia Rossii, XX–nachalo XXI veka*, 11<sup>th</sup>-year textbook (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 2007).

Society.<sup>27</sup> It is 80 pages long,<sup>28</sup> with an “explanatory note” that defines the bases for the teaching of Russian history at school and the principles underlying the *Concept*, and a long “historical and cultural standard” (*Istoriko-kul’turnyĭ standart*) as a foundation for the narrative in schools.

Among their many recommendations, the authors describe the need to stress the continuity between all periods of Russian history, to show that the historical process is based on the shared efforts of many generations of Russians, and that the history of Russia is an integral part of the global historical process. As before, school pupils study Russian history chronologically. However, whereas Soviet history used to be covered in the 9<sup>th</sup> year, the final year of compulsory schooling in Russia, and the last two years (10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>) of full secondary education were years of revision and greater detail, now Soviet history is to be covered in the 10<sup>th</sup> year only, with 11<sup>th</sup>-year history lessons being used to prepare for the single state examination for the secondary leaving certificate (EGE).<sup>29</sup>

At present in Russia there is, therefore, no single textbook but three series, each with a number of volumes, considered to be the only textbooks that comply with the *Concept*. These were first published in 2016 by three publishing houses (Prosveshchenie, Drofa, and Russkoe slovo) and are regularly reprinted.<sup>30</sup> But they can hardly be said to differ greatly

<sup>27</sup> About Russian Historical Society see <https://historyrussia.org/> (last visited 30 October 2019).

<sup>28</sup> Russian Historical Society, *Koncepciia novogo uchebno-metodicheskogo kompleksa po otechestvennoi istorii*, available at <https://historyrussia.org/images/documents/konsepsiyafinal.pdf> (last visited 30 October 2019). The working group to produce the new *Concept* was chaired by Sergei Naryshkin, Director of the Russian Historical Society. Other members were Russian historians, in particular, Aleksandr Chubarian, former Director and current Academic Director of the Institute of General History, Russian Academy of Sciences.

<sup>29</sup> The Unified State Exam (EGE) was adopted in Russia in 2009. It replaced the various university competitive entrance examinations.

<sup>30</sup> I. L. Andreev and I. N. Fedorov, *Istoriia Rossii s drevneishikh vremen do XVI veka*, 6<sup>th</sup>-year textbook (Moscow: Drofa, 2016); I. L. Andreev, I. N. Fedorov, and I. V. Amosova, *Istoriia Rossii: XVI–konets XVII veka*, 7<sup>th</sup>-year textbook (Moscow: Drofa, 2016); I. L. Andreev et al., *Istoriia Rossii XVII–XVIII veka*, 8<sup>th</sup>-year textbook (Moscow: Drofa, 2016); L. M. Liashenko, O. V. Volobuev, and E. V. Smirnova, *Istoriia Rossii: XIX–nachalo XX veka*, 9<sup>th</sup>-year textbook (Moscow: Drofa, 2016); O. V. Volobuev, S. P. Karpachev, and P. N. Romanov, *Istoriia Rossii: nachalo XX–nachalo XXI veka*, 10<sup>th</sup>-year textbook (Moscow: Drofa, 2016); E. V. Pchelov and P. V. Lukin, *Istoriia Rossii s drevneishikh vremen do nachala XVI veka*, 6<sup>th</sup>-year textbook (Moscow: Russkoe slovo, 2015); eidem, *Istoriia Rossii: XVI–XVIII veka*, 7<sup>th</sup>-year textbook (Moscow: Russkoe slovo, 2015); V. N. Zakharov and E. V. Pchelov, *Istoriia Rossii: XVIII veka*, 8<sup>th</sup>-year textbook (Moscow: Russkoe slovo, 2015); K. A. Solov’ev

from previous textbooks, since some authors of the old ones worked at producing the new ones. And despite this single *Concept*, the three textbook series vary widely in the way they present Russian and Soviet history. The Prosveshchenie series has most fully integrated the *Concept* requirements, particularly that of making pupils future patriots, proud of their country's history: the text boxes entitled 'Glory and Pride of the Motherland' (*Chest' i slava Otechestva*) are carefully designed to remind pupils of the many heroes in Russian and Soviet history. This recurring emphasis on the grandeur of the Motherland is a link between the Prosveshchenie series and Danilov and Filippov's textbooks, filled with ideas of patriotism and sacrifice for the Russian state, which is hardly surprising since Danilov is one of the writers for this series.

Conversely, the Drofa series, with its critical vision of any form of despotism, as symbolized by Ivan the Terrible, and the positive portraits of some opponents of tsarism – particularly the 1825 Decembrists, called "patriots for their Motherland"<sup>31</sup> – recalls the 'liberal' textbooks of the 1990s and 2000s. These texts also place particular emphasis on social and economic history.<sup>32</sup> In the textbook on the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, the authors describe the harshness of daily life and social inequalities, which explain popular revolts, the exodus of peasants towards the frontiers of the Russian state, opposition to tsarism, and the lack of solidarity within society.

This is a far cry from the story told in the Prosveshchenie series, which tends to paint an idealistic picture of Russian society. In its 16–17<sup>th</sup>-century volume, the authors depict a harmonious peasantry united in a community of solidarity. When a needy neighbour required help, they explain to their young readers, the peasants "worked cheerfully, quickly, joking and singing songs".<sup>33</sup> But, for all their differences, none of the three

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and A. P. Shevyrev, *Istoriia Rossii, 1801–1914*, 9<sup>th</sup>-year textbook (Moscow: Russkoe slovo, 2015); V. A. Nikonov and S. V. Deviatov, *Istoriia Rossii: 1914–nachalo XXI veka, 2 vols. 10<sup>th</sup>-year textbook* (Moscow: Russkoe slovo, 2017); N. M. Arsent'ev et al., *Isto-riia Rossii*, 6<sup>th</sup>-year textbook, 2 vols. (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 2016); N. M. Arsent'ev et al., *Istoriia Rossii*, 7<sup>th</sup>-year textbook, 2 vols. (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 2016); eidem, *Istoriia Rossii*, 8<sup>th</sup>-year textbook, 2 vols. (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 2016); N. M. Arsent'ev et al., *Istoriia Rossii*, 9<sup>th</sup>-year textbook, 2 vols. (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 2016); M. M. Gorinov et al., *Istoriia Rossii*, 10<sup>th</sup>-year textbook, 3 vols. (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 2016).

<sup>31</sup> Drofa series, 9<sup>th</sup>-year textbook (see note 30), 69.

<sup>32</sup> As stated in the introduction to the third volume of the Drofa series, 8<sup>th</sup>-year textbook (see note 30), 6.

<sup>33</sup> Prosveshchenie series, 7<sup>th</sup>-year textbook (see note 30), vol. 2, 105.

textbook series justifies the Stalin purges by any higher considerations. The Prosveshchenie authors for the three Soviet period volumes also include the historian Oleg Khlevniuk, respected for his major books on Stalin and Stalinism. And while his participation does help ‘legitimize’ the patriotic vision of history that comes across strongly in this series, it also prevents any presentation of a positive vision of Stalinism.

Textbooks published between 1993 and 2015 may still be used in Russian schools. However, as they will probably not be re-edited, they will gradually disappear, soon to be relegated to the status of sources, in the same way as history textbooks of the Soviet period.<sup>34</sup> Consequently, the market for Russian history textbooks has shrunk considerably since 2016, although the idea of returning to a single history textbook, opposed anyway by some historians and teachers, appears to have been abandoned. One reason may be that a single textbook would mean financial gain for a single publisher. And publishing houses are engaged in fierce competition, because the schoolbook market in Russia is highly lucrative: schools buy the textbooks they choose from a list published each year by the Russian Federation Ministry of Education.<sup>35</sup> The textbooks are then handed out free to pupils. And public criticism of a given textbook, whether in history or another subject, for lack of patriotism, say, often conceals a more self-interested motive: forcing a competitor out of the market.<sup>36</sup>

In 2016, when the first new textbooks were published, the historical narrative ended in 2014. Vladimir Putin’s 18 March 2014 speech after the annexation of Crimea is inserted at the end of the Prosveshchenie series’ 10<sup>th</sup>-year textbook:

“Crimea is a unique blend of different peoples, cultures, and traditions. This makes it similar to greater Russia, where not a single ethnic group has disappeared or been dissolved over the centuries. Russians, Ukrainians, Crimean Tatars, and people of other ethnic groups have lived and worked side by side

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<sup>34</sup> In Moscow’s major schoolbook outlet, ‘old’ textbooks could still be found in April 2018, but by February 2019 there were far fewer of them and the shelves held virtually only the three new series.

<sup>35</sup> The list is available online at <https://docs.edu.gov.ru/document/1a542c2a47065cfbd1ae8449adac2e77/> (last visited 30 October 2019).

<sup>36</sup> Boris Grozovskii, ‘“Prosveshchenie” ot Rotenberga. Kak “patriotichnye” uchebniki druga Putina zachvatili rynek obrazovaniia’, *The Insider Russia*, 11 February 2019, available at <https://theins.ru/opinions/140359> (last visited 30 October 2019).

on the land of Crimea, keeping their own identity, traditions, languages, and faith.”<sup>37</sup>

That the textbook should close with the annexation of Crimea, which the Russian president describes as a sacred place of Russian history, is symbolic. But it also says much about the persistence in political discourse of the idea of the Empire and the very Soviet idea of ‘friendship among peoples’.

And this leads us directly to the representation of the Empire in post-Soviet textbooks. How is the history of the Empire explained to school-children in Russia? How do history textbooks describe the successive integrations of non-Russian peoples into the Russian state and the annexation of foreign territory after the Soviet–German Pact? What place does the school narrative give them? And finally, has there been a perceptible revamping of the ‘imperial model’ in the school narrative between 1992 and 2019?

## II. Imperial Model(s) (1992–2019)

### The Russian Empire in Post-Soviet Textbooks (1992–2015)

After the dissolution of the USSR in December 1991, post-Soviet historiography on imperial questions started virtually from scratch. The appearance in 1992 of the Swiss historian Andreas Kappeler’s book *Rußland als Vielvölkerreich*<sup>38</sup> (first Russian translation in 1996) was a major event. Kappeler innovates by turning away from the prevailing view in Russia and the West of Russia as a national construction and focuses on the multi-ethnic nature of the Russian Empire. Eric Hobsbawm’s *The Age of Empire* was translated into Russian in 1999.<sup>39</sup> Russian historiography then rapidly advanced in both methods and research topics.

Russian historians quickly abandoned Soviet views of the Russian Empire as either a ‘prison of peoples’ or an idyllic friendship between the peoples of imperial Russia. They abandoned not only the imperial models but also national ones, positioning their research within transnational or

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<sup>37</sup> Prosveshchenie series, 10<sup>th</sup>-year textbook (see note 30), vol. 3, 106.

<sup>38</sup> Andreas Kappeler, *The Russian Empire: A Multi-Ethnic History* (London: Routledge, 2001).

<sup>39</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire, 1875–1914* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1987).

transregional history, questioning, for example, the concepts of Russification and assimilation. They were divided by certain questions: Can the Russian Empire be compared to the Western colonial empires? Was the Soviet Union analogous to the Russian Empire and a continuation of it? Given the innovative nature of the Soviet project, is it right to see this as a clear break, at least in the 1920s, when *korenizatsiia*, support for national minorities, went together with a rejection of the forms of social domination inherited from the imperial period? The state of research is reflected in the journal *Ab Imperio*, established in Kazan' in 2000 and now the most significant international scholarly journal devoted to imperial and national questions in the former Russian-Soviet area.<sup>40</sup>

In fact, although imperial questions were booming in research in Russia, their influence was virtually imperceptible in history textbooks. The historical model that had started in tsarist historiography and was taken up by Stalinist historiography in the late 1920s remains omnipresent in schoolbooks, with the formation first of Early Rus', then Muscovite Russia, then the Empire, whose destiny was to grow organically towards the seas by absorbing territory, constantly fighting hostile neighbours and invaders. Similarly, the reasoning used to justify Russia's imperial expansion is the same as that found in Soviet textbooks.<sup>41</sup>

First, the story goes, there is the “gathering of the lands of Rus” around Moscow, including the integration of Left Bank Ukraine east of the River Dnipro in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, ‘liberated’ by Moscow from the feudal, national, and religious “triple Polish-Catholic yoke”. As for the late 18<sup>th</sup>-century Partitions of Poland by three of the Great Powers, most textbooks insist on the fact that, unlike Prussia and Austria, Russia “recovered” Belarusian and Ukrainian lands which had formerly belonged to Kyïvan (Kievan) Rus’: “Russia, as heir to the old Russian state, had always fought for the union of these lands... Thus, the centuries-old bonds between Slav peoples, which had been artificially cut, were finally restored”.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> See <https://abimperio.net/> (last visited 30 October 2019).

<sup>41</sup> Most of the following examples are taken from textbooks published in the 2000s. However, many textbooks published in the 1990s that we have analysed were reprinted with no or only minor changes in the 2000s, and this mostly refers to the representation of the Russian imperial construction.

<sup>42</sup> For example, A.A. Preobrazhenskii, *Istoriia otechestva*, 7<sup>th</sup>-year textbook, 13th ed. (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 2008), 69–70, 191, 194.

The reasoning that justifies imperial expansion is also applied to the ‘voluntary incorporation’ (again the Soviet terminology) of territories that had never been Russian: such as the Kazakh khanates in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, that asked Russia for protection against the Dzungarian threat to the steppes, where protection gradually became an annexation that destroyed the Kazakh social and political system. Or the conquest of foreign territory to resist external aggression or for economic reasons: the khanates of Kazan’ and Astrakhan’ in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, then the khanate of Crimea in 1783, and the conquest of North Caucasus in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, described as necessary for the territorial continuity of the Russian Empire, which had already absorbed South Caucasus.

In the case of Crimea, textbook writers talk of the natural continuity of Russian territory, whereas for the Ottoman Empire, which claimed the peninsula, Crimea was an overseas territory and thus “foreign”.<sup>43</sup> Defensive reasoning is also put forward to justify the annexation in Central Asia of the khanates of Kokand and Khiva and the emirate of Bukhara in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Here the term ‘colonial’ does sometimes occur. Some authors state that Russia was a “traditional empire”, even if its colonies were internal.<sup>44</sup> One textbook says that “by absorbing Central Asia and the lands of the Far East, Russia was taking part in the colonial division of the world”. However, the authors stress the benefits of annexation for the people in these territories, seen as economically, culturally, and politically inferior: “The Russian government stopped the civil wars waged by tribal chiefs, prohibited slavery, started building railways and factories”.<sup>45</sup>

One author is more explicit about the “conflict, ruin, and violence that the annexation of these regions meant for the civilian population”, pointing out that “the development of capitalist relations was forcing Russia to actively seek out new profitable markets”. However, he adds, Central Asia “would not in any case been able to keep its independence”. If Russia had not annexed Central Asia, it would have been subjected to Britain, “which would have been worse for the local population”.<sup>46</sup> Here again we

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 182.

<sup>44</sup> For example, E. N. Zakharova, *Istoriia Rossii: XIX-nachalo XX veka*, 8<sup>th</sup>-year textbook, 4th ed. (Moscow: Mnemozina, 2007), 197.

<sup>45</sup> D. D. Danilov, et al., *Rossiiskaia istoriia: XIX-nachalo XX veka*, 8<sup>th</sup>-year textbook (Moscow: Balass, 2007), 214. Also see A. A. Danilov and L. G. Kosulina, *Istoriia gosudarstva i narodov Rossii: XIX vek*, 8<sup>th</sup>-year textbook, 6th ed. (Moscow: Drofa, 2006), 168, etc.

<sup>46</sup> A. A. Levandovskii, *Istoriia Rossii: XIX vek*, 8<sup>th</sup>-year textbook, 2nd ed. (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 2006), 243–6; idem, *Istoriia Rossii: XVIII–XIX vekov*, 10<sup>th</sup>-year textbook, 2nd ed. (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 2006), 219–21.

have the ‘lesser of two evils’ argument, first put forward by Stalin in the 1930s for the integration of Ukraine and Georgia, although the term is not specifically used in post-Soviet textbooks.<sup>47</sup>

In some textbooks, Russia is described as the victim of hostile neighbours. However, it is the monarchist books that take this idea the furthest: the Polish uprising of 1863 is described as the work of a “group of nasty conspirators” supported by the Catholic Church. Emphasis is laid on the Poles’ many exactions and cruelties against the Russians and the Russian army’s concern to save human lives. The European press is virulently criticized for its “anti-Russian” stance:

“[The press] did not mention the cruelties of the Polish ‘patriots’, the persecution of the Orthodox, the children taken away from their parents and sent to Catholic monasteries, or the tortured Russian soldiers. It did not say that the Russian army had never attacked the civilian population, burned cities, or plundered properties like Napoleon’s army, which indeed included a Polish legion.”<sup>48</sup>

The author even claims in the introduction that unlike Britain and France

“... Russia did not plunder its new territories; their population did not pay tribute to the distant capital city. In the Russian Empire, there was no national or racial discrimination. Tribes and peoples kept their culture, traditions, and customs. Not one people in the Empire lost its specific features. Russia united many peoples, and the Russian language gave them access to the achievements of Russian and global culture.”<sup>49</sup>

Ultimately, the narrative of the formation of the Russian Empire, taking central place in all the history textbooks, is that of Russian national con-

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<sup>47</sup> This argument triumphed as early as 1940, but some elements were already present before, as Stalin’s observations about the acquisition of Georgia and Ukraine clearly suggest. These were written in 1937, following the result of the competition for a new textbook on the history of the USSR: “Georgia’s transfer under Russian protectorate at the end of the eighteenth century, and Ukraine’s transfer under Russian power are perceived by the authors as an absolute evil, without taking into account the actual historical circumstances of those times. The authors do not see that Georgia had the alternative of either being swallowed up by the Shah of Persia and the Sultan of Turkey, or coming under the power of Russia, in the same way as Ukraine also had the alternative of either being swallowed up by the Polish nobles and the Sultan of Turkey, or coming under the power of Russia. They do not see that the second alternative was nevertheless the lesser evil”. See: ‘Proekt postanovleniia po uchebnikam istorii (kontrbubnovskii). 29 marta 1937 g.’, in *Istoriia – v shkolu: sozdanie pervykh sovetskikh uchebnikov*, ed. Sergei Kudriashov (Moscow: Archiv Prezidenta Rossiiskoi Federatsii, 2008), 245.

<sup>48</sup> Russkoe slovo series, 8<sup>th</sup>-year textbook (see note 11), 88.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 5.



struction. This is obvious in the chapters on culture, which is almost always presented as solely Russian. The integration of non-Russian peoples is mentioned, but after that they are mainly forgotten, although some authors will give them a few paragraphs or rapidly note the negative aspects of Russian expansion: forced conversion at times, repression of revolts, policies of officially decided settlement of Russian peasants on pastureland or transhumance routes, land confiscation, and sometimes forced Russification. One textbook says that

“the autocracy restricted the rights of any peoples who showed signs of insubordination. This caused resistance, thoughts of independence, emigration, and created tensions between nationalities, which played no small part in the collapse of the Empire.”<sup>50</sup>

In another, the section on the Partitions of Poland ends as follows:

“The disappearance of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth from the map of Europe was bound to leave its mark. The Poles dreamed of a national revival and took up arms more than once. The Prussian, Austrian, and Russian governments put them down by force. But it is impossible to be free if one is oppressing other peoples. In the countries that partitioned Poland, the most conservative forces were strengthened.”<sup>51</sup>

Despite their differences and occasional conspicuous exceptions,<sup>52</sup> most of the textbook authors agree on one point: The Empire’s expansion was

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<sup>50</sup> N. V. Zagladin, *Vsemirnaia istoriia. Istoriia Rossii i mira s drevneishikh vremen do konca XIX veka*, 10<sup>th</sup>-year textbook, 7th ed. (Moscow: Russkoe slovo, 2007), 370.

<sup>51</sup> I. L. Andreev, I. N. Danilevskii, and V. V. Kirillov, *Istoriia Rossii s drevneishikh vremen do konca XIX veka*, 10<sup>th</sup>-year textbook (Moscow: Mnemozina, 2007), 212.

<sup>52</sup> Igor’ Dolutskii describes Russification, anti-semitism, pogroms, land confiscation in Central Asia, censorship, national repression, etc.: Dolutskii, *Otechestvennaia istoriia* (see note 10). The textbooks by Leonid Katsva and Andrei Iurganov, published from the mid-1990s to the end of the 2000s, constitute another notable exception in the way of addressing non-Russian populations and imperial construction: L. A. Katsva and A. L. Iurganov, *Istoriia Rossii: VIII–XV veka* (Moscow: Miros, 1995); eidem, *Istoriia Rossii: XVI–XVIII veka* (Moscow: Miros / Ventana-Graf, 1995); eidem, *Istoriia Rossii s drevneishikh vremen do konca XVI veka* (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 2007); eidem, *Istoriia Rossii: Konets XVI–XVIII vek* (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 2009). In the textbook published in 1995, the paragraph on the Partitions of Poland ends as follows: “While freeing Ukrainians and Belarusians from heavy religious oppression, Russia extended more cruel serfdom to the annexed territories and destroyed the existing liberties of Polish cities. ... The Polish people faced a long and dramatic struggle for the revival of their state. ... We must not forget the aggressive nature of the wars of the Russian Empire in the second half of the XVIII century” (p. 243). We can find almost the same passage in the textbook published in 2009, with the following significant addition: “Yet in that era, all the great powers sought to conquer foreign lands, ignoring the will of small countries and peoples” (p. 243).

necessary to preserve Russia's unity and integrity. That is a common theme that links post-Soviet textbooks with Soviet ones, although there are differences worth mentioning. In Soviet times, each people incorporated into the Russian Empire was described as strengthening the 'Russian people' in its fight against autocracy. The various peoples in the Empire, once united, showed solidarity together in their desire to free themselves from the tsarist yoke and their strictly national demands were left unmentioned.

In modern textbooks, there is no talk of any solidarity of subjugated peoples fighting for freedom from the tsarist 'prison of peoples'. What schoolchildren are now taught is the idea of the power of the Russian state. This power is only seen through the formation, development, and grandeur of the Empire. Geopolitical considerations – forming protective barriers against hostile neighbours, annexing land before another power does – are determining factors. Indeed, imperial history is now more confidently handled than it was in Soviet times. The 'lesser of two evils' explanation is taken further, and conquests and annexations are usually described as good in themselves: first for Russia, but also for the conquered peoples, caught up in a process tending towards 'progress' and modernization, within a sphere perceived as obviously superior. This comes at the expense of any consideration of how this was perceived by the 'other', the people belonging to a different geographical, cultural, and political sphere.

In this way, post-Soviet history textbooks maintain a conventional vision of Russia's history, inherited from tsarist historiography and repeated in the 1930s by Soviet historiography, in which Russia (*Rossia*) was a synonym for the Russian Empire. That is also why non-Russian peoples are only mentioned when they are integrated into Russia. After their integration they disappear from view.

Textbooks published between 1993 and 2015 testify to the diversity of interpretations in these years on a large number of historical facts – for example tsarism, revolutions, and Stalinism. But they also display a convergence in their unchanging view of the Russian Empire, which is never discussed in textbooks, unlike in the Russian scholarly research that, at the same time, was producing innovative discussions of imperial questions in general and the construction and functioning of the Russian Empire in particular. Do the textbooks published since 2016 show any change from their predecessors?

## A United Multi-Ethnic Russian State (2016–19)

According to the *Concept* approved in 2013, new textbooks are supposed to make the point

“that reunion with Russia and their presence within the Russian state had a positive significance for the peoples of our country: security from external enemies, the end of internal unrest and conflicts, cultural and economic development, education and healthcare, and so on”.<sup>53</sup>

Clearly, this recommendation merely perpetuates the conventional vision of the Russian Empire to be found in all post-Soviet textbooks. For example, integration into the Muscovite state was a “free, conscious choice by the Ukrainian people” subjected to Polish “cruel feudal oppression”, “a demonstration of the cultural, historic, and religious community that united the two peoples”.<sup>54</sup> Georgia in 1783, subject to devastating attacks from Iran and Turkey, asked Russia for protection, which, while it soon ended “its existence as a state”, did stop the “bloodshed” and protected it from “external dangers”.<sup>55</sup> Where the integration is not voluntary, it is justified or justifiable.

In the case of the 18<sup>th</sup>-century Partitions of Poland, since the Tsarina had no interest in seeing a weak neighbour disappear, “Catherine was forced” to accept the idea of partition put forward by Prussia. Russian victory in the Russian–Turkish war of 1768–74 convinced her that she had to agree “to divide the Rzeczpospolita”. This was because there was “a real risk that Turkey and Austria would make an alliance to fight together” against Russia.<sup>56</sup> Partition was thus a preventive move by Russia. Furthermore, Poland is described as partly responsible for its dismantlement, since the Polish nobles had done nothing to grant the Orthodox faithful rights equal to those of the Catholics or to relieve the harsh lives of the peasants.<sup>57</sup>

Finally, the Partitions of Poland contained “a certain consistency” (*zakonomernost*). They allowed the “return” to Russia of Ukrainian and Belarusian lands, which met “the interests of the Ukrainian and Belarusian

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<sup>53</sup> Russian Historical Society, *Koncepcia* (see note 28), 11.

<sup>54</sup> Drofa series, 7<sup>th</sup>-year textbook (see note 30), 187–8.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 33–4.

<sup>56</sup> Drofa series, 8<sup>th</sup>-year textbook (see note 30), 144; Prosveshchenie series, 8<sup>th</sup>-year textbook (see note 30), vol. 2, 44.

<sup>57</sup> Drofa series, 8<sup>th</sup>-year textbook (see note 30), 154.

peoples”.<sup>58</sup> Similarly, the annexation of North Caucasus met the interests of the mountain peoples, subject to a religious fanaticism that prevented good relations with ‘other peoples’. In one of the three sets of textbooks, there is the story of Pëtr Zakharov[-Chechenets], the Chechen baby “saved during the Caucasian War by the Russian soldier Zakharov”. Sent to Saint Petersburg by General Ermolov, the little boy who had taken his rescuer’s name studied at the Academy of Arts, becoming “the first native of the Caucasus to be a member of the Academy of Painting”.<sup>59</sup> What is not mentioned is that the baby was found beside his mother, who had died in a Chechen village destroyed by the Russian Army, and that he was also the only professional Chechen painter in the Russian Empire during the entire 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the Prosveshchenie series the conquest of North Caucasus is justified by the mountain peoples’ raids on Georgia, forcing Russia to defend itself. The only victims mentioned are the Russian soldiers killed fighting. The narrative of the Caucasian War ends with a paragraph on the traditional benefits for local people of being incorporated into the Russian Empire:

“With the new authorities there also came more advanced farming techniques, education and healthcare, progressive Russian culture and, later, industrial production. Thus began a process of mutual enrichment between the cultures of the multi-ethnic region of the Caucasus.”<sup>60</sup>

However, describing the positive aspects of integrating non-Russian peoples into Russia is no longer enough: According to the *Concept*, the history of Russia is the history of all the territories, countries, and peoples that have ever integrated “our State at one time or another”:

“Russia is the largest multi-ethnic and multi-religious country in the world. For this reason, it is necessary to increase the volume of educational material devoted to the history of the peoples of Russia, focusing on the interaction of cultures and religions, the strengthening of the economic, social, political and other ties between people.”<sup>61</sup>

The narrative taught in schools is now supposed to bring together into one united and harmonious whole the former pieces of the Russian Empire, some of which are still part of Russia, a country continually referred to in the Prosveshchenie series, from the distant past to the present, as a

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 152–4; Prosveshchenie series, 8<sup>th</sup>-year textbook (see note 30), vol. 2, 38.

<sup>59</sup> Drofa series, 9<sup>th</sup>-year textbook (see note 30), 127.

<sup>60</sup> Prosveshchenie series, 9<sup>th</sup>-year textbook (see note 30), vol. 1, 88.

<sup>61</sup> Russian Historical Society, *Koncepciia* (see note 28), 11.

‘united Russian state’ (*edinoe russkoe / rossiiskoe gosudarstvo*): rather as if the writers feared that this multi-ethnic Russia might split into pieces as the USSR did in 1991.

That is in fact the real innovation in the *Concept*: the space given to non-Russian peoples. As the historian Aleksandr Danilov explained in a radio interview while the *Concept* was being produced in 2013,<sup>62</sup> 22 years after the collapse of the USSR, pluralism in historiography was starting to “create problems in the regions”. This was because “regional history textbooks were at variance with the opinions and conclusions coming from the centre”. “Local patriotism” was increasingly developing, making it a matter of urgency, said Danilov, to place the “preservation of our country’s unity” centre stage in federal history textbooks. That meant including more about the regions and their peoples in the narrative taught to schoolchildren. This could be done, he added, by introducing, say, a “national hero”, to be mentioned together with “all-Russian” (*obshcherossiiskie*) events. When the interviewer asked what was to be done if regions put forward national heroes who had fought against Russian annexation, he replied that these were unlikely to be included in federal textbooks. The aim, he said, was to show “what unites us”.

This requirement to ‘show what unites us’ while placing ‘the Russian people’ centre stage concerns much more than school syllabuses. It is based on the ‘State Ethnic Policy Strategy of the Russian Federation Until 2025’, also mentioned in the *Concept*:

“The Russian state was created as a unity of peoples, with the Russian people being historically the bond that formed the system. Thanks to the unifying role of the Russian people, and centuries of inter-cultural and inter-ethnic interactions, there has been formed on the historical territory of the Russian state a unique cultural diversity and spiritual community among differing peoples attached to common principles and values: patriotism, service to the Motherland, the family, creative work, humanism, social justice, solidarity, and collectivism.”<sup>63</sup>

It is the Prosveshchenie series of textbooks that has best integrated this ‘strategy’. Entire sections for every period are devoted to the traditions,

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<sup>62</sup> ‘Spornye voprosy istorii: shto voidet v uchebnik?’, *Ékho Moskvy*, 16 June 2013, available at <https://echo.msk.ru/programs/assembly/1093926-echo/> (last visited 30 October 2019).

<sup>63</sup> See ‘Ukaz Prezidenta Rossiiskoi Federatsii “O strategii gosudarstvennoi natsional’noi politiki Rossiiskoi Federatsii na period do 2025 goda”’, paragraph 11, available at <http://pravo.gov.ru/proxy/ips/?docbody=&nd=102161949> (last visited 30 October 2019).

culture, literature, and religion of non-Russian peoples, described as being harmoniously integrated into the Russian body. As explained in a passage closing the subchapter on the “peoples of Russia in the 17<sup>th</sup> century”, Russia was developing “as a multi-ethnic state”:

“Under its sway came peoples living in Ukraine, Siberia, and the Far East. These peoples spoke different languages, had different traditions, and preached different religions and cults, but henceforth all these peoples had one single common homeland: Russia.”<sup>64</sup>

The textbooks recall that it was not only the Russians but also the peoples of the Volga, the North, and Western Siberia who joined the fight against foreign aggressors during the Time of Troubles. All of them fought “for the liberation of the Motherland”. Then later, in 1812 “alongside the Russians, Belarusians, Ukrainians, Tatars, Bashkirs, Georgians, and representatives of many other peoples made their contribution to victory”.<sup>65</sup>

The requirement to present the Russian state in its ethnic diversity does not, however, mean deconstructing the imperial model that still underpins the narrative:

“[In the 17<sup>th</sup> century], the Russian, much more than before, felt he belonged to a huge united country and the Russian [*russkii*] people whose base he formed. Even without any particular geographical knowledge, the Russian for the first time became aware of the vast spaces of his Motherland, whose territory stretched to the Pacific Ocean. Having overcome the Time of Troubles, the Russian for the first time acutely felt the role and sense of order and state stability. And that was true not only for the Russians but also the country’s other peoples.”<sup>66</sup>

And even though the “country’s other peoples” are omnipresent in this textbook series, they remain relegated to a parallel and thus secondary position; usually information about the ‘peoples of Russia’, their traditions, culture, literature, daily lives, or about ‘the national question’, ‘ethnic policy’, or ‘national movements’ is placed in subsections that are optional for the pupil. Multi-ethnic Russia is in reality imperial Russia. Its multi-ethnic nature is admittedly emphasized much more than before, described as a great strength endowing Russia with a character unique in the world. However, within this multi-ethnic state, the Russians remain, as they had been in Soviet textbooks, ‘first among equals’.

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<sup>64</sup> Prosveshchenie series, 7<sup>th</sup>-year textbook (see note 30), vol. 2, 86.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 23–4; Prosveshchenie series, 9<sup>th</sup>-year textbook (see note 30), vol. 1, 33.

<sup>66</sup> Prosveshchenie series, 7<sup>th</sup>-year textbook (see note 30), vol. 2, 103.

Thus, in the new textbooks, as in the previous ones, there is no attempt to deconstruct the Russian imperial model. The Russian Empire continues to be glorified. The narrative leaves unmentioned the imperialist nature of successive incorporations into Russia. Where the act of belligerence is obvious, integration into Russian lands is described as beneficial to the subjugated people. Nothing must allow the schoolchild to think that Russia might have done something bad to other peoples. For example, as in the previous textbooks, the pogroms against the Jews are barely mentioned in the new textbook series. And even if the negative aspects of annexations are occasionally touched on, these are mere details in a generally positive picture. Russia is described as having at all times brought benefits to the other peoples: in the tsarist era, it brought its civilization, technical progress, education, an end to inter-ethnic violence, slavery, and the foreign yoke; in Soviet times, its friendship, its economic support, and its pacifism.

### The USSR's Protective Hand

Which brings us to the Soviet period and in particular the German-Soviet Pact, an event that has played a central role in the wars of memory that have pitted and continue to pit Poland and the Baltic countries against Russia. For the Poles, the German-Soviet Pact led to their country's 'fourth' Partition (between the Third Reich and the USSR). For the Baltic countries, it meant their annexation by the USSR until 1991. In 2004, the former Estonian prime minister, Mart Laar, published an article in the *Wall Street Journal* entitled 'When Will Russia Say "Sorry"?'.<sup>67</sup> But never has Russia intended to 'say sorry', and the textbooks of both 1992–2015 and the present time are evidence of that fact.

Indeed, the German-Soviet Pact is often justified by geopolitical circumstances. First, most authors point out that the Pact was the consequence of the failure of the 'collective security' policy, the Munich Agreement and the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia, and the Western powers' unwillingness to work with the Stalinist state. Western and Soviet policies are placed on the same footing: both camps wanted to avoid confrontation with Germany, even if this meant negotiating behind the other's back. Many textbooks explain that the USSR had no choice but to

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<sup>67</sup> Quoted in Gabriel Gorodetsky, 'Le pacte germano-soviétique', in *Histoire partagée, mémoires divisées: Ukraine, Russie, Pologne*, eds. Korine Amacher, Éric Aunoble, and Andrii Portnov (Lausanne: Antipodes, 2020).

sign the Pact, since the country was not ready to go to war.<sup>68</sup> In the *Russkoe slovo* series, Vladimir Putin is cited in support of this view:

“The Soviet Union signed a non-aggression pact with Germany. You may say, oh, that was wrong. But was it so wrong if the Soviet Union did not want to fight? ... The alternative to the non-aggression pact was war with Germany and her allies as early as September 1939, when the USSR was not ready. Without the pact, the USSR’s defeat was likely, and also that of the entire anti-Hitler coalition during the Second World War. The pact gained time.”<sup>69</sup>

With regard to the secret protocols, if many textbooks do not justify them, the term ‘invasion’ is never used. As most of the textbooks put it, Germany “invaded” Poland, whereas the USSR “crossed” the Polish border. By this act the USSR, it is pointed out, merely “recovered” Ukrainian and Belarusian territories lost under the Treaty of Riga in 1921.<sup>70</sup> Some authors state that the Soviet army only entered Poland after the Polish government had left the country.<sup>71</sup> This distortion of the facts (for the Polish government left the country just after the Soviet invasion) makes it possible to explain to readers that the purpose was solely to help the abandoned Ukrainian and Belarusian populations. That was the official explanation given at the time, as can be seen from a 1939 poster reproduced in many textbooks. A friendly Soviet soldier is extending his protective hand to “the fraternal peoples of western Ukraine and western Belarus”.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> See for example A. A. Danilov and L. G. Kosulina, *Istoriia Rossii, XX vek*, 9<sup>th</sup>-year textbook (Moscow: Prosveshcheniie, 1996), 202–3; A. F. Kiselev and V. P. Popov, *Istoriia Rossii, XX–nachalo XXI veka*, 11<sup>th</sup>-year textbook (Moscow: Drofa, 2013), 125; A. A. Danilov and A. V. Filippov, *Istoriia Rossii, 1940–1945*, 11<sup>th</sup>-year textbook (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 2013), 318–19; Prosveshchenie series, 10<sup>th</sup>-year textbook (see note 30), vol. 1, 171–4; etc. Once again Dolutskii’s text is the exception that confirms the rule. He openly addresses such issues as the USSR’s ‘neutrality’ until June 1941, see Dolutskii, *Otechestvennaia istoriia* (see note 10), vol 2, 8.

<sup>69</sup> *Russkoe slovo* series, 10<sup>th</sup>-year textbook (see note 30), vol. 1, 186.

<sup>70</sup> See for example V. V. Zhuravlev, ed., *Istoriia Rossii: Sovetskoe obschestvo, 1917–1991* (Moscow: Terra, 1997), 248–9; V. S. Izmozik and S. N. Rudnik, *Istoriia Rossii*, 11<sup>th</sup>-year textbook (Moscow: Ventana Graf, 2009), 193; *Russkoe slovo* series, 10<sup>th</sup>-year textbook (see note 30), vol. 1, 187–8; A. F. Kiselev and V. P. Popov, *Istoriia Rossii: XX–nachalo XXI veka* (Moscow: Drofa, 2013), 127.

<sup>71</sup> See for example Prosveshchenie series, 10<sup>th</sup>-year textbook (see note 30), vol. 2, 4; Kiselev and Popov, *Istoriia Rossii* (see note 69), 127; Prosveshchenie series, 11<sup>th</sup>-year textbook (see note 30), 324.

<sup>72</sup> See for example, Drofa series, 10<sup>th</sup>-year textbook (see note 30), 141.



The same reasoning is used for Bessarabia, lost to Romania by Soviet Russia in 1918 and occupied by the USSR under the secret protocols in June 1940. For northern Bukovina, land that had never been Russian and was also incorporated into the USSR, the explanation is that Ukrainians formed the majority of the population. Some authors say that it was a ‘compensation’ for the unauthorized seizure (*samovol’nyi zachvat*) of Bessarabia by Romania in 1918,<sup>73</sup> encouraging the young reader to think that this was not an aggressive act against an independent state but the recovery of land that had been Russian. Like the incorporation of Left Bank Ukraine in the 17<sup>th</sup> century or the Partitions of Poland in the late 18<sup>th</sup>, these events are presented as the recovery of territories considered to be Russian and thus legitimate. Although some authors do say that repression soon descended on these Sovietized communities, most prefer to emphasize the fact that the Ukrainian and Belarusian inhabitants welcomed the Soviets as liberators, after suffering under the Polish yoke (Romanian yoke in Bessarabia) during the inter-war period.

As for the Baltic republics, the elections won by pro-Communist forces and the formation of people’s governments are usually mentioned, but not always the fact that this occurred under occupation. Only one textbook by Igor Dolutskii clearly states that this act marked the “start of 50 years’ occupation of the Baltic states”.<sup>74</sup> Finally, the Katyn’ Massacre is not systematically mentioned in textbooks, or only briefly, as if to prevent the reader spending too much time on this embarrassing episode. In the *Prosveshchenie* series, it says that thousands of Polish officers were shot in Katyn’ Forest, but never states clearly that the massacre was carried out on Stalin’s orders.<sup>75</sup>

But it must be noted that the picture given above is not totally uniform. In the *Drofa* series, the German–Soviet Pact is also justified by circumstances. However, the authors add that “in formal terms, the non-aggression treaty contained nothing reprehensible”. But everyone understood “that it gave the go-ahead to Hitler’s aggression against Poland... While delaying Hitler’s attack on the USSR, it created favourable conditions for the establishment of Germany’s military and political plans in Europe”.<sup>76</sup> Of the USSR’s annexation of territory, they say that although

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<sup>73</sup> See for example *Russkoe slovo* series, 10<sup>th</sup>-year textbook (see note 30), vol. 1, 190.

<sup>74</sup> Dolutskii, *Otechestvennaia istoriia*, (see note 10), vol. 2, 8.

<sup>75</sup> *Prosveshchenie* series, 10<sup>th</sup>-year textbook (see note 30), vol. 2, 4, 34.

<sup>76</sup> *Drofa* series, 10<sup>th</sup>-year textbook (see note 30), 139–40.

“officially, the Soviet government claimed its purpose was to liberate the western Ukrainian and Belarusian lands lost to Poland under the Treaty of Riga in 1921, unofficially it took advantage of the secret protocols to carry out the division of spheres of influence between Germany and the USSR”.

From the Soviet authorities’ point of view, the Red Army was waging a “campaign of liberation”, whereas for the “Polish patriots, it was just another partition of Poland. And from all points of view, the result was the liquidation of Poland as a state”.<sup>77</sup> And in the Drofa series, there is no ambiguity at all in the description of the Katyn’ Massacre as a “crime of the Stalinist regime”.<sup>78</sup> It must be noted, however, that one paragraph of the section on the German–Soviet Pact has disappeared from the 2019 edition of this textbook, implying that it will be aligned with a vision closer to official expectations.<sup>79</sup>

## Conclusion

Despite there being a single official *Concept*, differences remain between textbooks, for example in the way they describe the 18<sup>th</sup>-century peasant community or handle the German–Soviet Pact. In fact, what the new history textbooks show is the state of official history policy in present-day Russia. Within a framework laid down by the political authorities, some margin for manoeuvre is, for the moment, allowed. Furthermore, it is easy to see in these new textbooks the desire to avoid controversial positions and to reconcile opposing views on certain historical periods, particularly the 20<sup>th</sup> century. And they all agree on some points: although the Stalinist regime is no longer pilloried, as it was in many textbooks in the 1990s, none of the new ones rehabilitate it or justify the purges, as some textbooks did in the late 2000s.

The new textbooks have also similar negative visions of Tsar Ivan the Terrible, described as a tyrant. Similarly, the most extreme assertions against opponents and any sort of opposition to Tsarism once found in monarchist textbooks have completely vanished. This reconciliation of opposing positions was seen in Russia in 2017 during the centenary of the

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 144–5.

<sup>79</sup> Besides, the 10<sup>th</sup>-year textbook of the Drofa series is not included in the list of recommended textbooks, published in December 2018 by the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation.

1917 revolutions. For the Russian government, describing the ideological differences between Reds and Whites, identifying the guilty, condemning one side or the other, was less important than emphasizing that both sides, whatever their mutual hostility in 1917, wanted “prosperity for Russia and a better life on earth”.<sup>80</sup>

This is probably why the publication in 2016 of these three sets of textbooks aroused little public controversy and was not widely covered in the media, putting an end to more than 25 years of ‘textbook warfare’ in Russia: supporters of patriotic history can be satisfied and their opponents can say that the worst has been avoided. And the lack of any critical discussion of the Russian (and Soviet) empires in the new textbooks is unlikely to revive that ‘war’. In present-day Russia, the memory of the imperial model remains still very much alive and uncontested. The positive reactions in Russia to the annexation of Crimea in 2014 were clear evidence of this. Which is why any deconstruction of the traditional vision that glorifies an imperial Russia is for the moment confined to the world of scholarly historiography.

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<sup>80</sup> Ministerstvo kul'tury Rossiĭskoĭ Federatsii, ‘K 100-letiiu Velikoĭ rossiĭskoĭ revoliutsii: osmyslenie vo imia konsolidatsii’, 6 October 2017, available at <https://www.mkrf.ru/press/news/k-100-letiyu-velikoy-rossiyskoy-revolyutsii-osmyslenie-vo-imya-konsolidatsii20171006171334/> (last visited 30 October 2019). On the centenary commemorations of the 1917 Revolution see: Korine Amacher, ‘Fêter une révolution sans donner des idées’, *Le Monde Diplomatique*, March 2017; eadem, ‘L’embarrassante mémoire de la Révolution russe’, *La Vie des Idées*, 14 April 2017, available at <https://lavedesidees.fr/La-memoire-encombrante-de-la-Revolution-russe.html> (last visited 30 October 2019).

# LITERATURE AS A HISTORY'S PLAYGROUND



MIRIAM KRUSE

## MARTYRS, TRAITORS, HEALING HOUSEWIVES

### THE REPRESENTATION OF FEMALE WAR EXPERIENCES IN BORIS GORBATOV'S *TARAS' FAMILY* (1943)

Boris Gorbатов's story *Taras' Family* enjoyed great success in the Soviet Union: it first appeared as a series in *Pravda* in 1943 and was broadcast on the radio before being published as a novel later that year. In 1946, Gorbатов was awarded the Stalin Prize for it. Until the 1980s it was sold successfully in a number of editions.<sup>1</sup>

The story is set in a city in eastern Ukraine during the Second World War. It features the life of three generations of a local family under German occupation. The time of publication – 1943, in the midst of war – is of special interest in terms of the portrayal of gender roles. At that point, gender roles in the Soviet Union, especially the image of women and conceptions of femininity, seemed to be being challenged: with men drafted into the Red Army, women took over formerly male-dominated occupations in heavy industry and agriculture. Additionally, between 800,000–1,000,000 Soviet women participated in the war in the ranks of the Red Army and in partisan units.<sup>2</sup> They entered the realm of war and

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<sup>1</sup> Elena Penskaja, 'Arctic Narrative Semantics in Soviet History: Fiction and Art of the 1930s', *Enthymema* XIII (2015): 167–83, here 179; Olga Gershenson, 'Between the Permitted and the Forbidden: The Politics of Holocaust Representation in *The Unvanquished* (1945)', in *Soviet Jews in World War II: Fighting, Witnessing, Remembering*, eds. Harriet Murav et al. (Brighton: Academic Studies Press, 2014), 168–86, here 169f.

<sup>2</sup> Numbers used by researchers vary, see for example Carmen Scheide, '“Unstintingly Master Warfare”: Women in the Red Army', in *The Palgrave Handbook of Women and Gender in Twentieth-Century Russia and the Soviet Union*, ed. Melanie Ilic (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 233–48, here 233; Susan Corbesero, 'Femininity (Con)scripted: Female Images in Soviet Wartime Poster Propaganda, 1941–1945', *Aspasia*, 4 (2010): 103–20, here 104; Olesya Khromeychuk, 'Experiences of Women at War: Servicewomen During WWII and in the Ukrainian Armed Forces in the Conflict in Donbas', *Baltic Worlds* X, 4 (2017): 59–70, here 60.

violence that had hitherto been denoted as exclusively male. However, as the war ended, their experiences and participation in the war were mostly excluded from official Soviet historiography and commemoration.<sup>3</sup>

This text examines how the role and experiences of women had been portrayed in the tumultuous times of war before the official Soviet narrative of the ‘Great Patriotic War’ with its emphasis on male heroes had been sanctioned. It depicts the existence of those female experiences omitted by Gorbатов and by the official narrative, and the negative implications of their exclusion. The text offers an analysis of the gender roles of the women in *Taras’ Family* in a close reading of three characters. The findings are contextualized by an overview of dominant gender images in Soviet culture, politics, and historiography before, during, and after the war. The text also shows how traditional gender roles were used in Soviet war literature and propaganda both to agitate and to stabilize Soviet society, omitting and trivializing the experiences and trauma of individual women.

### Gender Roles in Soviet Politics and Culture Before, During, and After the War

Soviet gender policies in the 1930s were ambivalent. The early Soviet period had seen intense political discussions on the question of the liberation and emancipation of women, as well as progressive laws on divorce and abortion. However, the 1930s were characterized by a reversal of these tendencies: the Women’s Department (*Zhenotdel*) of the Central Committee was disbanded in 1930. Officially, the ‘woman question’ was considered as solved by then. Even though women had entered the workforce, their roles as mothers and wives were fostered and re-traditionalized by the legal prohibition of abortion in 1936 and by restrictive marriage legislation.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, women were professionalized and

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<sup>3</sup> See for example Anna Krylova, ‘“Healers of Wounded Souls”: The Crisis of Private Life in Soviet Literature, 1944–1946’, *The Journal of Modern History* 73, 2 (2001): 307–31, here 326; Khromeychuk, ‘Experiences’ (see note 2), 65; Scheide, ‘Women in the Red Army’ (see note 2), 234.

<sup>4</sup> Roger D. Markwick, ‘“The Motherland Calls”: Soviet Women in the Great Patriotic War, 1941–1945’, in *Handbook of Women* (see note 2), 217–32, here 218–20; Carmen Scheide, *Kinder, Küche, Kommunismus: Das Wechselverhältnis zwischen sowjetischem Frauenalltag und Frauenpolitik von 1921 bis 1930 am Beispiel Moskauer Arbeiterinnen* (Zürich: Pano, 2002), 15, 33, 239–43.

militarized in paramilitary training, which was available during the 1930s to all Soviet citizens, regardless of gender, in preparation for war.

As a result a new type of “Soviet womanhood” began to emerge, “combining military expertise in war, violence, femininity and redefined motherhood”.<sup>5</sup> Hence it became part of the self-image of young women in the 1930s to defend their country, using military violence if necessary.<sup>6</sup> However, when Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union in 1941 and masses of women volunteered for the Red Army, they were mostly rejected or recruited only covertly.<sup>7</sup> Instead, propaganda posters and magazines urged women to express their patriotism on the home front, in agriculture or in heavy industry. This shift of women taking over occupations formerly denoted as male was presented not as emancipatory and lasting, but as “unwomanly and mediated by males”<sup>8</sup> – as a temporary replacement for male workers, or as marital duty to their fighting husbands.<sup>9</sup> The mass mobilization of women began in 1942, only after the Red Army had incurred heavy losses at the beginning of the German–Soviet war. During the war, women constituted about 3–8 % of Red Army soldiers and 2.59 % of members of partisan units.<sup>10</sup>

A largely undiscussed wartime experience of Soviet women, whether on the battlefield or on the home front, was sexual violence. Until now there has been hardly any research on sexual violence in the Red Army or in partisan units, or on the violence inflicted by them on Soviet civilians.<sup>11</sup> The foundation for research on the sexual violence committed by German

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<sup>5</sup> Anna Krylova, ‘Stalinist Identity from the Viewpoint of Gender: Rearing a Generation of Professionally Violent Women-Fighters in 1930s Stalinist Russia’, *Gender and History* 16, 2 (2004): 626–53, here 646.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 636ff.

<sup>7</sup> Scheide, ‘Women in the Red Army’ (see note 2), 235; Khromeychuk, ‘Experiences’ (see note 2), 60, 63; Markwick, ‘Soviet Women’ (see note 4), 224. Many of these initial rejections are described in the literary-documentary work of Svetlana Alexievich, *The Unwomanly Face of War: An Oral History of Women in World War II* (New York: Random House, 2017).

<sup>8</sup> Corbesero, ‘Femininity’ (see note 2), 104.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 104–09; Markwick, ‘Soviet Women’ (see note 4), 220–22; Scheide, ‘Women in the Red Army’ (see note 2), 235ff.

<sup>10</sup> Scheide, ‘Women in the Red Army’ (see note 2), 233; Markwick, ‘Soviet Women’ (see note 4), 225.

<sup>11</sup> Alexievich, *Unwomanly Face* (see note 7), 235; Scheide, ‘Women in the Red Army’ (see note 2), 241; Volodymyr Hinda, *Seks i nimets’ko-radians’ka vīna (1941–1945)*, unpublished monograph (Kyïv, 2018), 212–33 (chapter 4.4), 402–19 (chapter 6.2).



troops in the Soviet Union has been established by the work of Regina Mühlhäuser. As she has shown, sexual violence committed by German troops was commonplace. This included rape and mass rape, body searches, the touching and hitting of genitals, forced (public) undressing, mutilation, and the display and photography of naked female corpses.<sup>12</sup>

One of the functions of acts like these was the humiliation of Soviet society and of Soviet men. This implies the underlying cultural construction of women as *verletzungsoffen* (vulnerable), and men as *verletzungsmächtig* (capable of vulnerating): women need to be protected by men. They thus become a target:

“They symbolize one’s own territory which needs to be defended, and the violation of which is especially humiliating. So the body of a woman becomes a battlefield: of a man-on-man fight, and of the fight against a whole ... community.”<sup>13</sup>

Inherent in this is a culturally determined connection between “female-ness, honour, and nation”.<sup>14</sup>

A similar cultural image of women prevailed in Soviet culture and politics, where it was also exploited for the war effort. Soviet wartime propaganda used the image of the vulnerable woman in posters and text, implying that large numbers of Soviet women were being forced to work in brothels in the German *Reich*.<sup>15</sup> Imagery like this was exploited to fuel the fighting spirit of the male Soviet soldiers and hatred of the German occupying forces.<sup>16</sup> The harm done to individual Soviet women experiencing sexual violence, however, was of no concern here. On the contrary, women raped by the enemy were often regarded as traitors or as having

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<sup>12</sup> Regina Mühlhäuser, ‘Handlungsräume: Sexuelle Gewalt durch Wehrmacht und SS in den besetzten Gebieten der Sowjetunion 1941–1945’, in *Krieg und Geschlecht: Sexuelle Gewalt im Krieg und Sex-Zwangsarbeit in NS-Konzentrationslagern*, eds. Insa Eschebach et al. (Berlin: Metropol, 2008), 167–85.

<sup>13</sup> Gaby Zipfel, ‘Ausnahmestand Krieg? Anmerkungen zu soldatischer Männlichkeit, sexueller Gewalt und militärischer Einhegung’, in *Krieg und Geschlecht* (see note 12), 55–74, here 66; also see 55–8; Mühlhäuser, ‘Handlungsräume’ (see note 12), 176–8.

<sup>14</sup> Mühlhäuser, ‘Handlungsräume’ (see note 12), 172, fn. 14. On functions of sexual violence by German troops see *ibid.*, 173–9.

<sup>15</sup> Gelinada Grinchenko, ‘The *Ostarbeiter* of Nazi Germany in Soviet and Post-Soviet Ukrainian Historical Memory’, *Canadian Slavonic Papers / Revue Canadienne des slavistes* LIV, 3–4 (2012): 401–26, here 406f.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 406ff; Markwick, ‘Soviet Women’ (see note 4), 226.

been dishonoured.<sup>17</sup> The ‘canonization’ of the murdered female partisan Zoia Kosmodem’ianskaia, which already began during wartime, stands as another example of how women and female bodies were instrumentalized as symbols by the Soviet leadership: in presentations of Kosmodem’ianskaia and her fate, there was an emphasis not only on her military activities, but also on her act of self-sacrifice, her youth, innocence and femininity, as well as on details of her brutal torture by German troops.<sup>18</sup> In this way Kosmodem’ianskaia was stylized as the symbol of a “ravaged people and nation”.<sup>19</sup>

As a rule, the symbolic presentation of women in the Soviet Union came at the expense of the representation of female subjectivity, individual experience, and the suffering of women during war. This is also the case in Soviet wartime and post-war literature, which was characterized by silence on female war trauma. Its main protagonists were the disturbed, physically and psychologically injured men returning from the war. Authors placed female characters depicted as “soul-healers” at their disposal:<sup>20</sup> waiting wives and fiancées, with healthy bodies and strong minds, welcoming ‘their’ men, unconditionally ready to heal, to mother, to revitalize. Female characters were limited to the domestic sphere and their psyche presented as banal. References to war experiences outside the home, of female distress, trauma, or inner conflict were lacking.<sup>21</sup>

Similarly, propaganda posters towards the end of the war presented women as mothers, wives, waiting brides, welcoming returning soldiers in intact and homely houses. The reinforcement of traditional gender roles was used as a means of overcoming the trauma of war: “[G]ender, as defined by heterosexual norms, served as a key organizing principle to help reconstitute the post-war landscape”.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Regina Mühlhäuser, *Eroberungen: Sexuelle Gewalttaten und intime Beziehungen deutscher Soldaten in der Sowjetunion 1941–1945* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2010), 49ff.

<sup>18</sup> Markwick, ‘Soviet Women’ (see note 4), 225; Adrienne M. Harris, ‘Memorializations of a Martyr and Her Mutilated Bodies: Public Monuments to Soviet War Hero Zoia Kosmodem’ianskaia, 1942 to the Present’, *Journal of War & Culture Studies* 5, 1 (2012): 73–90, here 74–9; on symbolic use of Kosmodem’ianskaia, but without gender-specific analysis, see Nina Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead: The Rise and Fall of the Cult of World War II in Russia* (New York: BasicBooks), 76.

<sup>19</sup> Markwick, ‘Soviet Women’ (see note 4), 225.

<sup>20</sup> Krylova, ‘“Healers”’ (see note 3), 324.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 310, 324ff.

<sup>22</sup> Corbesero, ‘Femininity’ (see note 2), 114.

Another feature of this reinforcement was the marginalization of the participation of women in the armed forces, which began at the end of the war: at the official victory festivities in Moscow in 1945 among 40,000 soldiers there were no women present. They were demobilized quickly and had no post-war military career prospects.<sup>23</sup> Widespread narratives of female combatants perpetuated rumours of promiscuity and husband-hunting as the main motivations and activities of female soldiers.<sup>24</sup> Soviet culture and propaganda thus imposed a “healing discourse” and “social imperative”<sup>25</sup> of innocence, domesticity, and dedication / devotion on Soviet women, which was almost impossible to live up to in the context of their wartime experiences.

### Close Reading: Gender Roles and Female Images in *Taras' Family*

The writer Boris Gorbатов was born in 1908 in a mining camp in today's Luhans'k Oblast' (Ukraine) and grew up in the same region, referred to as the Donbas – then part of the Russian Empire and later part of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. He was a party member, one of the founders of the proletarian writers' union in the Donbas and a secretary of the All-Union Association of Proletarian Writers. He worked as a war correspondent for *Pravda* on the frontline at the beginning of the Second World War.<sup>26</sup> The setting of his story *Taras' Family* is most probably the city of Voroshylovhrad (today's Luhans'k), where Gorbатов conducted interviews in 1943 after the Red Army had reconquered the city.<sup>27</sup>

The story presents the life of three generations of a family under German occupation, with Taras, the 60-year-old head of the family, as the main character. Its central topics are conflicts of loyalty and the dilemma faced by the characters between survival on the one hand and the precept of not bowing to the German occupying forces on the other. Taras, the moral authority of the story, repeatedly states his solution: “Everybody

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<sup>23</sup> Markwick, ‘Soviet Women’ (see note 4), 226; Scheide, ‘Women in the Red Army’ (see note 2), 238.

<sup>24</sup> Scheide, ‘Women in the Red Army’ (see note 2), 240; Khromeychuk, ‘Experiences’ (see note 2), 63; Krylova, ‘Stalinist Identity’ (see note 5), 650.

<sup>25</sup> Krylova, ‘“Healers”’ (see note 3), 330.

<sup>26</sup> Penskaja, ‘Arctic Narrative’ (see note 1), 178f.

<sup>27</sup> Jeremy Hicks, ‘Confronting the Holocaust: Mark Donskoï's *The Unvanquished*’, *Studies in Russian and Soviet Cinema* 3, 1 (2009): 33–51, here 41.

only thinks about saving their life, but one should also think about saving one's soul".<sup>28</sup> In the eyes of Taras, one should rather die than betray the Party, the Red Army, the Soviet Union, or Russia by collaborating with the German occupiers in thought or action. Against this backdrop, the following section analyses the portrayal of female characters in the story: how are their war experiences narrated and how do other characters judge them? Which experiences are represented and which are omitted? Which character traits are ascribed to the women and what do readers learn about their inner lives?

### Nastia

18-year old Nastia is one of the main characters in the story. Using metaphors of flowers, her father Taras describes her as a wonderfully beautiful girl turning into a woman. As such, Taras suspects that she is striving for fulfilment through love. He prohibits Nastia from leaving the house unless she is dressed in shabby old clothes. It remains unclear whether Taras fears that Nastia could fall victim to sexual violence or whether Taras thinks that she herself, driven by her youthful longing for love, might seek contact with the German soldiers – or whether Taras sees a distinction between the two. Indeed, sexual violence on the part of German troops was so widespread that women dressed poorly when leaving the house to protect themselves, or went completely into hiding, leading to considerable limitations on their everyday life and freedom of movement. Many women blamed themselves when German troops inflicted sexual violence on them.<sup>29</sup>

The character is mostly portrayed through the eyes of her father Taras and Nastia herself remains largely silent. Neither through dialogues nor inner monologue does the reader learn about her interior life. Taras worries constantly about Nastia's stance in the ongoing war. In a scene of reunion between Nastia and her early love Pavlik, the reader has a

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<sup>28</sup> Boris Gorbатов, *Izbrannoe* (Moscow: Ministerstvo kul'tury SSSR. Glavizdat. Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoï literatury, 1953), 451.

<sup>29</sup> On deliberately shabby clothing for protection, see Mühlhäuser, *Eroberungen* (see note 17), 106; Evgeniï Krinko, 'Okkupanty i naselenie v gody velikoi otechestvennoi voïny: problemy vzaimovospriiatii', in *Voenno-istoricheskaiia antropologiia: Ezhegodnik 2003 / 2004*, ed. Associaciia voenno-ictoricheskoi antropologii i psikhologii 'Chelovek i voïna' (Moscow: Rosspeñ, 2005), 329–44, here 333f. On victim blaming, see Mühlhäuser, *Eroberungen* (see note 17), 49ff.

glimpse of her patriotic attitude. When Pavlik assures Nastia that he has remained faithful to her, Nastia replies: "And to all the others?"<sup>30</sup> It seems that Pavlik's patriotism and loyalty to communism are more important to her than their personal relationship. At the same time, she is very attentive towards Pavlik, worrying about him, pitying him, assuring him of her fidelity. As Pavlik asks her how she has dealt with questions of loyalty during occupation, she pretends to be naïve and apolitical: "I am a very ordinary, average girl. I have simply lived according to my conscience".<sup>31</sup> It is not until the end of the story that the utterly surprised Taras and the reader learn that Nastia has been secretly active as a partisan. But before Taras has the opportunity to talk to Nastia about it, she is discovered by German troops and hanged.

The character of Nastia remains a symbol: of female virtues, on the one hand, such as faithfulness, empathy, beauty, and care. On the other hand, she is presented as the exemplary patriot and communist who sacrifices herself. Her character thus stands as an example of the contemporary politically required presentation and canonization of Soviet female heroes. Gorbатов reproduces the 'woman combatant / beautiful victim' narrative. It parallels the presentation of the 18-year-old female partisan Zoia Kosmodem'ianskaia, who was hanged by German troops and who had been 'canonized' with the use of similar traits in *Pravda* one year before Gorbатов's book was published.<sup>32</sup>

What are Nastia's motivations? Does she hesitate to become a partisan and thus endanger her family, should she be discovered? How does she handle her secret duties in respect of her own family? What are her tasks and everyday life as a partisan? The reader learns nothing about Nastia's individual experiences or conflicts. This stands in contrast to the presentation of her brother, Stepan. A partisan himself, his diverse activities and meetings in organizing resistance against the German occupiers are described on roughly thirty pages in great detail. Similarly, the reader learns about the war experiences and duties of Nastia's other brothers, Andrei and Nikifor, in the Red Army. The symbolic nature of Nastia's character, as well as the surprise of her being a partisan, contribute to the lack of representation of women's participation in the war – the role of female partisans is minimized, while female Red Army soldiers are not mentioned at all.

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<sup>30</sup> Gorbатов, *Izbrannoe* (see note 28), 541.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 548.

<sup>32</sup> Harris, 'Memorializations' (see note 18), 74.

## Lizka / Luisa

The secondary character Lizka / Luisa is Nastia's school friend. After the arrival of the German occupiers, she renames herself from Lizka, using the German name Luisa. She is described as superficial, hedonistic, and treacherous: she wears make-up, dresses conspicuously and tantalizingly, and seeks contact with the German soldiers. She doubts whether the Red Army will return, and even if so, she prefers to enjoy her youth and beauty with the German soldiers rather than keeping a patriotic stance by staying away from them:

“‘Meanwhile youth will pass us by!’ Lizka sighed. ‘The most beautiful time will pass. By the time our troops (the Red Army – M.K.) return, we will have become old women that nobody wants to look at. No’, she shook her curly head, ‘better somehow to enjoy oneself...’”<sup>33</sup>

The male characters condemn her behaviour. Lizka's longing for luxury is depicted as extraordinarily treacherous and reprehensible. She wears a beautiful sweater which she received as a gift from a German soldier, a sweater the German soldier has stolen from another woman, having beaten her daughter to death, and whose daughter's blood still sticks to it. A boy, Nastia's nephew, comments on Lizka's behaviour by singing a song he has picked up in the city:

“... Young girl, so soon you have forgotten  
That in the terrible war for the homeland  
That for you, for the girls, in the very first battle,  
The young man shed his hot blood. ...  
In spring, to the lieutenant pilot, young girl,  
In tears you vowed to be faithful,  
But in difficult times you forgot the falcon,  
Sold yourself to the German for a bread ration. ...  
You know, this trade in affection and feelings,  
Girl, you will not be able to justify.”<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Gorbatov, *Izbrannoe* (see note 28), 448.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 449. That such stances towards women as those expressed by this song existed seems plausible; see Mühlhäuser, *Eroberungen* (see note 17), 50ff. As German wartime documents show, a version of this song actually existed and was sung in the streets of Kyiv, see Doklad o nastroenii i polozenii v general'nom komissariate Kiev za period ot 13.-20.2.1943 goda, Nachal'nik policii bezopasnosti i SD v Kieve, 20 February 1943, f. 3767, op. 4, spr. 476, ark. 143ff, Tsentral'nyi derzhavnyi archiv vyshchych orhaniv vladu ta upravlinnia Ukrainy (TsDAVO), here p. 175.

The connection between “femaleness, honour, and nation”<sup>35</sup> features prominently in this song, according to which male soldiers are defending the homeland and young girls in equal measure. The alleged actions of young women – seeking contact with German soldiers – are thus condemned not only as a personal treachery against their supposed partners who are fighting at the battlefield, but simultaneously as a treason against their homeland.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, the song portrays a gender-specific division between the male-denoted battlefield and the female-denoted home front and the cultural conception of women as vulnerable. The ethics postulated by this song would fail to function if applied to female soldiers in the Red Army.

As exemplified by the character of Lizka / Luisa, the main motivation for sexual or intimate encounters between Soviet women and German soldiers appears to be hedonism and an egoistic desire for luxury. It should be noted that instances of the exchange of sex for luxury goods are indeed known in the historiography of the Second World War. Furthermore, consensual relationships with German soldiers did exist, and the sexual and relational agency of women should be taken into account.<sup>37</sup> However, another possible motivation for intimacy with German soldiers is only mentioned in passing by Gorbатов: “the bread ration”. The trade of food for sex was a reality under the German occupation of Soviet territory, ranging from single instances to regular contact.<sup>38</sup> Mühlhäuser

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<sup>35</sup> Mühlhäuser, ‘Handlungsräume’ (see note 12), 172, fn. 14. The question arises as to whether the Soviet Union can be considered a nation, or with which nation femininity is being connected in the underlying case. In the Russian original, Gorbатов uses the word *rodina* (homeland). What this exactly refers to remains vague throughout Gorbатов’s story, varying between Russia, Ukraine, Soviet power, or the Bolsheviks. This diffuseness is typical of Soviet war literature, in which Russia and the Soviet Union are often equated: see Marc Slonim, ‘Soviet Prose after the War’, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 263, 1 (1949): 101–13, here 102. As Krylova convincingly showed, the caring devotion of women has been depicted in literature both as a Russian virtue and as a quality present in Soviet women, see Krylova, ‘“Healers”’ (see note 3), 327. Therefore, in this article the triad of femaleness, honour, and nation is applied to the wide, diffuse notion of *rodina* which prevails in Gorbатов’s story.

<sup>36</sup> Mühlhäuser, *Eroberungen* (see note 17), 258.

<sup>37</sup> On consensual relationships, motivations and the dangers involved, see *ibid.*, 240–60. On luxury goods involved in sexual trade, see *ibid.*, 167; Anatolii Kuznetsov, *Babiĭ Iar* (Zaporizhzhia, 1990), 255, quoted in Hinda, *Seks* (see note 11), 123; for occupied Poland, see Maren Röger, *Kriegsbeziehungen: Intimität, Gewalt und Prostitution im besetzten Polen 1939 bis 1945* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2015), 68.

<sup>38</sup> Mühlhäuser, *Eroberungen* (see note 17), 156–62.

refers to the structural violence and disastrous food situation, caused both by the retreating Red Army and by exploitative German occupation policies, which need to be considered as possible motivations for women to engage in the trading of sex as a means of sustaining themselves and their families.<sup>39</sup>

Both the motivation of women and their actual experiences of engaging in intimacy with German soldiers are trivialized and presented one-sidedly by Gorbатов. Furthermore, Gorbатов romanticizes the experiences of such encounters, depicting them as “trade in affection and feelings”. Except for consensual relationships, it remains questionable whether in the majority of instances of sexual trade, women experienced or gave “affection and feelings”. Sexual trade could become dangerous for the women involved: on the one hand, because of the possible brutality of the soldiers, often armed and with recent experience of violence and battle; on the other, because of the potential for subjection to condemnation or harassment and even physical attack or death at the hands of the Soviet population, army, or partisans.<sup>40</sup>

The overall ethics of the story suggest that even in questions of life and death, women should rather have died than traded intimacy for food. It should be noted that the maxim of dying rather than collaborating with or giving in to the Germans is applied to both men and women in *Taras' Family*. Andreï, Nastia's brother and a Red Army soldier, surrenders to the German troops and becomes a prisoner of war. Upon his return home, his father Taras postulates harshly that Andreï should rather have let himself be shot than surrendered. However, in contrast to the case of the female characters, the reader receives insights into Andreï's interior world of thought and emotion: Andreï justifies himself and is furious at those who condemn him for surrendering: “You never smelled death, you never saw the German, but you want to ... have a say in all this. But who am I, alone against the Germans? All their force ... and me?”<sup>41</sup> He talks about the brutality of captivity in war, about his own doubts about whether or not he should have let himself be shot.

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 156, 160; on food shortages as reason for the spread of clandestine prostitution, see OKH Generalquartiermeister, Betr.: Prostitution und Bordellwesen in den besetzten Ostgebieten, 20 March 1942, Az. 1271 IV b (IIa) Nr. I / 13017/42, H 20 / 840, Bundesarchiv / Militärarchiv, quoted in Franz Seidler, *Prostitution, Homosexualität, Selbstverstümmelung: Probleme der deutschen Sanitätsführung 1939–1945* (Neckargemünd: Vowinkel, 1977), 139.

<sup>40</sup> Mühlhäuser, *Eroberungen* (see note 17), 255ff.

<sup>41</sup> Gorbатов, *Izbrannoë* (see note 28), 477.



The reader learns about his gender role conflict in times of war: Andreï feels uneasy as soon as he finds himself not fitting the common image of masculinity symbolized by the strong, glorious soldier, capable of vulnerating and of defending his homeland and family. He feels humiliated by the pity of the women who come to the fence of the camp for prisoners of war. He feels useless at the home front and burdensome to his family after he has returned home. The reader thus gains an insight into the psyche, emotional conflicts, and human, unheroic aspects of the war experiences of a man and a soldier. This does not apply to Lizka / Luisa or any of the female characters in Gorbatov's story: the one-dimensional martyr Nastia is accompanied by the equally one-dimensional traitor Lizka / Luisa.

### Antonina

The secondary character Antonina worked as an accountant before occupation. She is married to Andreï. Antonina is presented as fearful and emotional and is repeatedly portrayed crying. When Andreï returns from captivity, she cossets him, holds his hand, snuggles against him. In his perception, the laundry she gives him smells of "the caring hands of wives".<sup>42</sup> The character of Antonina thus stands symbolically for the domesticity of women on the home front suffering from worry about their men at the front and perpetuates the alleged binarity of the female-denoted home front and the male-denoted battlefield.

The character highlights the double standard applied to women in the story in terms of their outer appearance: women who are perceived as beautiful or take care of their appearance are condemned and suspected of seducing the German soldiers (e.g. Lizka / Luisa). The character of Nastia seems to have internalized this suspicion. As Pavlik tells her how beautiful he thinks she is, Nastia replies: "But I am also ... honest".<sup>43</sup> In times of war, beauty seems to become reprehensible. However, as Antonina loses her beauty in the eyes of the male characters and the male-gaze narrator, this is depicted with harsh words. "She started to look unattractive and old from those many tears."<sup>44</sup> Beauty is essentialized as an inherent physical trait of women. In this story, the effect of war on women is manifested by their loss of beauty and their crying, whereas the effects on men are

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 541.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 445.

psychological in nature: “The same storms and woes that had been shaking Andreï, that had ripped apart and broken his body and soul, had also swept over the silent house in Kamennyï Brod (Taras’ house – M. K.): they had made Antonina old, and Taras bitter.”<sup>45</sup> This constitutes another example of how the subjectivity and psychological life of women are rendered banal.

The cause of Antonina’s suffering remains vague. Perhaps she experiences sexual violence when forced by the German occupation forces to report to their labour office. She returns home in a perturbed state:

“Taras looked at her and asked nothing. There was nothing to ask. Antonina silently sank down onto the bench, as if petrified. She sat in the gloomy kitchen, her arms hanging feebly by her sides, and did not say a word. Old Efrosin’ia sat next to her. ‘Did they beat you?’ she asked whispering. ‘Beating was the only thing they did not do, but everything else they did’, Antonina responded.”<sup>46</sup>

The following night, Antonina dreams of her husband, a soldier. In her dream, she assures him: “I have never betrayed you, Andreï, neither in my heart, nor in my thoughts”.<sup>47</sup> These allusions can be interpreted as a reference to Antonina’s possible experience of sexual violence.<sup>48</sup> However, the exact events remain unspoken and implicit. Similarly, the discourse of witnesses about sexual violence in wartime has been characterized by vagueness of language which does not describe or name the actual violence. “This constitutes a reference to a collective imaginary, to certain pictures of rape which the recipients have in mind. What happens is left to their imagination”.<sup>49</sup> In Soviet society sexual violence on the territories under German occupation was an “open secret”.<sup>50</sup> Since being raped meant that women lost their “cultural attribution of innocence”<sup>51</sup> and

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 481.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 442.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 443.

<sup>48</sup> The scene can be interpreted differently: Antonina surrendered to the German occupiers, pleading to be spared from violence and deportation to the *Reich* for forced labour. The fact that her husband is fighting against the Germans, and that she is now surrendering to them, could also feel like a personal betrayal of her husband. Again, this would imply cultural connotations of femaleness, honour, and nation, see Mühlhäuser, ‘Handlungs-räume’ (see note 12), 172, fn. 14.

<sup>49</sup> Mühlhäuser, *Eroberungen* (see note 17), 57, also see 54–7, 108; eadem, ‘Handlungs-räume’ (see note 12), 170–2.

<sup>50</sup> Mühlhäuser, *Eroberungen* (see note 17), 108.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 53.

honour in conjunction with a prevailing culture of victim-blaming, it seems plausible that the victims themselves and their loved ones did not speak openly about sexual violence. A general taboo on sexuality and sexual violence in Soviet society and the military contributed to this silence.<sup>52</sup>

### Conclusions

With the help of the female characters in his story *Taras' Family*, Boris Gorbатов reproduces a narrative of gendered labour division during the Second World War, differentiating between a female-connoted home front and a male-connoted battlefield. The story employs the cultural construction of women as *verletzungsoffen* (vulnerable), and men as *verletzungsmächtig* (capable of vulnerating). Women allegorically represent the homeland, needing to be defended by men. Female Red Army soldiers do not fit into this narrative, and therefore their existence and experiences are omitted from the story. Even though female partisans do figure in the story, the reader learns nothing about their war contribution or everyday life. This stands in sharp contrast to the activities, experiences, and psychological struggles of male partisans and soldiers described in great detail in the book. The female partisan Nastia thus remains a symbol of feminine virtue and patriotism. In opposition to this stand the actions of those girls and women which are condemned as treason, especially trade in sex with German soldiers. As the motivation of the female characters for this trade Gorbатов suggests hedonism and a desire for luxury. As a result, sexual trade as a survival strategy is not considered, and the possible inner conflicts of the women involved are not covered.

Sexual violence on the part of the German soldiers, though widespread in reality, is only vaguely alluded to in the story. In this way Gorbатов reduces and trivializes female wartime experiences and the female psyche. The reader hardly learns about the inner lives and struggles of the female characters in contrast to some of the male characters. Instead, Gorbатов portrays and reproduces cultural and social requirements for women which were almost impossible to live up to in the face of women's actual experiences and that often implied double standards: devoted care, feminine domesticity, a need for protection, unabated patriotism, innocence, physical and sexual integrity, and beauty. "Especially in times of war, it was seen as the duty of women to secure stability at home, not least by

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<sup>52</sup> Scheide, 'Women in the Red Army' (see note 2), 241.

means of virtue and respectability".<sup>53</sup> These images of femininity show the conservative aspects of the Stalinist gender policy of the 1930s which fostered the role of women as mothers and wives. However, during the 1930s, in the course of the professional militarization of women, alternative concepts of femininity had begun to emerge, encompassing military discipline and violence alongside motherhood and charm. The image of the female defender of the homeland had become a part of the self-perception of many Soviet young women. But the portrayal of women and gender roles in *Taras' Family* and the fact that the story was officially sanctioned and awarded the Stalin Prize show that this change in traditional gender roles could not ultimately be established.

As Soviet wartime and post-war literature, propaganda, and politics of history show, the return and reinforcement of traditional conceptions of gender roles, with female devotion and self-sacrificial care as an unalienable part of them, were used towards the end of the war and in its aftermath to overcome the horrors of war and to stabilize post-war Soviet society. Female Red Army soldiers were soon demobilized and advised not to speak about their participation in the war. For a long time, they had no place in war historiography and commemoration which was dominated by heroic male soldiers, who were venerated as the liberators in the cult about the 'Great Patriotic War'. Female soldiers, in contrast, were stigmatized, their role in war was despised and reduced to alleged promiscuity and husband-hunting.

The trauma of women, whether at the battlefield or on the home front, found almost no representation in literature or politics. Instead, women were confronted with role expectations fraught with double standards and impossible to fulfil. The consequences for women could be devastating, exposing them to social isolation and stigmatization. A way of avoiding this was to keep silent about one's own experiences, which often led to isolation and a lack of processing of women's trauma. Furthermore, deviation from imposed role expectations could lead to identity crises and conflicts with the social environment. Not least, out of fear of stigmatization, demobilized women might not have asserted their claims to veteran benefits, which placed them in danger of material poverty.

*The author would like to thank Olena Stiazhkina for drawing her attention to Gorbatov's book.*

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<sup>53</sup> Mühlhäuser, *Eroberungen* (see note 17), 258.



OLEKSANDR ZABIRKO

## THE WAR IN NEVERLAND

### THE HISTORY OF NOVOROSSIIA AS LITERARY PROJECT

#### 1.

Since the occupation of Donetsk and Luhansk by Russian-backed separatists, there has in both cities been no shortage of commemorative events, mass performances, and TV shows, all designed to provide historical legitimacy to the new authorities in the breakaway regions of eastern Ukraine.

Although the politics of the two self-proclaimed states, the Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) and the Luhansk People's Republic (LNR), generally remain murky, one particular sphere of their politics has been prominent and visible right from the beginning: the politics of memory. Since the end of 2014, new memorials, statues, and monuments have been springing up like mushrooms in the capitals of both 'republics'; yet one particular monument, unveiled in militant-controlled Luhansk in September 2015, seems to stand out against the general background of countless 'places of glory' and is therefore worth mentioning.

Erected in the middle of the 'government quarter' in the very centre of Luhansk, this monument features a massive stone plate with a strange heraldic symbol on its surface. While the red star on the top and the rising sun flanked by two wheat sheaves entwined with red ribbons unequivocally resemble the Soviet coat of arms, in the middle of the emblem the typical Soviet hammer, sickle, and globe have been replaced with a crowned imperial double-headed eagle grasping a royal sceptre and an orb in its claws.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 'Nochnye Volki postavili v LNR sovetsko-russkii pamiatnik', 19 November 2015, available at <https://korrespondent.net/ukraine/3592149-nochnye-volky-postavyly-v-lnr-sovetsko-russkyi-pamiatnyk> (last visited 1 February 2019).

This peculiar combination of Soviet and Russian imperial symbols is adorned with lines from the Russian poet Leonid Kornilov, carved beneath the sign: “Before the eyes of the world, the split Russian plain grows together again. It is Russia’s destiny, to rise as a Eurasian giant”. Erected in a *de jure* Ukrainian city, this monument is full of truly geopolitical symbolism, in which tsarist and Soviet imperial claims fuse with the Eurasian doctrine of Russian interwar émigré thinkers and ultimately with Halford Mackinder’s idea of the inseparable Eurasian ‘heartland’. Thus, the message of the monument can be interpreted as Russia’s tropism towards an indefinite territorial expansion – a supposedly natural movement rooted in Russian history and geography.

More than by the geopolitical message itself, the oddity of the monument was emphasized by the people who unveiled it: the former third-rank officials from the local branch of the Party of Regions (of the deposed Ukrainian president Yanukovych) and the members of the Russian Night Wolves bikers’ club, dressed in leather armour, providing not just an ornament for the stone symbol of Russia’s glorious past, but rather a grotesque re-enactment thereof.

However, as a hybrid monument in times of hybrid war, this strange symbol remains, above all, a visible manifestation of an already established historical narrative, which currently functions as an *ersatz* version of official history for the two ‘people’s republics’. While such officially adopted history is still to make its way into the schools and universities of Donetsk and Luhansk, its main postulates are already down on paper. One may recall here the two volumes of *History of the Fatherland (Istoriia Otechestva)* by Aleksandr Rogozhkin (the former professor of international law at the Donetsk Law Institute) and Aleksandr Kofman (between 2014 and 2016 a minister of foreign affairs of the internationally unrecognized DNR)<sup>2</sup> or the *Introduction to the History of the Donetsk Region (Vvedenie v Istoriiu Donetskogo Kraia)* by Aleksei Chernyshev. Although these books received official recommendations from the ministry of education of the DNR, reportedly they are still not used as official textbooks for ‘financial reasons’ (a subtle euphemism to disguise the local fight for funding from Moscow).

Based on studies of the local and regional history of Donbas, these textbooks also introduce some crucial historical sources for the legitimacy of the DNR and the LNR. The three main pillars of their both separatist

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<sup>2</sup> A. V. Rogozhkin, A. I. Kofman, and S. A. Rogozhkin, *Istoriia Otechestva. Uchebnik dlia studentov gosudarstvennykh obrazovatel’nykh uchrezhdenii* (Donetsk, 2017).

and irredentist rhetoric are: the supranational idea of the Russian World (*russskii mir*); the geo-historical concept of *Novorossia*; and, finally, a modified religious vision of Holy Rus (*Sviataia Rus*). Taken together, they illustrate the global, the local, and the metaphysical dimensions of the new 'statehood' on the territory of the Ukrainian–Russian borderlands.

From the point of view of highbrow intellectual historiography, the production of such clumsy, politically-inspired narratives appears a rather dubious undertaking, yet its success within the local education system seems predetermined, if not inevitable. Indeed, the construction of their own official history has long been on the agenda in Donetsk and Luhansk: the circulation of study guides, learning concepts, and methodological outlines for such subjects as 'lessons in civic consciousness', 'lessons in patriotism', and last but not least 'the history of the Fatherland / Homeland' (the latter is already an established subject in the school curriculum) all testify to the eagerness of the new rulers to create a new historical narrative for 'home consumption'.

In the post-Soviet space, exercises in 'separatist' history-writing are by no means unprecedented. One may look to the situation in Moldova, where the textbooks and learning materials on the history of the break-away republic of Transnistria provide a spectacular demonstration of the fact that the power of the constructivist approach in contemporary history-writing is limited only by the authors' own imagination and by the boundaries of the political doctrines set by ruling elites.<sup>3</sup>

While an analysis of the 'histories of the Fatherland' made in Donetsk and Luhansk promises to be a fruitful endeavour for professional historians, scholars will probably have to acknowledge that in this case the pedigree of the material under review appears not analytical, but aesthetic, since its true origin lies not in the sphere of analytical history, but in works of fiction, where the fusion of tsarist, Soviet, and Eurasian symbols and discourses alongside performative extrapolations on the political reality of the post-Soviet space has long been a trend in various genres of contemporary literature written in Russian. After 2014 the literary *bricolage* of those seemingly incompatible ideological narratives and vistas has acquired an important performative aspect (which is impressively exemplified by the 'hybrid' monument in Luhansk) – Russia's military on-

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<sup>3</sup> See Stefan Troebst, 'Staatlichkeitskult im Pseudo-Staat: Nationales Identitätsmanagement durch Geschichtspolitik in Transnistrien', *Osteuropa* 53, 7 (2003): 963–83.



slaught against Ukraine has been viewed by many authors as a chance to turn fiction into facts.

## 2.

The war in Eastern Ukraine has often been labelled a “war of writers”.<sup>4</sup> The separatists’ side in particular boasts quite a few renowned authors, who are active supporters, fighters or even officers in separatist military units. Probably the most prominent example is the Russian writer Zakhar Prilepin. In an interview published by *Komsomol’skii Pravda* on 13 February 2017, Prilepin announced the formation of a volunteer battalion in the DNR.<sup>5</sup> While the military impact of this unit remains hard to assess, the publications, videos, and interviews it bruited are not politically marginal – they reflect both a ‘patriotic’ trend on the Russian literary scene and shades of Prilepin’s own literary persona.

To be sure, Prilepin’s fiction and essays have always shown traces of his turbulent biography: he was a special forces officer serving in Chechnya before becoming a prominent member of the banned National-Bolshevik Party (NBP), which, as its name suggests, is based on a hybrid ideology, combining Marxism-Leninism (and sometimes Stalinism) with Russian nationalism. Long before the mass protests that followed the country’s fraudulent parliamentary and presidential elections in 2011–12, Prilepin had acquired the reputation of a fierce critic of the current political regime and was considered a public intellectual with a clear anti-Putin stance. Yet after 2014 his attitude had changed dramatically, prompting the writer to become one of the most vocal supporters of Russian aggression against Ukraine. This twist is a sign of more than just opportunistic behaviour, revealing some fundamental features of Prilepin’s literary strategy.

With his novel *Sankya*, first published in 2006, Prilepin jumped into the ranks of Russia’s most successful authors of the decade. The novel depicts the unsteady life of a young man who leaves his small town near Moscow to join the nationalist militants of The Union of Founding

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<sup>4</sup> Dmitrii Bykov, ‘Voïna pisatelei’, *Novaia Gazeta*, 74 (2014): 19–20.

<sup>5</sup> The unit’s official name is the “4<sup>th</sup> Reconnaissance and Assault Battalion of the Special Forces of the DNR Armed Forces”. See Aleksandr Kots, ‘Zakhar Prilepin sobral v DNR svoj battal’on’, *Komsomolskii pravda*, 13 February 2017, available at <http://www.kp.ru/daily/26642.5/3661046/> (last visited 1 February 2019).

Creators (*Soiuz sozidaiushchikh*, with the significant abbreviation SS). Initially taking part in anti-regime demonstrations, brawls with immigrants from the Caucasus, and games of cat and mouse with Putin's police forces, the military branch of the Founders soon turns to increasingly acts of violence.<sup>6</sup> At some point in the story, the 'Union' entrusts the protagonist with the assassination of a Latvian judge, whom the party holds responsible for the persecution of their brothers-in-arms, as well as for oppressing their Russian fellow-countrymen who had settled in Latvia in Soviet times. This episode in the novel bears distinct parallels to a series of real events: on the one hand, to the spectacular murder of the Latvian judge Jānis Laukroze, supposedly assassinated by Russian right-wing radicals in 2001 and, on the other, to the scandal caused by former Soviet officers living in independent Latvia, who boasted of having killed Latvian civilians in a reprisal against partisan attacks in 1944.<sup>7</sup>

In *Sankya*, Prilepin emphasizes the dilemma faced by the protagonist and his fellow militants in their struggle for Russia's imperial future: they view Latvia as a part of Russia's legacy to be protected and administered, but are hardly able to deal with this legacy in reality. The well-ordered cosiness of the Baltic capital with its old-town architecture are depicted as entirely hostile surroundings in which the heroes feel only the aggressive pulse of Europe. Furthermore, Latvia's community of former Soviet Russians remains literally speechless throughout the novel: the humiliations they allegedly suffer must be assumed by default. The Russian-speaking minority thus remains a simple object of imperial concern.

Nonetheless, these events in Latvia are crucial to the entire course of the novel. For Prilepin's hero, the expedition to Riga functions as an initiation: he now feels a distinct readiness to kill and die for his cause. He takes this preparedness back with him to Russia, where he ultimately finds himself at the head of a bloody rebellion with obscure goals and an uncertain outcome. Thus, in *Sankya*, Latvia, or rather its Russian-speaking minority, functions as a pivot for substantial political changes in the Russian "heartland".<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Alfred Sproede and Oleksandr Zabirko, 'Cynics, Loyalists, and Rebels in Recent Russian Fiction: Literary Scenarios of Legitimation and the Pursuit of "Sovereign Democracy"', in *Politics and Legitimacy in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, eds. Martin Brusis et al., (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 193–222.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 208.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 209.

As the much-desired national renaissance of Russia is obstructed by social atomization and estrangement between the generations, in the novel the national community is imagined as extending beyond the borders of the Russian Federation. The revival of the Russian state starts with the rescue of compatriots living abroad. Rogers Brubaker defines this kind of political attitude as “transborder nationalism of the external national homeland”, but while for Brubaker the typical goals of this sort of nationalism are to “promote the welfare, support the activities and institutions, assert the rights, and protect the interests of one’s own ethnonational kin in other states”,<sup>9</sup> in Russian patriotic literature it is frequently applied in order to deny the very existence of those states and to describe them as territories attributable to Russia (since they are already inhabited by a Russian-speaking population).

Within the framework of this rhetorical strategy, the difference between Russian-speaking and Russian proper is programmatically neglected. Unlike Western post-imperial discourses in Britain, Germany, or Spain, where it is perfectly normal to use plural terms such as ‘English-speaking countries’, ‘deutschsprachige Länder’ or ‘los países hispanohablantes’, in today’s Russia there is still a very limited understanding of the post-imperial character of Russian language and culture, and so, in the official rhetoric of Kremlin and in Russian federal legislation, Russian-speakers abroad are normally referred to as “compatriots” (*sootchestvenniki*) despite their foreign citizenship.<sup>10</sup>

In fact, the concept of Russian ‘compatriots abroad’ has never been the same: over the decades it has travelled a long way, from the liberal pragmatism of the late 1990s, to the confrontational instrumentalization of Russian-speakers as a lever of Russia’s soft power in the 2000s and finally to the utterly irredentist visions emerging after the annexation of Crimea in 2014.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, the semantics of *russkii mir* as a concept have changed from the idea of a diasporic network of “global Russians”<sup>12</sup> to a suprana-

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<sup>9</sup> Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge: CUP, 1996), 5.

<sup>10</sup> ‘Federal’nyi zakon Rossiiskoi Federatsii ot 23 iuliia 2010 g. “O gosudarstvennoi politike Rossiiskoi Federatsii v otnoshenii sootchestvennikov za rubezhom”, *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 27 July 2010, available at <http://www.rg.ru/2010/07/27/sootech-dok.html> (last visited 1 February 2019).

<sup>11</sup> Mikhail Suslov, ‘The Production of “Novorossia”: A Territorial Brand in Public Debates’, *Europe-Asia Studies* 69, 2 (2017): 202–21.

<sup>12</sup> Petr Shchedrovitskii, ‘Russkii mir i transnatsional’noe russkoe’, in *V poiskakh formy*, ed. idem (Moscow: FGU, 2005).

tional community united by Russian culture and language, by historical memory and anti-liberal (and by extension, anti-Western) values, and finally by the Orthodox faith and loyalty to a transcendent Russian state (which includes the Russian Empire as well as the USSR).

Contemporary Russian literature mirrors this development in the works of some of its best-selling authors. In *San'kya* the 'compatriots' from Latvia are already turning into a valuable resource for Russia's neo-imperial future. The largest 'deposits' of this resource, however, are to be found not in a tiny Baltic country, but elsewhere in the post-Soviet space. So Prilepin's text *Terra Tartara*, a "prophetic" essay published in 2009, predicts mass uprisings starting in Russia shortly after the outbreak of a war in Eastern Ukraine:

"There were some problems with one of the country's former colonies, the land of *Ukraine*, where, somehow, and gradually to begin with, a civil war broke out, *West versus East*. ... Of course, it was necessary to do something about it, since all over the country volunteer units were beginning to organize themselves. Easily crossing the state border, they were vanishing into the vast open spaces of *Ukraine*".<sup>13</sup>

Having acquired military experience in the 'Ukrainian civil war', numerous Russian volunteers are returning to Russia to resume their fight for the national cause on the home front. It is this vision of a popular uprising in Ukraine which turns the notion of *ruskii mir* into the legitimizing principle for revolt, as well as into the historical basis and ultimate political goal of the newly established separatist republics in Donetsk and Luhansk.

Since the outbreak of the war, literary production in and about the 'people's republics' has become an important factor in conceptualizing the new geopolitical reality in the post-Soviet space. The elephantine collections of poetry, prose, and drama sponsored by the Russkii Mir Foundation and by other Russian patrons provide the tropes, the images, and ultimately the poetic language for an emotionalized, aesthetic legitimization of the breakaway republics as well as for their self-positioning within the larger framework of the Russian world.

While the texts from 2014–15 construct an expansionist paradigm of the Russian world, spreading at least over the territories of South-Eastern Ukraine, already in the collection *The Donbas' Choice* (*Vybor Donbassa*),

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<sup>13</sup> Zakhar Prilepin, *Terra Tartara: Èto kasaetsia lichno menia* (Moscow: AST, 2009).

published in 2017,<sup>14</sup> the symbolic belonging of the DNR and the LNR to the Russian World has an important compensatory function, deliberately obfuscating the two republics' factual non-belonging to the Russian Federation (in contrast to Crimea). At the same time, featuring contributors from Iaroslavl', Moscow, Orenburg, Cheliabinsk, and other Russian cities, the book makes it clear that the alleged *Donbas' Choice* has been made largely from outside the Donbas itself. While the military involvement of Russian citizens in the war has been an object of heated debate since the outset, in literary texts the glorification of Russian 'volunteers' fighting in Eastern Ukraine is one of the major recurring themes – one which is articulated with an almost touching directness and simplicity, as in the following lines by Aleksandr Marfunin:

"He used to be an agronomist / in the glorious town of Tambov / He would still be working there, / if not for the war ... But here and now / he is a Russian volunteer / He crosses himself and gives an order: / 'For the Homeland! Fire!' " <sup>15</sup>

To be sure, the theme of Russian insurgents challenges the whole idea of 'Ukrainian civil war'. However, within the boundaries of the Russian world the concept of 'civil war' accrues a range of additional connotations, making it possible to view the Russian–Ukrainian conflict as a 'civil war' between the members of a large supranational community. Consider, for example, the following lines by Aleksandr Surnin:

"There is a civil war going on in the Donbas. People are busy with very important things there. They are defending the Russian World. And this is everyone's concern. For now, the Donbas is an outpost. If it is destroyed, you will be next in line. Nobody will be able simply to hide away." <sup>16</sup>

The supposed aggression of a 'Westernized' and 'Americanized' Ukraine against the Donbas and, more importantly, the unwillingness of the majority of the Donbas population to take an active part in the upcoming war, prompt Veniamin Uglëv to view the engagement of Russian volunteers as a sheer necessity:

" – There are quite a few millions of us living here in the Donbas!  
– You are not living here, you are just staying for a time! Not millions, but just thousands of people took up arms. And this is nothing, this is just like

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<sup>14</sup> Gleb Bobrov, ed., *Vybor Donbassa: Literatura narodnykh respublik. Al'manakh Soiuzna pisatelei LNR* (Luhans'k: Bol'shoi Donbass, 2017).

<sup>15</sup> Aleksandr Marfunin, 'Opolchenets', in *ibid.*, 100.

<sup>16</sup> Aleksandr Surnin, 'Iskhod', in *Vybor* (see note 14), 381.

dust! And this dust will be wiped away with a wet cloth, and everything will be clean and dry.”<sup>17</sup>

### 3.

While the political and military engagement of Russian authors in Eastern Ukraine can (at least partially) be explained as the outcome of a romantic glamorization of popular rebellion and guerrilla warfare, it is still surprising to see how many local writers have seized the opportunity to take an active part in the war in the Donbas, grasping the chance to become the heroes of their own stories.

Probably the most striking example is Fëdor Berezin, who in 2014 was actually appointed deputy minister of defence of the DNR. Berezin’s literary oeuvre is closely connected with the series entitled *Voenno-istoricheskaia Fantastika* (military and historical speculative fiction), which was launched in 2008 by the Moscow-based publishing house Eksmo / Iauza. Narratives about the forthcoming war in Ukraine (written mostly between 2003 and 2010) comprise a considerable portion of the series, with the most notable titles written by authors from Eastern Ukraine, Georgiï Savitskiï (from Donetsk) and Gleb Bobrov (from Luhansk).

Bobrov’s novel *The Era of the Stillborn*,<sup>18</sup> Berezin’s *War 2010: The Ukrainian Front*,<sup>19</sup> and Savitskiï’s *Battlefield Ukraine: The Broken Trident*<sup>20</sup> serve up extensive military exploits, often with lengthy descriptions and the detailed performance characteristics of various types of weaponry. All three novels characterize the Ukrainian state as a ‘stillborn’ geopolitical anomaly, which will give way to the rise of a new (Eurasian) empire – a trope which unites them with the literary genre of alternative (or counterfactual) history.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Veniamin Uglëv, ‘Apogeï strakha’, in *Výbor* (see note 14), 389.

<sup>18</sup> Gleb Bobrov, *Èpoha mertvorozhdënnnykh* (Moscow: Eksmo, 2008).

<sup>19</sup> Fëdor Berezin, *Voïna 2010: Ukraïnskiï front* (Moscow: Eksmo, 2009).

<sup>20</sup> Georgiï Savitskiï, *Pole boia Ukraïna: Slomannyï trezubets* (Moscow: Eksmo, 2009).

<sup>21</sup> Interestingly enough, alongside Berezin, many other authors who write predominantly in the sub-genre of *boevaia fantastika* (military speculative fiction) and have eagerly and eloquently envisaged the destruction of the Ukrainian state, are not just Ukrainian citizens, but were formerly active participants and laureates of the Kharkiv Star-Bridge Festival – one of the largest science fiction festivals in Eastern Europe, sponsored and chaired by Arsen Avakov, the current Ukrainian Minister of the Interior.

In these novels, the reader witnesses the contemporary post-Soviet world in decline, a process manifested in growing social tensions, in the fading of cultural life, and in the slow collapse of the remnants of Soviet heritage. Against the backdrop of this decline, the reader is confronted with the existence of dark forces, which plan to invade this vanishing world and thus, finally, to destroy it. These forces may appear either as NATO troops or as another form of Western conspiracy. The plots of these novels usually lead the reader not just to a well-deserved victory over the foreign invaders, but also envisage the reestablishment of the newly mighty Empire or a new social order as a result of this heroic fight. The imperial backlash is thus presented as an emotional substitute for the modernization and social harmony which is absent. More importantly, in all these texts the territory of Ukraine turns into a battleground and the place where the recovery fable starts. In more recent fiction this springboard is described by the term 'Novorossiiia'.

As a territorial brand promoted by pro-Kremlin intellectuals, spin doctors, and Donbas insurgents, the designated land of Novorossiiia appears both as an *antemurale* of the Russian world and the point of departure for Russia's reestablishment as a global power.

The historical term 'Novorossiiia' emerged in 1764, when Catherine II issued a decree establishing a province (governorate) called Novorossiiia in military frontier regions along with southern parts of the Hetmanate. In the decades which followed, the territory of Novorossiiia was adjusted many times. The administrative reform of 1802 put an end to the official term 'Novorossiiia' on imperial maps, breaking the province into three governorates (with centres in Mykolaïv, Katerynoslav, and Crimea), the region of the Army of the Don, and Bessarabia. Yet the word 'Novorossiiia' continued in circulation. For example, in 1838, the town of Novorossiisk was founded in the Northern Caucasus.

As a political concept, the word 'Novorossiiia' briefly re-appears in Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's infamous treatise 'How We Should Organize Russia' (*Kak nam obustroit' Rossiïu*), where it is applied to counter Ukrainian claims on state sovereignty within the administrative borders of the Ukrainian SSR.<sup>22</sup> Finally, after the annexation of Crimea, Novorossiiia

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<sup>22</sup> First published in 1990 in a special issue of the newspaper *Literaturnaia gazeta*. See Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, 'Kak nam obustroit' Rossiïu', in *Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn: Sbranie sochineniï*, vol. 8, *Publitsistika: Na Zapade 1990–1994. V Rossii 1994–2003*, ed. Nataliia Solzhenitsyna (Moscow: Vremia, 2005), 7–65.

was mentioned in Putin's "direct line" phone-in of 17 April 2014.<sup>23</sup> It quickly fell out of favour with Russia's highest officials, but has remained in the discourse of pro-Kremlin public intellectuals and in the Donbas itself, where on 24 May 2014 the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic and Luhansk People's Republic established the confederative Union of Novorossiiia, branded in the Russian media as part of the broader Russian World. The results of the presidential elections in Ukraine (25 May 2014) were a cold shower for supporters of Novorossiiia, because they showed quite substantial support for President Poroshenko (and by extension for the idea of a united Ukraine) in those regions comprising the historical lands of Novorossiiia.<sup>24</sup>

Nevertheless, as a poetic symbol and an effective substitute for the clumsy abbreviations of DNR and LNR, Novorossiiia has remained firmly anchored in both the literary and the political discourses of the two breakaway republics. Yet in its most eloquent manifestation the vision of Novorossiiia came from the pen of the Russian writer Aleksandr Prokhanov. It is worth quoting at length:

"Fascism ... is on the rise again and marching eastwards, building crematoriums and gas chambers in the cities of Ukraine. The new state [Novorossiiia] born in the fight with the fascist beast accomplishes a vital mission: without any help from outside ... it defends the world from fascism. The history of Novorossiiia goes back to the mysterious depths of ancient Slavdom, of Greek city-states, and of Scythian barrows. These lands carry the primeval mystic energy which gave birth to the whole Russian world, from the Black Sea to the Baltics, from the Carpathians to the Urals. ...

The state which is being created in Eastern Ukraine is in its spirit truly a people's state. They who fight for justice are children of the people's war. They fight for social justice (in a country), where there will be no hierarchies, no rich and poor. They fight for a national justice (in a country), where all peoples will be equal and united. And they also fight for divine justice, for the fight against fascism is a cosmogonic war of the forces of light against the forces of darkness, the forces of love against the forces of hatred, the forces of heaven against the forces of hell".<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> 'Direct Line with Vladimir Putin', 17 April 2014, available at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20796> (last visited 01 February 2019).

<sup>24</sup> Suslov, 'Production' (see note 11), 203.

<sup>25</sup> Aleksandr Prokhanov, 'Novorossiiia – rozhdënnaia v ognе', *Izvestiia*, 12 May 2014, available at <https://iz.ru/news/570647#ixzz3oLmCUeQn> (last visited 01 February 2019).



Starting with its pretentious title, *Novorossiiia – The Fireborn*, in terms of rhetoric and tropes, this text would already make the perfect plot for a fantasy story. First, it uses the equally original and fictive geopolitical concepts of Novorossiiia (literally, New Russia) and the Russian World (*russkii mir*), which both comprise a half-historical, half-metaphysical space attributed to the Russian state. Second, this text constructs the image of an absolute Other (Ukrainian fascism), thus enabling the scenario of a ‘cosmogonic war’ between Good and Evil. And finally, it envisages a social utopia, which is held to be worth fighting for.

More importantly, the vision of Novorossiiia establishes a universal antagonistic border, constitutive for the whole imaginary community of Russians.<sup>26</sup> Far from harmless literary speculation, the proponents of Novorossiiia have proved eager to constitute this new (geo)political reality by military means. Against this backdrop, the major problem with Prokhanov’s text is that it was published not in a fantasy magazine, but in the international politics column of the reputable newspaper *Izvestiia*. Despite this context, the author does not even try to give a semblance of plausibility to his story about “death camps and gas chambers”, simply because, owing to the specifics of the genre, this text cannot be the object of any fact-checking whatsoever. Its aim is not mimesis, but simulation, not the recognizable representation of the world, but the construction of a new, parallel reality. Omnipresent in various media, this aestheticized counterfactual captivates its consumers and makes it possible to read and interpret current geopolitical conflicts through the prism of speculative fiction.

Another important innovation, which in Prokhanov’s text appears alongside the term Novorossiiia, is the notion of ‘fascism’. Obviously, its function is not analytical, but aesthetic – fascism does not refer here to a particular ideology, but constitutes an image of the absolute Other (both in Soviet and post-Soviet tradition the term ‘fascism’ is equated with German National Socialism and, by extension, with absolute Evil).

To be sure, the othering of the enemy in the contemporary Donbas goes both ways: in the texts of pro-Ukrainian authors from Donetsk and Luhansk, we can come across strong metaphors which contribute effectively to the delegitimation of the enemy. For instance, in Vladimir Rafeenko’s much-praised novel *The Longitude of Days* (*Dolgota dnei*, 2017) the city of Donetsk and its pro-Russian inhabitants are referred to as

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<sup>26</sup> Suslov, ‘Production’ (see note 11), 203.

“Z City” and “Z people”, where Z is obviously to be translated as “zombie”.<sup>27</sup> In his book *Reflections on the Luhans’k Vendée (Razmysleniia o Luganskoï Vandee)* Aleksandr Erëmenko characterizes the pro-Russian inhabitants of Luhans’k as “backward, uneducated, retarded, stupid, past-oriented masses”.<sup>28</sup>

As literary figures, neither a zombie nor a fascist can be valid interlocutors as they cannot be engaged in any meaningful exchange or argument. Yet, beyond the utterly fantastical figure of a zombie, the notion of fascism is charged both historically and politically – it constitutes a discursive framework, where on the one hand the separatists’ fight against Ukrainian forces echoes the historical example of the Red Army’s fight in the ‘Great Patriotic War’ (1941–5), but on the other hand this fight can only ever be a copy, or rather an imitation, of that truly cosmogonic world war once fought on the territory of Ukraine.

The ‘heroic fight against fascism’ makes the founding myth of Novorossia entirely retrospective: the war for a united Eurasia, going on in eastern Ukraine, appears first and foremost a war for a better past. This past may appear as a ‘correct’ version of history, as sets of private memories about life in the USSR, or as a visible, allegorical extension of the Soviet past into the present – for example, in form of a Lenin statue in the essay by Nikolai Ivanov:

“The first thing we notice in the town Izvaryne, near Luhans’k, is Lenin. The concrete of which the monument is made has burst here and there, the fingers of the outstretched hand [of the statue] are gone, but here he stands – unfallen, undefiled, unguarded. So it is true that the Donbas hasn’t allowed the new followers of Bandera to take control of its land.”<sup>29</sup>

#### 4.

This idea of a war for the past is quite in line with post-Soviet transformations of the symbolic order of time, which Ilya Kukulín summarizes as follows:

“In Stalin’s time, the present was regarded and represented as the highest point of history, the point of breakthrough to the ‘shining future’. In today’s Rus-

<sup>27</sup> Vladimir Rafeenko, *Dolgota dnei* (Kharkiv: Fabula, 2017).

<sup>28</sup> Aleksandr Eremenko, *Razmysleniia o Luganskoï Vandee* (Berlin: Just a Life, 2015), 7.

<sup>29</sup> Nikolai Ivanov, ‘Gruppa iz’iatiia’, in *Ia dralsia v Novorossii*, eds. Gleb Bobrov and Fedor Berezín (Moscow: Eksmo, 2016), 70.

sia, the present, while not considered less valuable, is not considered more valuable than the past: in this way, the encounter between present and past turns into an endless *mise en abyme*, where each new action appears as a symbolic re-enactment of the past”.<sup>30</sup>

The valorization of the past is hardly a new trend in the post-Soviet space. In *The Future of Nostalgia*, Svetlana Boym noted that in Russia, already “in the mid-1990s ..., the word ‘old’ was becoming popular and commercially viable, promoting more goods than the word ‘new’ ”.<sup>31</sup> Following Kukulin, one might conclude, however, that the nostalgia of the 1990s gradually turned from a widely accessible good into an object of performative re-enactment with political implications. This re-enactment dominates fictional discourse about Novorossia, but it is also visible in the political rhetoric and performative actions of its elites. Thus, in the separatist-controlled parts of the Donbas the boundary between fiction and reality remains programmatically blurred or even permeable. For instance, in his “mobilization decree” from 24 June 2014, the then leader of the LNR Valerii Bolotov (1970–2017) uses the following rhetoric:

“The treacherous military attack by fascist Ukraine on our motherland continues. Despite heroic resistance by the Army of the Luhans’k People’s Republic and although the best divisions of the enemy and its best air force units have already been destroyed and have met their end on the battlefield, the enemy continues its advance and throws new troops into battle.”<sup>32</sup>

Anyone who has dealt with the Soviet history of WWII would easily recognize in Bolotov’s inflammatory speech Stalin’s radio broadcast from 3 July 1941, which was the first address that Soviet citizens heard from their leader after the crushing first weeks of the German–Soviet war. The speech has become famous for Stalin’s choice of words: for instance, he addressed his fellow countrymen as “brothers and sisters” and as “my friends” for the first time. Although Bolotov shies away from such informal and intimate forms of address, his speech otherwise carefully reproduces Stalin’s initial wording (only substituting Hitler’s Germany with “fascist Ukraine” and the Red Army with “the Army of the Luhans’k People’s Republic”).

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<sup>30</sup> Ilya Kukulin, ‘Cultural Shifts in Russia Since 2010: Messianic Cynicism and Paradigms of Artistic Resistance’, *Russian Literature* 96 (2018): 232.

<sup>31</sup> Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 65.

<sup>32</sup> ‘V Luganskoï narodnoï respublike ob’iavlena polnaia, no dobrovol’naia mobilizatsiia’, *TASS*, 24 July 2014, available at <https://tass.ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/1339692> (last visited 1 February 2019).

An even more spectacular re-enactment of history was organized in neighbouring Donetsk, where on 24 August 2014 the insurgents staged a 'parade' involving Ukrainian prisoners of war marching through one of the central streets of the city – obviously an imitation of Stalin's 'parade' of German POWs in Moscow in 1944.

While Article 13 of the Geneva Convention states that "prisoners of war must at all times be protected ... against insults and public curiosity", in the emerging master narrative of Novorossia this 'parade' will nevertheless remain a glorious event and the subject of collective pride. Thus, in her essay 'A Letter from Donetsk', Iuliia Sergeeva describes the 'parade' as intertwined both with her idea of local patriotism and with her daily routine:

"In Donetsk, the Heroes of the Donbas forced the captured chasteners<sup>33</sup> to march through the streets at the point of a bayonet. Three water carts drove behind them, washing the filth from our soil. Tears of pride rose in my eyes – pride in our people, in our country. The Donbas never gives up! I grew up with that [feeling]. Although until this year I had only had to fight against my employers and against myself."<sup>34</sup>

Obviously, the whole event which took place in Donetsk that day could be interpreted as a manipulative technique used by behind-the-scenes propaganda strategists, while the real numbers of those combatants and their supporters in eastern Ukraine who sincerely believe that they are fighting against fascists can scarcely be properly estimated. However, it is no less evident that the very idea of the fight against fascism is already codified in countless texts about the war in the Donbas, thereby making this idea a central cognitive model for interpreting the events of 2014.

## 5.

From the perspective of the programmatic re-enactment of history, it is not surprising that one of the key elements in conceptualizing the war in Eastern Ukraine is the idea of time travel. A very telling example is provided by the Russian movie *14 / 41: The Lesson Unlearned*. Here is a quote from the synopsis:

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<sup>33</sup> The word *karatel'* (chastener) was commonly used in Soviet literature to designate members of the SS-Einsatzgruppen, who were engaged in punitive expeditions against the civilian population of the occupied territories.

<sup>34</sup> Iuliia Sergeeva, 'Donetskoe pis'mo', in *la dralsia* (see note 29), 270.

“This is the story of Nick, a 5<sup>th</sup> grader at a school in Donetsk, who stays in the classroom during a bombing raid. All alone with his fear, he suddenly finds support. The most ordinary school blackboard becomes a portal to the past. Nick meets the same little boy, but from 1941. They are both locked in school, under fire, and both want to live, to be happy and to enjoy their childhood.”<sup>35</sup>

However, while the story unfolds, viewers learn not only that the boys are “the same”, but also that the forces they are afraid of – the military units of the German Wehrmacht from 1941 and the Ukrainian government troops from 2014 are by implication merged and presented as “the same” fascists.

The motif of time travel has been used frequently in the Russian popular fiction of the 2000s to symbolize some profound (and otherwise unimaginable) ideological and political shifts. The most visible outcome of this literary practice is the particular figure of the post-Soviet time traveler, commonly referred to as a *popadanets*. The noun *popadanets* derives from the Russian verb *popadat'* – to get somewhere, to reach a specific place – and marks the special case of stories about time travel, when a protagonist from our time, or from some period in the past, suddenly and accidentally finds himself in some other historical era, from where he tries to change the course of history. A typical feature of these narratives is a combination of time travel and reincarnation, i.e., when the protagonist dies physically in his own time, but his consciousness, i.e., his ‘mind and soul’, are transferred into the body of some historic character in the past (e.g., into the body of the Russian tsar or of a Soviet leader). The idea of progress, which was so typical for Soviet science fiction, is not simply rejected here but is substituted for a revanchist utopian past, which is subsequently projected into the future (through alternative history and time travel).

Despite a common genre origin (with Mark Twain’s *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court*, 1889, being an example), revanchist post-Soviet time travel, being a specific subgenre, treats the past in a way drastically different from Western fiction, where altering the course of history is often viewed as a taboo-breaking. Ray Bradbury’s short story *A Sound of Thunder* (1952) was definitely a trend-setter with regard to time para-

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<sup>35</sup> The synopsis is accessible online on the website *Cinepromo*, available at <http://www.cinepromo.ru/fr/component/k2/item/265-lesson-unlearned-14-41.html>; and the YouTube-Channel of the film’s director, Nina Vedmitskaya, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j-fWjMqakqA> (both last visited 1 February 2019).

doxes: in this story, the accidental crushing of a pre-historic butterfly by a time-traveller leads to irrevocable changes in history. This 'informal' restriction inherent in the genre proved especially fruitful for addressing different national traumas. Thus, in the novel *Pastwatch: The Redemption of Christopher Columbus* (1996) by Orson Scott Card,<sup>36</sup> as well as in Stephen King's novel *11 / 22 / 63* (2011),<sup>37</sup> the time travellers have to abandon their initial plans of changing the course of history and are forced to set things right again.

In Eastern Europe, this 'therapeutic' effect is usually achieved by means of alternative history (without time travels). In Ziemowit Szczerek's *The Triumphant Republic* (*Rzeczpospolita zwycięska*, 2013), Poland wins the world war and becomes a new superpower, but as a militaristic and authoritarian state, it quickly turns into a threat to the entire continent.<sup>38</sup> In a recent novel by Oleksandr Irvanets', *Kharkiv-1938* (2017), Ukraine successfully defends its independence from the Bolsheviks, only to build a collectivist society (with a peculiar mixture of Marxism and ethnic nationalism) under the rule of a decadent elite.<sup>39</sup> Far from justifying the German occupation of Poland or Stalinist crimes in Ukraine (and in the rest of the Soviet Union), both authors point to the limitations and dangers of an alternative utopian past promoted as a viable model for the future. Described in all its ambivalence, 'a past which never occurred' ceases to be a fetish and a focus for the revisionist dreams of a traumatized national ego.

Needless to say, the authors of the contemporary Russophone time-travels advocate an entirely different strategy for dealing with the past. Once sent back in time, the typical Russian *popadanets* is usually preoccupied with saving and strengthening a metaphysical Russian statehood, which may appear in any of its historical incarnations. The dominant theme and the most frequently-deployed historical setting is the Second World War, which resonates with the Soviet concept of the 'Great Patriotic War' as the main legitimizing narrative of the Soviet Union. However, the genre openly adopts the idea that the real enemy in this war was not Nazi Germany, but rather the Western democracies – Great Britain and the USA. In some novels, the USSR may even cooperate with the

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<sup>36</sup> Orson Scott Card, *Pastwatch: The Redemption of Christopher Columbus* (New York: Tor Books, 1996).

<sup>37</sup> Stephen King, *11 / 22 / 63* (New York: Scribner, 2011).

<sup>38</sup> Ziemowit Szczerek, *Rzeczpospolita zwycięska* (Kraków: Znak, 2013).

<sup>39</sup> Oleksandr Irvanets', *Kharkiv-1938* (Kyiv: Laurus, 2017).

Third Reich. At least after the Ukrainian Orange Revolution of 2004, the role of the enemy was more frequently ascribed to the Baltic states, Georgia, or Ukraine itself – the supposed ‘puppets of the West’.

The correlation between the genre’s popularity and the aggressive turn in Russia’s foreign policy is too marked to be ignored. According to the web-portal *fan-book.ru*, no less than 145 new books featuring the trope of the *popadanets* have been published in Russia in 2014, followed by 66 new novels a year later.<sup>40</sup> While most of these texts are rather plain and simple-minded stories with comparatively small print-runs, the sheer scope of this literary production reveals the cumulative effect of a phenomenon which goes far beyond mere graphomania.

We cannot disregard the point that these books featuring the stereotypical figure of the *popadanets* are not only stories about time travel. More importantly, they are also narratives about upward social mobility and personal transformation from average loser to epic hero. The same narrative model was carefully deployed by Russian state-controlled media, by their war journalists, and by authors like Zakhar Prilepin and Marina Akhmedova – with the aim of constructing the idealized biographies of the most renowned separatist warlords of the Donbas republics.<sup>41</sup> These are the stories in which a poor guy like Arseniï Pavlov, alias Motorola (1983–2016), who barely makes ends meet by working at a car wash in Russia, suddenly finds himself in eastern Ukraine, where he becomes a renowned war commander and an unbending fighter against fascism. A story in which the former bricklayer Pavel Drëmov (1976–2015) receives a sort of divine revelation and turns into a brave and noble Cossack ataman fighting for the Orthodox faith. A story in which the amateur poet and folk singer Alekseï Mozgovoi (1975–2015) becomes a new Che Guevara at the head of an armed guerilla battalion.

Despite their physical death, as literary figures the warlords of the separatist republics remain important collective symbols within the larger discourse of Novorossiia. Consider, for example, the following lines by Elena Zaslavskaia, referring to the assassination of Arseniï Pavlov (killed by remotely-activated explosives in the elevator of the house he lived in),

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<sup>40</sup> Nikita Averin, ‘Trendy rossiïskoï fantastiki v 2016’, *fan-book.ru*, 11 October 2016, available at <https://fan-book.ru/blog/192/entry/2697/> (last visited 1 February 2019).

<sup>41</sup> Marina Akhmedova, *Uroki ukrainskogo: Ot Maïdana do Vostoka* (Moscow: AST, 2014); Zakhar Prilepin, *Vše, chto dolzhno razreshit’sia... Khronika idushchei voïny* (Moscow: AST, 2016).

but which also provide a poetic monumentalization of the entire idea of the independent country of Novorossia:

“In my Novorossia / [a country] which cannot be found on Google maps / Where everything is so simple / And so crystal clear / Where field commanders fly into outer space / In the elevator / Where the spoil tips of insanity / Are more terrifying than Lovecraft’s mud-bank / There is a place for feats and for revenge / Zoom in, / Let’s take a look at the star Betelgeuse together, / My comandante!”<sup>42</sup>

Finally, the notions of simplicity and clarity in the above poem by Zaslavskaja are worth discussing explicitly, as they are echoed in many other Russian texts which refer to the war in the Donbas.

Apart from political Manichaeism and the clear identification of an enemy, this particular understanding of simplicity also implies a farewell to the ambiguity of (post)modern reality and to the corresponding (post-modernist) style of writing. The latter gives way to a literary form which is generally believed now to be extinct. However, a brief look at the literary examples quoted in this article will suffice to show that most of these texts carefully reproduce the stylistics of Soviet *politinformatsiia* (political-ideological lectures) and ultimately the “wooden language” of socialist realism<sup>43</sup>: they are full of pompous words, tautologies, ideologically charged symbols, and bad metaphors.

Abandoning the idea of a glorious future for the sake of a retrospective utopia, these texts still manage to maintain a typically Soviet sense of forced optimism and revolutionary romanticism. Although the re-enactment of history, as one of the central legitimizing models of Novorossia, capitalizes on the motif of travelling back in time which is borrowed from Western popular literature, the real and indeed the only functioning time machine we encounter in these texts is the literary form itself – more than the actual content of the texts, their wording and their literary aesthetics successfully reinstall some central conventions of Soviet ‘realist’ writing and by doing so evoke a stable feeling of *déjà vu*.

<sup>42</sup> Elena Zaslavskaja, ‘Zvezda Betel’geize’, in *Vybor* (see note 14), 45.

<sup>43</sup> The term ‘wooden language’ is a literal translation of the French expression *langue de bois*, introduced by the French scholar Françoise Thom. See Françoise Thom, *La langue de bois* (Paris: Julliard coll. “Commentaire”, 1987).



## 6.

While the political future of the DNR and the LNR remains both obscure and fragile, the works of fiction and the vibrant literary discourse which have emerged around the designated state of Novorossiia have effectively achieved the textual codification of this separatist Neverland and placed the unrecognized state on the mental maps of the Russian reading audience. More importantly, the same motives, tropes, and symbols which constitute the founding myth of Novorossiia can easily be re-attributed to the more conventional territorial brand of 'Donbas', to the administrative acronyms of the DNR and the LNR, or to any other regional brand.

Anticipating the official histories of the breakaway republics of the Donbas, the literary texts (whether poetry or prose) already provide a common aesthetic background for a large community united by a shared imperial resentment. Combining retro-utopian narrative, historical re-enactment, and modern warfare, these literary works construct a community which is not only 'imagined' but also 'intentional' – it is an outpost of the Russian World, which in its present-day incarnation is closely connected to the Donbas region, but which is capable also of emerging anywhere in the post-Soviet space.

# (RE-)INVENTING MEMORIAL SPACES



TATIANA ZHURZHENKO

# THE MONUMENTAL COMMEMORATION OF ST. VOLODYMYR / ST. VLADIMIR IN UKRAINE, RUSSIA, AND BEYOND

## THE NATIONALIZATION OF THE PAST, THE ORTHODOX CHURCH, AND ‘MONUMENTAL PROPAGANDA’ BEFORE AND AFTER THE ANNEXATION OF CRIMEA

### Introduction

During the post-Soviet period an increasing proliferation of monuments to the princes of Kyïvan Rus’ and to Orthodox saints can be seen in Ukraine and in Russia. The political salience of such a distant past is not a surprise as both countries lay claim to the historical heritage of Kyïvan Rus’, which serves for them as a national myth of origin. The idea of the historical continuity of Russian statehood from Kyïvan Rus’ to Muscovy to the Russian Empire with St. Petersburg as its capital was established in Russian historiography in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. *Malorossy* (Little Russians), who populated the territories of the former Kyïvan Rus’, were considered no more than a regional branch of the Russian people with some cultural and linguistic peculiarities. In Ukraine, the ‘national awakening’ of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century brought about public interest in Cossack history and established its direct continuity from Kyïvan Rus’. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Ukrainian historian Mykhaïlo Hrushevs’kyï challenged Russian imperial discourse by claiming Kyïvan Rus’ as the first Ukrainian state (*Ukraina-Rus*).<sup>1</sup> In Soviet historiography, Kyïvan Rus’ was considered the ‘common cradle’ of the three East Slavic peoples –

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<sup>1</sup> See for example Andreas Kappeler, *Ungleiche Brüder: Russen und Ukrainer vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart* (München: C.H. Beck, 2017), 26–34.

Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians – eventually re-united in one state as Soviet republics.

The collapse of the Soviet Union gave way to the emergence of Ukraine and Russia as two independent states which embarked on the nationalization of history as a pillar of nation-building. Russia's post-imperial identity has been grounded in widely accepted pre-Soviet and Soviet historical narratives of Kyïvan Rus' as the origin of the Russian state. In Ukraine, which in many aspects presents itself as a post-colonial nation, Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyi's historiography considering Kyïvan Rus' as the precursor to the Ukrainian state became foundational in the process of nation-building. With the revival of the Orthodox Church, the Christianization of Kyïvan Rus' in 988 (its 1000<sup>th</sup> anniversary was officially celebrated in the USSR at the peak of Perestroika) came to the fore as a key historical event which had determined the historical destiny of both Russia and Ukraine. This narrative has been actively supported by the newly empowered Orthodox Church. All this explains the ambivalent role of Kyïvan Rus' heritage in the current Ukrainian–Russian culture wars as it provides resources for narratives of Slavic unity and a common Orthodox civilization as well as of Ukraine's distinct historical path and national identity.

Through all the interpretations of the history of Kyïvan Rus', the Kyïvan prince Volodymyr (in Russian Vladimir) holds a central position. Prince Volodymyr the Great, in full Volodymyr Sviatoslavych (c. 960–1015), is celebrated as the first Christian ruler of the Kyïvan state. Canonized in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, he is often referred to as 'the Holy, Equal to the Apostles, Grand Prince of Kyïv'.

Especially against the background of the current Russian–Ukrainian conflict, St. Volodymyr / St. Vladimir<sup>2</sup> serves as a symbol employed by various political actors for re-drawing (or eliminating) the boundaries between the Ukrainian and Russian nations. Extremely fluid and ambivalent, this symbol has been claimed, re-imagined, and re-interpreted in multiple political contexts. Newly built monuments to St. Vladimir in Russia refer to the origins of a 'thousand-year-old' Russian statehood and of Russian Orthodox civilization. The latter goes beyond the borders of the Russian Federation and embraces all East Slavic peoples. In contemporary Russian discourse this idea takes the form of the 'Russian World' (*Russkii mir*) which construes Russians and Ukrainians as a single people

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<sup>2</sup> In the following, I will use both the Ukrainian and the Russian transliteration of the name depending on context.

(*odin narod*). A similar interpretation of the figure of Prince Vladimir has also been reproduced in Ukraine by the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) and by pro-Russian organizations. At the same time, some Ukrainian monuments to Prince Volodymyr (both in the country and especially abroad) symbolize exclusive claims to Kyïvan Rus' as the first antecedent of Ukrainian statehood and sometimes even of Ukraine's 'European Choice'. To add to the complexity of St. Volodymyr / St. Vladimir as a symbol, in many cases monuments dedicated to him are local projects, aimed at the re-invention and consolidation of regional / local identities in the first place.

This article addresses some examples of the monumental commemoration of St. Vladimir / St. Volodymyr.<sup>3</sup> It looks at the mnemonic actors involved in these projects on the national and the local level, at the political debates surrounding the construction of the monuments, and at the uses of these monuments and their appropriation by local communities. The article seeks to answer the following questions: what does the proliferation of St. Vladimir monuments tell us about nation-building in Ukraine and Russia and the nature of the culture wars between the two countries? What does it say about the relationship of the Orthodox Church(es) to the post-Soviet state? Who or what are the mnemonic actors who initiate and support these commemorative projects?

## 1. Understanding the New Monumental Cult of St. Vladimir / St. Volodymyr

Monuments are attracting growing interest from different academic disciplines, including history, social anthropology, and political science. In the following, I underline some approaches relevant to the questions addressed in this article.

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<sup>3</sup> According to my calculations there are more than thirty monuments to St. Vladimir / St. Volodymyr in Russia, Ukraine, and other parts of the world, and the number is growing every year. Due to the lack of space, it was not possible to address all existing monuments in this chapter. Among those which were omitted are, for example, monuments in Novocheboksarsk (2003), Kemerovo (2015), and Samara (2018), all in Russia.

### 1.1. Re-Bordering Russia and Ukraine

First, monuments connect myths and narratives with territory and endow localities with historical meaning. In this way, monuments contribute to what the political geographer Robert Kaiser called the “production of homelands”<sup>4</sup> and the historian Antony Smith conceptualized as the “territorialization of memory”.<sup>5</sup> As symbolic markers of collective identities, monuments do not just memorialize historical events and personalities: often, they help lay territorial and geopolitical claims. Especially in times of crisis and rapid change they serve as instruments of the re-bordering of political communities. With political boundaries moving, new monuments mushroom, celebrating territorial gains or coping with a loss of territory. Sometimes, however, monumental commemoration can be viewed as preceding – or even signalling – forthcoming changes in political geography. It is difficult to resist seeing in this way the erection of the St. Vladimir monument (by the well-known Russian nationalist sculptor Viacheslav Klykov) in Sevastopol’ back in 1993.

In their report *Ukraine in Russian Historical Discourse: Problems of Research and Interpretation*, the Ukrainian historians Georgiy Kasianov, Valerii Smolii, and Oleksii Tolochko wrote that while the Russian historical narrative which includes Kyivan Rus’ as part of its medieval history was not really challenged by the Ukrainian historical ‘*Reconquista*’, the collapse of the Soviet Union still created a serious problem for Russia:

“Yet contemporary geographic and political realities cannot be ignored. Kyiv and other centres of Ancient Rus’, including those which are part of Russian national mythology (for example, the whole geography of the *Tale of Igor’s Campaign*) for the first time in modern history found themselves beyond the state borders of Russia. From the perspective of state commemorative practices – the celebration of anniversaries, visits to historical and memorial places, the construction of monuments and memorial signs – this situation is quite uncomfortable. In fact, Russia has lost the possibility of defining the ‘sites of memory’ related to its early history and origins of statehood according to its own vision and ideology. Russian officials can only take part in the commemorative activities of the Ukrainian state as guests, which creates a quite ambivalent situation: are they attending their own celebration or celebrating foreign

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<sup>4</sup> Robert J. Kaiser, ‘Homeland Making and the Territorialization of National Identity’, in *Ethnonationalism in the Contemporary World: Walker Connor and the Study of Nationalism*, ed. Daniele Conversi (London: Routledge, 2002), 229–47.

<sup>5</sup> Antony D. Smith, ‘Culture, Community and Territory: The Politics of Ethnicity and Nationalism’, *International Affairs* 72, 3 (1996): 445–58.

history? Besides, 'common celebrations' require the adjustment of ideological gestures and their meanings in such a sensitive area as historical memory, something the Russian authorities try to avoid. In this way Russia has faced the situation of losing control over its 'territory of memory' but is not ready to accept its transfiguration by Ukraine.<sup>6</sup>

In an attempt to adjust Russia's "territory of memory" to its current state borders some new projects emerged in the 2000s, mostly related to Ladoga (now Staraia Ladoga in Leningrad Oblast') and Velikiĭ Novgorod. In 2002, Putin signed a decree ordering the celebration of the 1250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Ladoga; in 2003 he visited Ladoga as part of the festivities and inaugurated a memorial related to the event. During 2003–4, Ladoga was celebrated in the media and in official speeches as the 'de facto first capital of the Russian state'. Another campaign under President Medvedev which ended with the celebration of the 1150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Russian statehood focused on Velikiĭ Novgorod, one of the historical centres of Kyïvan Rus'.

In this context, the proliferation of monumental statues to Vladimir and other Kyïvan princes on the territory of the Russian Federation can be seen as an attempt to adjust the imaginary memoryscape of Kyïvan Rus' to Russia's new post-Soviet borders. In 2014, however, the annexation of Crimea signified a new, opposite tendency, i.e. the regaining Russia's former territories justified by arguments relating to historical memory: the state borders have now been adjusted to include 'lost' elements of the Russian memoryscape. So the monumental commemoration of St. Vladimir in Russia during the post-Soviet period has been a way of coping with territorial losses – and at the same time, from 2014 on, an instrument for the legitimization of a territorial gain (Crimea).

This territorial aspect is less obvious in Ukraine, whose current political geography largely overlaps with the memoryscape of Kyïvan Rus' and for whom the presence of the 'original' St. Volodymyr in Kyïv makes additional symbolic claims unnecessary. This reason, along with limited economic resources and different priorities on the part of key mnemonic actors, makes 'Vladimiromania' less pronounced in Ukraine than in Russia. In the Ukrainian context, Volodymyr appears a more ambivalent symbol as its monuments signify a belonging to the Russian / Slavic cultural space in some cases (e.g. in Sevastopol') and to Ukrainian (albeit

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<sup>6</sup> Georgiy Kasianov, Valerii Smoliĭ, and Oleksiĭ Tolochko, *Ukraïna v rosiĭs'komu isto-rychnomu dyskursi: problemy doslidzhennia ta interpretatsii* (Kyïv: Natsional'na Akademiia Nauk Ukraïny, Instytut Istorii Ukraïny, 2013), 110–11.



not anti-Russian) identity in others (e.g. the recently erected St. Volodymyr monument in Kryvyi Rih).

### 1.2. Local Memory Politics, Diverse Mnemonic Actors

The second influential approach in memory studies sees monuments as political projects deeply rooted in local politics and society. In the words of Jay Winter, however sacred the task of commemoration, it has been always about “the chords of local loyalties, petty intrigues, favouritism, apathy and indifference” and “about contracts, payments and profits”.<sup>7</sup> In other words it is “a business shaped by the character of the community which undertook it”.<sup>8</sup> From this perspective, political fights, negotiations, and compromises around the construction of new monuments reveal such persistent vices of post-Soviet politics as a lack of public accountability, clientelism, and corruption. Monumental commemoration projects are often sites of public debate and political battles around such issues as location, funding, and ideological interpretation; they involve multiple actors and reveal different visions not so much of the past as of the present.

Unlike some other historical personalities, St. Volodymyr / St. Vladimir is not really a politically controversial symbol: he does not polarize local communities either in Ukraine or in Russia. In this sense, the monument erected in 2016 in Moscow is rather an exception – it became controversial because of the post-Crimean political context, its ‘federal’ status, and its symbolic allusions to Vladimir Putin. But even in this case public debate in Moscow focused mainly on the choice of location, the size, and the appropriateness of such a monumental statue in a city historically unrelated to Vladimir’s life. In the Russian regions, the monumental commemorations of Vladimir / Volodymyr have caused little political controversy and have usually been supported by a broad coalition of mnemonic actors, including local authorities, business, and the Church, as well as some representatives of the local intelligentsia – historians, journalists, etc.

Political scientist Andrei Makarkin points to a “monumental particularism” in post-Soviet Russia where, in contrast to the Russian Empire or the Soviet Union, the right to decide to whom to erect a monument is left

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<sup>7</sup> Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 90.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

to the regions. According to Makarkin, regional authorities and municipalities in Russia usually initiate their own projects while trying of course not to irritate the centre but to fit into the current political trend.<sup>9</sup>

In the coalition of local authorities, business, and the Church the respective interests of the various mnemonic actors of course differ. While the authorities are interested in the consolidation of a quasi-ideology providing society with 'traditional values', local business (often intertwined with power) seeks to promote the image of an (Orthodox) benefactor. The Russian Orthodox Church does not act as a single mnemonic actor. Even if the monumental commemoration of Orthodox saints is usually supported by local Church representatives, some priests have reservations about the use of monumental sculptures which is seen more as a Catholic than an Orthodox tradition.<sup>10</sup> The initiative thus usually comes not from the Church *per se* but from various church-affiliated groups or individuals. Some of those actors actively involved in the monumental commemoration of St. Vladimir, other saints, and prominent representatives of the Orthodox Church will be addressed below: for example, the Imperial Orthodox Palestinian Society, the Russian Military-Historical Society or the head of the Union of Orthodox Women, Galina Anan'eva. One interesting and underresearched type of mnemonic actor are the sculptors and architects themselves. Some of them have pronounced political views and a sense of personal mission: they initiate monuments and actively promote their projects, looking for support from local sponsors and the Church. Two such sculptors in particular, Viacheslav Klykov (1939–2006) and Sergeĭ Isakov (born 1954), have played an important role in the monumental commemoration of Russian Orthodox saints, state leaders, and cultural icons. Their contributions to the creation of the monumental cult of Vladimir in Russia will be addressed below.

The same coalition of mnemonic actors – local authorities, business, and the Church(es) – can be found in Ukraine. Ukrainian regions and municipalities have been even more independent from the centre in terms of monumental commemoration, which has often been used by regional

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<sup>9</sup> Andreĭ Makarkin, 'Pamiatniki sovremennoĭ Rossii', *Pro et Contra* 14, 1 (2010): 127–38.

<sup>10</sup> Author's personal conversation with Sergeĭ Chapnin, journalist and 2009–15 executive editor of the Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate, an official publication of the Russian Orthodox Church (27 March 2018, IWM, Vienna). According to Chapnin, there is no tradition of veneration of monuments in Russian Orthodoxy, but no direct ban either. This gap makes possible the proliferation of Orthodox monumental art.

elites to demonstrate discontent or even directly challenge the cultural policy of the centre. Against the background of the ‘memory wars’ in the Ukrainian regions, St. Volodymyr appears as a reconciliatory symbol whose meaning can be stretched from the pro-Russian to the Ukrainian nationalist.

### 1.3. Between the Public and the Sacred: Making Use of Monuments to St. Vladimir / St. Volodymyr

Finally, the third approach relevant to this article underlines the performative aspect of monumental commemoration. Monuments are contextualized through commemorative and cultural events, political gatherings, performances, and mass actions. The initial meaning of a monument can be changed by means of its various uses and re-appropriation by new actors. What are the political, religious, and everyday uses of monuments to St. Vladimir / St. Volodymyr? It seems that the mnemonic actors involved in such projects often think no further than the official inauguration (fig. 1).

From the canonical perspective of the Orthodox Church these monuments are problematic, as they cannot be considered sacral objects like icons or frescoes. Can they be involved in religious ceremonies, such as worship or processions? Often spatially linked to Orthodox churches, these monuments nevertheless belong to the urban public space. It seems that they are located at the boundary between the religious and the secular and thus demonstrate some important features of post-Soviet post-secularism. According to Sergeï Chapnin, the proliferation of monuments to Orthodox saints signals the establishment of a new public cult, where religion is intertwined with the Soviet tradition of monumental propaganda.<sup>11</sup> This reincarnation of Soviet monumental propaganda corresponds with the new Russian regime of “caesaropapism”.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> ‘Monumental propaganda’ (*monumental’naia propaganda*) refers to the Soviet politics of using monumental art for the purpose of communist propaganda. It goes back to Lenin’s 1918 plan of removing the tsarist monuments and mass construction of monuments to the Bolshevik Revolution. See Christina Lodder, ‘Lenin’s Plan for Monumental Propaganda’, in *Art of the Soviets: Painting, Sculpture and Architecture in a One-Party State, 1917–1992*, eds. Matthew Cullerne Bown and Brandon Taylor (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993).

<sup>12</sup> Author’s personal conversation with Sergeï Chapnin (see note 11).



Fig. 1: Inauguration of the monument to St. Vladimir near the newly constructed Sophia Cathedral of the Wisdom of God in Samara, Russia, 6 May 2018. The Cathedral itself was inaugurated on 23 September 2018.

© Alexandr Blinov / Dreamstime.com

In Ukraine, where attempts to consolidate a ‘national church’ have so far failed, it would be difficult to generalize about the political uses of the monuments to Volodymyr (outside Kyïv, they are located in small towns and villages, not even in oblast’ centres), while in Russia they seem to be increasingly used in the official celebration of important historical dates. This concerns first and foremost the Day of the Christianization of Rus’ (28 July) which was added to the “List of days of military glory and memorial days of Russia” by decree of President Medvedev.<sup>13</sup> To be fair, a similar state holiday – the Day of the Christianization of Kyïvan Rus’–Ukraine – was established by decree of President Viktor Yushchenko two years earlier, on the occasion of the celebration of the 1020<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Christianization of Rus’ in 2008. As part of Yushchenko’s memory politics agenda (consolidating the narrative of the Ukrainian nation as deeply rooted in European / Christian civilization), this date served as the perfect occasion for addressing the issue of the unification of the Orthodox churches in Ukraine and the official recogni-

<sup>13</sup> Nikolai Solntsev, ‘Kreshchenie Rusi: Istoriia iubileev i memorial’naia politika’, *Istoricheskie praktiki izucheniia politogeneza. Vestnik Nizhegorodskogo Universiteta im. N.I. Lobachevskogo* 6, 3 (2012): 36–41.

tion of the Ukrainian national church as autocephalous. The occasion was used by the Ukrainian authorities for an attempt at a diplomatic breakthrough in Kyiv's relations with Constantinople. Patriarch Bartholomew, the principal guest at the celebrations, was given the highest honours, a fact which rather irritated another guest, the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church, Aleksii II.<sup>14</sup> As part of the official programme, Viktor Yushchenko and Patriarch Bartholomew laid flowers at the monument to Prince Volodymyr, as well as at monuments to Princess Ol'ha, to Cyril and Methodius, and to Andrew the Apostle (a secular and actually typically Soviet public ritual).

The celebration of the same date in summer 2013 looked quite different: the 1025<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Christianization of Kyïvan Rus', under President Viktor Yanukovych celebrated on Volodymyr Hill in Kyiv, was attended by President Putin and the new Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church, Kirill. A few months before the Euromaidan protests and in the midst of preparations for signing the Association Agreement with the EU, this was the last visit of Vladimir Putin to Ukraine to date. The annexation of Crimea in 2014 was a watershed in Ukrainian–Russian relations and the following significant dates, the 1000<sup>th</sup> anniversary of St. Vladimir's death (2015) and the 1030<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Christianization of Rus' (2018) were for the first time celebrated in Russia separately from Ukraine.

With the consolidation of the new post-2014 conservative consensus in Russian politics the meaning of 28 July has changed: from an official diplomatic event meant to demonstrate the special relationship between Russia and Ukraine it has been turned into a domestic political ritual, called the “church-state celebration” in the media (*tserkovno-gosudarstvennyi prazdnik*). The new monument to St. Vladimir erected in 2016 in Moscow is the perfect location for such celebrations. For example, on 28 July 2018, on the occasion of the 1030<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Christianization of Rus', an Orthodox procession led by Patriarch Kirill and President Putin went from Sobornaia Square in the Kremlin to the St. Vladimir monument on Borovitskii Hill where a prayer service was held.<sup>15</sup> Judging by media reports, a similar ‘invented tradition’ can be

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<sup>14</sup> ‘Political, Religious Battles Loom Between Ukraine, Russia over Orthodox Baptism Celebration’, *International Herald Tribune*, 24 July 2008.

<sup>15</sup> ‘V Rossii otprazdnovali 1030-letie kreshcheniia Rusi’, 28 July 2018, available at [www.rbc.ru/photoreport/28/07/2018/5b5c60e29a794754ff08fda4](http://www.rbc.ru/photoreport/28/07/2018/5b5c60e29a794754ff08fda4) (last visited 24 October 2019).

observed on 28 July in other Russian cities possessing monuments to St. Vladimir.

In Ukraine, where there is a similar tendency to celebrate 28 July with Orthodox processions frequently joined by politicians, political instability and competition between the Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Kyïv Patriarchate) complicate the picture. Volodymyr Hill with its monument to Prince Volodymyr is an important location for events organized by the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) (UOC (MP)) as well as by the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Kyïv Patriarchate) (UOC (KP)) (fig. 2).

In the last years these events have been separated in time and space: the procession of the UOC (MP) takes place on 27 July, starting at Volodymyr Hill and heading to the Kyïv Pechers'k Lavra, while the procession of the UOC (KP) on 28 July leaves from St. Volodymyr's Cathedral and culminates with a prayer at Volodymyr Hill. Political tensions (and competition in numbers) grew in 2018 when the celebration of the 1030<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Christianization of Kyïvan Rus' was used by president Poroshenko for the promotion of the idea of an autocephalous Ukrainian Church. The procession organized by the UOC (MP) on 27 July was joined by some opposition politicians such as Mykhaïlo Dobkin, Nestor Shufrych, and Iurii Boïko. Participants arriving from outside Kyïv reported "obstacles" created by the authorities to prevent the mobilization of UOC (MP) followers.<sup>16</sup>

The procession of the UOC (KP) under the banner 'Prayer for Ukraine' took place on 28 July and was joined by President Poroshenko with his wife and other Ukrainian officials; the same day Poroshenko spoke at the monument to St. Volodymyr at an official celebration attended by representatives of all Christian Churches in Ukraine. One year later, in 2019, the procession on 28 July was organized by the newly established Orthodox Church of Ukraine (Pravoslavna Tserkva Ukraïny, PCU) and headed by its leader, Metropolitan Epifaniï. In his interview, Epifaniï said that he feels no competition for the legacy of Prince Volodymyr: his act of baptizing Kyïvans in the River Dnipro prepared

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<sup>16</sup> 'Sviatkuvannia khreshchennia Rusi – Iak viriany Moskovs'koho patriarkhatu molylys' ta ishly khresnym khodom', *Hromadske Radio*, 27 July 2018, available at <https://hromadske.radio/news/2018/07/27/svyatkuvannya-hreshchennya-rusi-yak-viryany-moskovskogo-patriarkhatu-molylys-ta-yshly-hresnym-hodom-fotoreportazh> (last visited 24 October 2019).



the ground for the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, while the history of the Russian Orthodox Church in fact started some centuries later.<sup>17</sup>



Fig. 2: Prayer service near the Monument to St. Volodymyr on Volodymyr Hill in the center of Kyiv, Ukraine, 28 July 2019, the Day of Christianization of Kyïvan Rus'-Ukraine. © paparazza / Shutterstock

It seems, however, that beyond this newly established tradition of celebrating the Day of the Christianization of Rus' and their function as an icon of local identity (or local brand), the monuments to St. Vladimir / St. Volodymyr find little use in everyday life. (By comparison, monuments to the Orthodox Saints Pëtr and Fevroniia, linked in the context of 'traditional values' to the Day of Family, Love, and Fidelity (8 July) and promoted by the Russian Orthodox Church as an alternative to St. Valentine's Day, have become popular sites for wedding photos.) A special case seems to be the small town of Lanivtsi in Ternopil' Oblast' in Ukraine, where the Day of the Christianization of Kyïvan Rus' on 28 July coincides with the Day of the City, and the monument to St. Volodymyr, erected on the spot where a statue of Vladimir Lenin used to

<sup>17</sup> 'Konkurentsii z Rosiïciu za spadok kniazia Volodymyra ne vidchuvaiemo - Mytropolyt Epifaniï', *Belsat TV*, 29 July 2019, available at <https://belsat.eu/ua/news/konkurenciyyi-z-rosiyeyu-za-spadok-knyazya-volodimira-ne-vidchuvayemo-mitropolit-epifaniy/> (last visited 24 October 2019).

stand, dominates the town centre. The official programme of 28 July thus includes, apart from the traditional prayer service, the honouring of fallen soldiers and veterans of the military conflict in the Donbas as well as the usual entertainment programme for children and adults.<sup>18</sup>

Different again is the range of public uses of St. Volodymyr / St. Vladimir memorials outside the borders of Ukraine and Russia. For the local Ukrainian and Russian diaspora(s) they often serve as symbolic markers representing their existence as separate groups, as spots for private meetings and public gatherings, and as sites for the expression of collective emotion and the manifestation of national identity. Thus, the St. Volodymyr monument in London became in 2013–14 a site for ‘Euro-maidan London’ gatherings and later served as a site of protest against Russian aggression and of public mourning for Ukrainian victims in the Donbas (fig. 3).



Fig. 3: The statue of St. Volodymyr in London was turned into a spontaneous memorial to the victims of the Maidan massacre and the war in Donbas. © Slawek Kozakiewicz / Dreamstime.com

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<sup>18</sup> Ternopil' Regional State Administration, 'Stepan Barna pryvitav lanivchan iz Dnem Mista', 27 July 2015, available at <http://www.oda.te.gov.ua/main/en/news/detail/98630.htm?lightWords=ЛАНІВЦІ> (last visited 24 October 2019).



## 2. The Proliferation of Monuments to St. Vladimir / St. Volodymyr

### 2.1. St. Volodymyr in Kyïv (1853)

The ‘proto-monument’ to Vladimir / Volodymyr, so to speak, is situated in Kyïv, on one of the slopes of the River Dnipro, which is now called Volodymyr Hill, a place traditionally associated with the baptism of the Kyïvans in 988 (see fig. 2 above). This is the oldest sculptural monument in Kyïv, and it has long been one of the symbols of the city. Before Peter the Great, historical events and personalities were commemorated in Russia according to the Orthodox tradition: by building churches, monasteries and chapels, and not with statues or obelisks. St. Vladimir thus became one of first modern monumental statues in the Russian Empire.<sup>19</sup> Little wonder that the Metropolitan of Kyïv was critical of the project: he considered it absurd to build an “idol” to honour someone who fought against pagan idols.<sup>20</sup> This historical detail is not unimportant, because of the similar arguments used by some Orthodox conservative critics today, protesting against the erection of monuments to Russian Orthodox saints: as already mentioned, monumental sculptures are often seen as representative of a Catholic rather than an Orthodox artistic tradition.

Almost twenty years passed between the approval of the initiative by Tsar Nicholas I and the erection of the monument in 1853.<sup>21</sup> Designed by the sculptor Vasilii Demuth-Malinovskii, the statue of Vladimir with a large cross in his right hand was set on an octagonal plinth in pseudo-Byzantine style created by the architect Aleksandr Ton; the project was finalized by Peter Clodt, Nicholas I’s favourite sculptor. The total height of the monument is 20.4 metres, of which the statue itself is 4.4 metres. It remained the only monument to St. Vladimir in the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union until the late 1980s.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Kirill Sokol, *Monumenty imperii* (Moscow: Grant, 2001).

<sup>20</sup> Ivan Zotsenko and Aliona Tron’, ‘Do istorii sporudzhennia pam”iatnyka sviatomu rivoapostol’nomu kniazii Volodymyru v Kyievi’, *Opus mixtum* 3 (2015): 172–6.

<sup>21</sup> Larysa Tolochko, ‘Konkurs u Sankt-Peterburz’kii akademii khudozhestv na proekt pam”iatnyka kniazii Volodymyru dlia m. Kyieva (1842)’, in *Nestorivs’ki studii*, materials of the XIII. academic conference “Kniaz’ Volodymyr ta ioho doba: Kul’turno-mystetski nadbannia Kyivs’koi Rusi”, available at <https://www.kplavra.kiev.ua/ua/node/462> (last visited 24 October 2019).

<sup>22</sup> There are also statues of St. Vladimir as parts of bigger architectural ensembles, e.g. the Monument to the Millennium of Russia in Velikii Novgorod and the Kazan Cathedral in St. Petersburg.

Together with the opening of the St. Vladimir Kyïv University in 1835 and the construction of the St. Vladimir Cathedral (1862–82), the erection of the monument can be seen as part of the imperial place-making policy aimed at the Russification of Russia's western borderlands, countering Polish cultural and political influences and reclaiming Kyïv as an ancient Russian city and the cradle of the Orthodox Christianity. In summer 1888, Kyïv was the central site of the official celebrations devoted to the 900<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the "Christianization of the Russian People";<sup>23</sup> the Vladimir monument was, of course, one of the symbolic focal points of the event.

The Soviet regime, while initially hostile and later rather indifferent to the Orthodox Church, came to understand the symbolic importance of the St. Vladimir monument in Kyïv; in the late Soviet era it was integrated into the official ideology of the 'friendship of peoples'. In 1982, the Friendship Arch symbolising Ukrainian–Russian brotherhood was built in close proximity to the monument. The inauguration was linked to the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of the USSR and the 1150<sup>th</sup> jubilee of the city of Kyïv.

The monument includes two bronze statues of a Russian and a Ukrainian worker ostentatiously holding aloft the Soviet Order of the Friendship of Peoples. Another element of the monument is a granite stele depicting the participants of the Pereiaslav Council of 1654 – a historical event interpreted as the 're-unification' of Ukraine with Russia. In this way, the monument established the historical continuity of Ukrainian–Russian 'brotherhood', connecting it to Prince Volodymyr / Vladimir, who in this context symbolizes the common ancient origins of the two peoples. This symbolism survived the Soviet Union and its official ideology as the monument came to symbolize the 'special partnership' of the two post-Soviet nations belonging to the same Orthodox civilization. As already mentioned, in summer 2013, the 1025<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Christianization of Rus' was celebrated on Volodymyr Hill with the participation of Presidents Viktor Yanukovych and Vladimir Putin and the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Kirill.

With the beginning of the Russian–Ukrainian conflict and in the context of decommunization, a public debate about the future of the

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<sup>23</sup> Heather J. Coleman, 'From Kiev Across All Russia: The 900<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Christianization of Rus' and the Making of a National Saint in the Imperial Borderlands', *Ab Imperio* 19, 4 (2018): 95–129.

Monument to the Friendship of Peoples started:<sup>24</sup> despite some radical suggestions the monument has so far remained in place. The Arch of Friendship has become an object of artistic re-interpretation: for example, in November 2018, a symbolic ‘crack’ appeared in the middle of the arch, referring to the deep crisis in Ukrainian–Russian relations. Against this background the St. Volodymyr monument was also re-contextualized as a symbol of Kyiv’s historical precedence over Moscow and a proof – contrary to the Kremlin’s rhetoric – of Ukraine’s centuries-long existence as a nation.

## 2.2. The Millennium of the Christianization of Rus’ in 1988

For the first time since the collapse of the Russian Empire, the issue of a monumental commemoration of St. Vladimir arose on the occasion of the Millennium of the Christianization of Rus’ in 1988. The celebration was first intended to be an internal event for the Russian Orthodox Church, but preparations coincided with the unfolding of Perestroika and the liberalization of the Soviet regime. Mikhail Gorbachev, who was seeking to improve relations with the Church, used this occasion as a showcase for his political reforms. The radical turn in Soviet policy towards the Church was welcomed by the liberal part of society and by the West. On the occasion of the Millennium, a monument to St. Vladimir was erected in 1988 on the territory of the Danilov Monastery in Moscow which in 1983 had been restituted to the Church (fig. 4). A copy of the monument by the prolific Soviet / Russian sculptor Aleksandr Rukavishnikov<sup>25</sup> was constructed in Buenos-Aires (Argentina) on the initiative of the local Russian diaspora and the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad. This was a sign of rapprochement between the Soviet state and the ‘white emigration’ diaspora in the West still suspicious about Perestroika. Similarly, a monument to St. Vladimir was

“commissioned by the Russian Community in Brisbane on the occasion of the millennium of Christian culture in Russia in 1988, and presented to the Uni-

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<sup>24</sup> See, for example ‘ “Arka druzhby narodiv” u Kyievi ta viina z Rosiieiu: shcho robyty z radians’kym monumentom?’, *Radio Svoboda*, 24 January 2018, available at <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/28994013.html> (last visited 24 October 2019).

<sup>25</sup> Aleksandr Rukavishnikov, who belongs to the third generation of a dynasty of Russian / Soviet sculptors, is especially known to the public for his monument to Vladimir Vysotskiĭ at the Vagan’kovo Cemetery. In 2014, Rukavishnikov signed a collective letter from Russian cultural figures in support of Putin’s policies in Ukraine and Crimea.

versity of Queensland and the people of Brisbane to commemorate the Bicentenary of Australia in that year, and twenty-five years of Russian studies at the University of Queensland”.<sup>26</sup>

It was unveiled in 1995 in front of the university building. The inscription in Russian says that “St. Vladimir, The Great Grand Prince of Kyïvan Rus’ (980–1015) brought Christianity, literacy and learning to his nation from Byzantium in 988 AD”.<sup>27</sup>



Fig. 4: Monument to St. Vladimir on the territory of the Danilov Monastery in Moscow. © akostra.livejournal.com

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<sup>26</sup> Monument Australia, ‘St. Vladimir’, available at <https://monumentaaustralia.org.au/themes/landscape/settlement/display/100277-st.-vladimir-> (last visited 24 October 2019).

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.



Fig. 5: Statue of St. Volodymyr in front of the St. Volodymyr Institute in Toronto, Canada. © Greg's Southern Ontario (catching Up Slowly), Flickr, available at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/57156785@N02/12999161555/in/photostream/> (last visited 11 August 2020).

On the same occasion, the Millennium of the Christianization of Rus', the Ukrainian diaspora inaugurated monuments to St. Volodymyr in Toronto and in London. Both were installed in front of Ukrainian cul-

tural institutions (the St. Volodymyr Institute in Toronto and the Ukrainian Club in London). The Toronto monument bears the inscription “Baptizer of Ukraine” (fig. 5), and the London one “Ruler of Ukraine”.

Both statues were created by the well-known Canadian-Ukrainian sculptor Leo Mol who is famous for, among other works, his monument to Taras Shevchenko in Washington, D.C.<sup>28</sup> Another statue of St. Volodymyr, created by Leo Mol on the occasion of the Millennium of the Christianization of Rus’ as a gift for Pope John Paul II, was inaugurated in Rome in 2015 on the territory of Saint Sophia, the Greek Catholic church which serves as a cultural centre and meeting place for the Ukrainian diaspora.<sup>29</sup>

While some Russian cultural activists claim all St. Vladimir’s monuments in the West as “Russian”,<sup>30</sup> the inscriptions, language, and use of symbols (such as the Ukrainian trident) clearly indicate their ‘nationality’. St. Vladimir’s monuments outside Russia and Ukraine remain under the care of the respective diasporas and they are often integrated into commemorative and religious ceremonies organized by local Ukrainian and Russian communities. Thus in 2013, the 1025<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Christianization of Rus’ was celebrated in front of the St. Volodymyr statue in London by the local Ukrainian community with the participation of the Ukrainian embassy.<sup>31</sup> The 1000<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Vladimir’s death in 2015 was commemorated in Buenos-Aires in front of the St. Vladimir statue under the supervision of Russian state cultural institutions (such as *Rossotrudnichestvo*) and the Russian Orthodox Church. This

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<sup>28</sup> Leo Mol, full name Leonid Molodozhnyn (1915–2009), was born in Ukraine, studied arts in Vienna and Leningrad, and moved to Canada after World War II. More than three hundred of his sculptures are displayed in the Leo Mol Sculpture Garden in Winnipeg where he lived and worked.

<sup>29</sup> The Greek Catholic Church of Saint Sophia in Rome was built in the 1960s by Cardinal Josyf Slipyi after he had been released from the GULAG where he had spent 18 years.

<sup>30</sup> See, for example, the interview with Galina Anan’ina, head of the Orthodox Women of Russia Association, where she argues that the above-mentioned monuments in London and Toronto “were built at the cost of the Russian Orthodox Church and of the local communities of our Orthodox compatriots”. Igor’ Elkov, ‘Vladimir u Kremli. Pamiatniki Kniaziu – krestiteliu Rusi ustanovleny dazhe v Avstralii i Argentine’, *Rossiiskaia Gazeta*, 12 November 2015, available at <https://rg.ru/2015/11/12/pamyatnik-site.html> (last visited 24 October 2019).

<sup>31</sup> ‘U Londoni takozh vidsviatkuvaly 1025-richchia Khreshchennia Rusi’, in: *Den*, 27 July 2013, available at <https://day.kyiv.ua/uk/news/270713-u-londoni-takozh-vidsvyatkuvali-1025-richchya-hreshchennya-rusi> (last visited 3 August 2020).



latter event was part of the large-scale official Russian campaign which connected the 1000<sup>th</sup> anniversary of St. Vladimir's death with the 'return of Crimea' (more on this topic below).

### 2.3. The Collapse of the USSR and the Proliferation of Statues of St. Vladimir in Russia

The next wave of monumental commemorations of St. Vladimir / Volodymyr in Russia and Ukraine started after 1991 and reflects the trauma of the Soviet collapse and the search for new national and local identities. The most prominent examples of this period are the Vladimir statues built in Sevastopol' in 1993 and in Belgorod in 1999, both by the Russian sculptor Viacheslav Klykov (1939–2006). Klykov was famous not only for his artistic work but also for his political activities as a Russian nationalist and monarchist. Already during Perestroika he had joined the notorious Pamiat Society; later he headed the International Foundation for Slavic Writing and Culture (*Mezhdunarodnyi Fond Slavianskoï Pis'mennosti i Kul'tury*), was president of the Slavic Economic Union and, during the last years of his life, led the re-established Union of the Russian People (*Soiuz Russkogo Naroda*). Being deeply anti-Soviet – Klykov supported the removal of the Dzerzhinskii Statue at Lubianka in 1991 and was proud of never having made a single sculpture of Lenin<sup>32</sup> – at the same time he was profoundly opposed to the politics of Yeltsin. Some of his projects caused political scandals:<sup>33</sup> from the point of view of today's Russian nationalism, he was ahead of his time.

In 1987, afraid of nationalist mobilization, the Soviet authorities had put a stop to plans already made public for the erection of Klykov's statue of Sergius of Radonezh in Moscow Oblast' (the statue was eventually erected one year later). Klykov's monument to Tsar Nicholas I was blown up by Russian anarchists, and the local Communists in Irkutsk fervently

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<sup>32</sup> Viacheslav Klykov, 'Pamiatnikov slishkom malo', *Rossiiskaia Gazeta*, 2 December 2005.

<sup>33</sup> Klykov's monument to the Kyïvan Prince Sviatoslav was supposed to be erected in Belgorod but caused protests by some Russian Jewish organizations due to its use of the Star of David; eventually the monument was erected in the countryside. On Khazaria in Russian nationalist discourse, see Victor A. Shnirelman, 'The Story of a Euphemism: The Khazars in Russian Nationalist Literature', in *The World of the Khazars: New Perspectives*, eds. Peter Golden, Haggai Ben-Shammai, and András Roná-Tas (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2007), 353–72.

opposed his monument to the leader of the White movement, Admiral Kolchak.



Fig. 6: Statue of St. Vladimir in Sevastopol', Crimea. © Igor Litvyak / Shutterstock

Klykov's prolific work and political activism in the 1990s were aimed at the re-nationalization of the Russian cultural landscape but also at redrawing the symbolic and territorial boundaries of Russianness – the latter was, for example, the case with the Pushkin monument in Tiraspol in



Moldova in 1991, in the midst of the Transdnestrian conflict. In the early 1990s, Klykov donated some of his sculptures to the city of Sevastopol', a highly symbolic place for the Russian national imagination which after 1991 found itself in independent Ukraine. Among them was the monument to St. Volodymyr erected in 1993 on the territory of Chersoneses where according to legend Prince Vladimir had been baptized (fig. 6).

The project was sponsored by the Russian businessman Mikhail Zhidkov who together with Klykov headed the Slavic Economic Union. Crimea in the early 1990s was struggling with pro-Russian separatism, but the inauguration of the monument was not controversial. It was the annexation of Crimea, rationalized by, among other arguments, the historical role of Crimea in the Christianization of Russia, that retroactively invested this monument with a new political meaning.

Another St. Vladimir monument created by Klykov was erected in 1998 in Belgorod, a Russian city situated some 40 km from the Ukrainian border (fig. 7). Initially it was a local project, part of the rebranding of the city by the local authorities, and it was in fact based on a misinterpretation of historical facts. The local amateur historian Iurii Shmelev claimed that, according to *The Tale of Past Years* or the *Primary Chronicle*, Belgorod had been founded by Vladimir the Great and was thus much older than had been understood previously. Despite the protests of professional historians and experts Shmelev managed to convince the Governor, Savchenko, and then prime minister Chernomyrdin gave his blessing to an official celebration of the 'Millennium of Belgorod'. The historical error was later clarified, but the ambiguity regarding the year of foundation of Belgorod remained. The St. Volodymyr Statue erected on the top of Kharkiv Hill, a by-product of the false Millennium, has meanwhile become an important marker in the urban landscape and a symbol of the city where Orthodox faith, along with the memory of the Battle of Kursk in World War II, is considered a pillar of local ideology. Belgorod presents itself as a stronghold of Orthodox belief and national identity on Russia's new western border.

In this context, Ukraine is often seen as a source of various 'spiritual threats' such as schism, the expansion of Protestant sects and of Catholic influences. The dominant status of the Orthodox Church corresponds with the Pan-Slavism and Russian nationalism popular among local elites. No wonder that Viacheslav Klykov, who due to his Kursk origins is considered almost a local, created several important monuments in Belgorod and the region. Among them is the Prokhorovka War Memorial

which inscribes the epic Kursk tank battle into the centuries-long history of Russian military glory.<sup>34</sup>



Fig. 7: Monument to St. Vladimir in Belgorod, Russia. Photograph by Panoramio, license CC BY 3.0, available at [https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%A4%D0%B0%D0%B9%D0%BB:Monument\\_to\\_Prince\\_Vladimir\\_-\\_from\\_panoramio.jpg](https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%A4%D0%B0%D0%B9%D0%BB:Monument_to_Prince_Vladimir_-_from_panoramio.jpg) (last visited 11 August 2020).

In the context of the Ukrainian–Russian borderlands the monument to Prince Vladimir in Belgorod has an ambivalent meaning as it symbolizes East Slavic unity and at the same time presents the Russian response to Ukrainian claims on the heritage of Kyïvan Rus'. Russian Wikipedia emphasizes that Belgorod's Vladimir is some metres higher than his Kyïv counterpart.

From the mid-1990s to the mid-2000s Belgorod, together with neighbouring Ukrainian Kharkiv, promoted ideas of cross-border cooperation and 'East Slavic brotherhood'. In 2000, Presidents Putin, Kuchma, and

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<sup>34</sup> The Prokhorovka War Memorial now includes a monument to Viacheslav Klykov created by his son, also a sculptor who shares his father's mission and vision of the Russian past. In 2017, a statue of St. Vladimir created by Andreï Klykov was erected on the territory of the Valaam Monastery in Russian Karelia.

Lukashenka visited the monument to St. Vladimir and the Prokhorovka Memorial during their Belgorod Summit.<sup>35</sup>

The case of another Russian city, Vladimir, is similar to Belgorod. A medieval town, part of the Golden Ring and the administrative centre of Vladimir Oblast' in Central Russia, it was known in the Russian Empire as Vladimir-on-Kliaz'ma or Vladimir-Zalesskii, to distinguish it from Volodymyr-Volyns'kyi, now in Ukraine. Traditionally, the founding date of Vladimir was acknowledged as 1108, and this view attributes the founding of the city and its name to Vladimir Monomakh, another prince of Kyïvan Rus'. In accordance with this view, the 850<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Vladimir was celebrated in 1958 (and two years later, in 1960, the monument to the founders of Vladimir was erected in front of the local railway station). In the early 1990s, however, as in the case of Belgorod, some local historians put forward a new theory that the city had been founded not by Vladimir Monomakh, but by Vladimir the Great and is thus two hundred years older. This view remains controversial among historians, but the new foundation date of 990 has been recognized by the local authorities and written into official documentation.

It would be surprising if the city of Vladimir had not had its own monument of St. Vladimir (celebrated now as 'the founder of the city', according to the new local historical narrative), and indeed there are even two of them. The more recent was erected in 2015 (at the occasion of the Millennium of Vladimir's death) near the construction site of the new St. Volodymyr church. But the more prominent is the monument "to the baptizers of Vladimir lands" – the "Equal to the Apostles" Prince Vladimir and Saint Fëdor, which was inaugurated in 2007 (fig. 8). The occasion was the celebration of the 850<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the transfer of the capital city of Rus' from Kyïv to Vladimir. The monument (the only equestrian statue of Vladimir) was designed by Sergeï Isakov (born 1954), another prominent Russian nationalist and Orthodox sculptor.

Compared to Viacheslav Klykov and his oppositional radical nationalism, Sergeï Isakov's Orthodox Russian nationalism is rather mainstream and corresponds with the recent turn to Orthodoxy of Putin's establishment. In 2015, Isakov created one more St. Vladimir statue for the small city of Bataïsk in the Rostov-on-Don Oblast' where he had moved from

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<sup>35</sup> Tatiana Zhurzhenko, 'Shared Memory Culture? Nationalizing the "Great Patriotic War" in the Ukrainian-Russian Borderlands', in *Memory and Change in Europe: Eastern Perspectives*, eds. Małgorzata Pakier and Joanna Wawrzyniak (Oxford: Berghahn, 2016), 169–92.



Fig. 8: Monument to the baptizers of Vladimir lands, St. Vladimir and St. Fëdor, in Vladimir, Russia. © Olga Volodina / Dreamstime.com

Moscow, after years of studying and working in Europe.<sup>36</sup> As the author of numerous monuments to Orthodox saints<sup>37</sup> his most important commission, however, is a series of monumental statues of St. Nicholas, traditionally the most respected saint in Russia, to be built along the borders of Russia, and in this way re-mapping Russia as an Orthodox space.<sup>38</sup> Monumental statues of St. Nicholas have thus appeared, not without the resistance of some local Orthodox clerics, in Anadyr', Kamchatka, the Kurile Islands, Franz-Josef Land, Kaliningrad, Minsk, Polotsk, Eïsk, Bataïsk, Omsk (and even in Spain). Among the institutions supporting this project are the Saint Nicholas Foundation and the Imperial Orthodox

<sup>36</sup> 'V Bataïske otkryt pamiatnik sviatomu kniaziu Vladimiru raboty chlena IPPO Sergeia Isakova', 19 October 2015, available at <http://www.ippo.ru/science/article/v-batayske-otkryt-pamyatnik-svyatomu-knyazyu-vladi-101496> (last visited 24 October 2019).

<sup>37</sup> This includes the most recent project of a St. George statue created for the separatist-controlled Ukrainian Donetsk and presented to DNR leaders.

<sup>38</sup> Alekseï Fedotov. 'Skul'ptura, proslavliaiushchaia Boga', *Russkii narodnaia liniia*, 29 December 2014, available at [http://ruskline.ru/special\\_opinion/2014/12/skulptura\\_proslavlyayuyaya\\_boga/](http://ruskline.ru/special_opinion/2014/12/skulptura_proslavlyayuyaya_boga/) (last visited 24 October 2019).

Palestinian Society<sup>39</sup> (both led by people who seem happily to combine careers in the security services, big business, and the Church).

Some new monuments to Vladimir were erected in Russia on the occasion of the 1025<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Christianization of Rus'. One of them, relatively modest, was built in 2012 in Tula near the local St. Vladimir Church (fig. 9).<sup>40</sup>



Fig. 9: Monument to St. Vladimir in Tula, Russia. © Anna Krivitskaia / Dreamstime.com

Both the church and the monument are situated on the territory of the Tula Machine-Building Plant (*Tulamashzavod*), a major Russian producer of guns and missiles for land, air, and naval forces. The monument was sponsored by the company and manufactured by its workers and thereby serves as an example of a corporate symbolic politics.

<sup>39</sup> The Imperial Orthodox Palestinian Society, created in 1882 by the Russian imperial family to cultivate ties with the Holy Land, underwent several transformations in the Soviet era and was re-established after 1991 as an instrument of Russian soft power in the region. Since 2007, it has been headed by Sergei Stepashin, the former FSB chief and a close ally of Putin. Among other tasks, the Palestinian Society is currently concerned with the restoration of Orthodox churches in Syria.

<sup>40</sup> 'V Tule odkryli pamiatnik krestiteliu Rusi – kniazia Vladimiru', *Tul'skaia Pressa*, 27 August 2012, available at <https://www.tulapressa.ru/2012/07/v-tule-otkryt-pamyatnik-krestiteliu-rusi-knyazyu-vladimiru/> (last visited 24 October 2019).



Another St. Vladimir was erected in 2013 in Astrakhan', in front of the city's St. Vladimir Cathedral (fig. 10). This church, one of the showplaces of the southern Russian city on the Volga delta, was constructed at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to mark the 900<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Christianization of Rus' and to promote the conversion of the local Muslim population to the Orthodox faith.



Fig. 10: Monument to St. Vladimir in front of the St. Vladimir Cathedral, Astrakhan', Russia. © Valery Bocman / Dreamstime.com

In the 1930s, the building was taken from the church and by a miracle survived attempts to erase it during the Khrushchev era, only to serve for the next thirty years as a local bus station. It was only in 1999 that the cathedral was re-opened: the erection of the monument in 2013 was combined with the improvement of the surrounding space, thus accomplishing a long-term project. As reported by the official website of the Astrakhan' authorities, Metropolitan Iona who consecrated the monument announced that the statue had become an Orthodox icon and that everybody who passed it could now pray to it as an icon of St. Vladimir.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>41</sup> 'V Astrakhani otkryli pamiatnik sviatomu kniaziu Vladimiru', *Novostnoĭ portal goroda Astrakhani*, 23 December 2013, available at <http://news.astrgorod.ru/news/v-astrakhani-otkryli-pamyatnik-svyatomu-knyazyu-vladimiru-0> (last visited 3 August 2020).

Especially interesting in the context of our research is the fact that the monument was presented to the city by the Heydar Aliyev Foundation. Leyla Aliyeva, Vice-President of the foundation and daughter of the current President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev, personally attended the inauguration and in recognition was awarded the Order of Princess Ol'ha by the Russian Orthodox Church.<sup>42</sup> Leyla Aliyeva, a high society person living between Moscow and Baku, is a key figure in the Azeri diaspora in Russia and in public diplomacy between Russia and Azerbaijan. The gift to the city of Astrakhan', which hosts a considerable Azeri diaspora, thus involves several dimensions: it symbolizes good relations between Moscow and Baku, and together with other elements of the urban landscape (the Bridge of Friendship Between Russia and Azerbaijan, Heydar Aliyev Square, and the Heydar Aliyev Monument) it legitimizes the presence of the Azeri minority in the city and endorses the monument with the additional meaning of multi-confessional dialogue. It is quite interesting that the author of the St. Vladimir statue, Azeri sculptor Natik Aliyev (not a relation of the president's family) also created the statue of Heydar Aliyev in Astrakhan' (as well as Aliyev statues in Kyïv, Tbilisi, and Belgrade) and the Monument to Baku–Astrakhan' Friendship in Baku. The latter monument was inaugurated in the same year as the Vladimir statue in Astrakhan', in 2013.

#### 2.4. Monuments to St. Volodymyr in Post-Soviet Ukraine (1991–2013)

After 1991, new monuments to St. Volodymyr were erected not only in Russia, but also in Ukraine. These were local projects, not too ambitious and not intended to compete with the monument in Kyïv. In most cases, they refer to Kyïvan Rus' and to Prince Volodymyr in particular as a source of local identity and as a local brand. Apart from the above-mentioned monument in Sevastopol' created by Klykov, the monument to St. Volodymyr by the L'viv sculptor L'ubomyr Iaremchuk<sup>43</sup> was erected in 2000 in Volodymyr-Volyns'kyï, a small town in the Volyn' Oblast' twelve kilometres from the border with Poland. Situated in the city's

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Volodymyr Iaremchuk (born 1954) is the author, most famously, of the monument to Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyï in L'viv. Several Taras Shevchenko monuments of his authorship are installed in provincial towns of western Ukraine. Iaremchuk is also the author of the Stepan Bandera monument in Drohobych.

historic district (Slov''ians'kyi Sad, a recreation zone on the site of the former fortress), the monument to St. Volodymyr is supported by statues of the Kyïvan Rus' princes Iaroslav Osmomysl and Iaroslav the Wise, by the same sculptor (fig. 11).



Fig. 11: Monument to St. Volodymyr (in the background) and statues of Kyïvan Rus' princes Iaroslav Osmomysl and Iaroslav the Wise in the city park of Volodymyr-Volyns'kyi, Ukraine. © baxys / Shutterstock

This combination of historical personalities refers to the history of the Halych (Galicia) Rus' Principality, one of the main regional states within Kyïvan Rus', which later became the Kingdom of Galicia-Volhynia, one of the successor states of Kyïvan Rus'. Mentioned already in the *Primary Chronicle*,<sup>44</sup> the town was given the name Vladimir-Volynskii when in

<sup>44</sup> This fact is contested by the Russian city Vladimir (formerly Vladimir-on-Kliazma) as it was already mentioned above.



1795 it became part of the Russian Empire as a result of the Third Partition of Poland. In interwar Poland the town was known as Włodzimierz. In 1939, the name Volodymyr-Volyns'kii was restored by the Soviet authorities. Twice in post-Soviet history, in 1998 and in 2016, there were public initiatives aimed at changing the name back to Volodymyr, but to no avail.



Fig. 12: Monument of St. Volodymyr on the territory of the Assumption Monastery at the Holy Mountain in Zymne, Volodymyr-Volyns'kyi district, Ukraine. © Association of Orthodox Journalists, available at <https://spzh.news/ru/news/52687-predstojately-upc-nachal-vizit-v-zapadnyje-jeparkhii-s-zimnenskogo-monastyrya> (last visited 11 August 2020).

The second St. Volodymyr statue can be found just some kilometres from Volodymyr-Volyns'kiï, on the territory of the female monastery in the village of Zymne (fig. 12). The Uspens'kyï Sviatohirs'kyï Monastery (in English, the Assumption Monastery at the Holy Mountain) belongs to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) and is one of the oldest in Ukraine. A monastic legend attributes its foundation to Vladimir the Great. This explains the construction of the statue of St. Volodymyr in 2001, on the occasion of the monastery's Millennium. In 2009, the monastery was visited by the Russian Patriarch Kirill, who took part in prayers to St. Vladimir in front of the statue.<sup>45</sup> The monastery is frequently visited by top Ukrainian politicians (it has a helipad and a VIP hotel); in the Ukrainian media it has been associated with Viktor Yanukovych and with pro-Russian politicians. In an interview soon after the election of Yanukovych, Mother Superior Stefana also admitted her close personal relationships with notorious pro-Russian politicians such as Viktor Medvedchuk and Iurii Boïko.<sup>46</sup>

Another monument to St. Volodymyr was created in 2010 in the village of Bilohorodka, twenty-two kilometres from Kyïv. Historians consider it the original "White Town" mentioned in the *Primary Chronicle* – a reference which was erroneously used by the Russian Belgorod to legitimize its 'Millennium'. The emblem of the village proudly presents 980 as the year when Bilhorod-Kyïvs'kyï – the legendary city-castle of the Kyïvan Rus' – was first mentioned in historical sources. The remnants of the ancient castle near Bilohorodka is an important archaeological site.

One more example of the local monumental commemoration of St. Volodymyr can be found in Lanivtsi (Ternopil' Oblast'). The statue was erected on the central square (where Lenin had stood before) in 2001, when Lanivtsi village was given the status of a town. Since then, the monument serves in public celebrations of the 'Day of the City', which coincides with St. Volodymyr's Day according to the Orthodox calendar. The statue is designed by the Ternopil' sculptor Vasyl' Sadovnyk (1934–2005) who created several monuments in the region. His other work, a monument to Fighters for the Freedom of Ukraine (a reference

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<sup>45</sup> 'Predstoiatel' Russkoï pravoslavnoi tserkvi pobylal v Zimnenskom Uspenskom Zhenskom Monastyre', available at <http://pravoslavie.ru/31443.html> (last visited 24 October 2019).

<sup>46</sup> Religious Information Service of Ukraine (RISU), 'Ihumen'ia Stefana. President nachal svoï put' s Kievo-Pecherskoï Lavry', 23 March 2010, available at [https://risu.org.ua/ua/index/monitoring/kaleido\\_digest/34963/](https://risu.org.ua/ua/index/monitoring/kaleido_digest/34963/) (last visited 24 October 2019).

to the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) which was active in the area) was the first monument built in Lanivtsi after 1991.

In Liubech (Chernihiv Oblast'), a small ancient town, according to legend considered the birthplace of Malusha, Volodymyr's mother, one finds an unconventional sculpture of Malusha with the infant Volodymyr (fig. 13). It was created in 2011 by the young Ukrainian sculptor Mykyta Zigura (born 1984 in Dnipropetrovs'k).



Fig. 13: Sculpture of infant Volodymyr with his mother Malusha in Liubech, Chernihiv Oblast', Ukraine. © Kiyanka, available at [https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Файл:Пам'ятник\\_Малусі\\_з\\_Володимиром.\\_Скульптор-М.\\_Зігура\\_м.Любеч\\_01.JPG](https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Файл:Пам'ятник_Малусі_з_Володимиром._Скульптор-М._Зігура_м.Любеч_01.JPG) (last visited 11 August 2020).

Another monument to Malusha and her son Vladimir (as an adolescent)<sup>47</sup> can be found in the local park in Korosten' (Zhytomyr Oblast') (fig. 14). The monument was built in 2010 and sponsored, according to official information, “by a private individual from Korosten' who now lives in

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<sup>47</sup> In Pskov (Russia) one can find another sculpture of an infant Vladimir, in this case with his grandmother princess Olga. The monument was created by the already mentioned Viacheslav Klykov and inaugurated in 2003.

Russia”.<sup>48</sup> Today’s Korosten’ (known in the chronicles as Iskorosten’, the capital of the ancient East Slavic tribe of the Drevlians) possesses several statues referring to its distant past. These include Mal, the legendary prince of the Drevlians, as well as, paradoxically, the Kyïvan Princess Ol’ha who according to legend burnt Iskorosten’ down in revenge for the murder of her husband Prince Ihor.



Fig. 14: Sculpture of young Volodymyr with his mother Malusha in Korosten’, Zhytomyr Oblast’, Ukraine. © Shidlovski / Shutterstock

In 2015, Korosten’ received one more monument, this time a rather conventional St. Volodymyr, by the local sculptors Vitaliï Rozhyk and Vasyľ Feshchenko (fig. 15).

Finally, one more monument to St. Volodymyr, erected in Kyïv, deserves a mention. It is called *Prince Volodymyr the Great Chooses His Faith* and consists of four bronze figures: Prince Volodymyr sitting on his throne, his eyes turned towards an Orthodox priest, and the two rejected representatives of Islam and Judaism standing on the other side (fig. 16). The monument by the Kyïv sculptor Petro Hlemiaz’ is situated in a park which belongs to the Interregional Academy for Personnel Management

<sup>48</sup> ‘U Korosteni vidkryiut’ pam’iatnyk kliuchnytsi Malushi, vartystiu 50 tys. dolariv’, *Novyny Zhytomyra*, 9 June 2010, available at <http://news.city.zt.ua/kylytra/1749-ukorosteni-vidkryiut-pamyatnik-klyuchnici-malushi.html> (last visited 24 October 2019).





Fig. 15: Monument to St. Volodymyr in the city park of Korosten', Zhytomyr Oblast', Ukraine. © Shidlovski / Shutterstock



Fig. 16: The monument *Prince Volodymyr the Great Chooses His Faith* on the territory of the MAUP in Kyiv. © Igor Turzh, available at [https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Файл:Пам'ятник\\_Князь\\_Володимир\\_обирає\\_віру\\_МАУП\\_Київ.JPG](https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Файл:Пам'ятник_Князь_Володимир_обирає_віру_МАУП_Київ.JPG) (last visited 11 August 2020).

(known by its Ukrainian acronym MAUP). Like many other statues in the park, the St. Volodymyr monument was commissioned by the MAUP, a private university, notoriously known in Ukraine and beyond for its xenophobic and anti-semitic conferences and publications.<sup>49</sup> Public scandals around MAUP reached a peak in the 2000s, and President Viktor Yushchenko and Foreign Minister Borys Tarasiuk had to distance themselves officially from this institution. In 2006, the founder of MAUP created his own political party whose ideology was defined as ‘national conservatism’, but his political project failed. The inauguration of the monument in 2002 was attended by Metropolitan Volodymyr of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) who consecrated it and received a small replica as a personal gift from the rector.

An interesting detail is worth mentioning: the event also included the laying of a foundation stone for the future Chapel of the Serbian Orthodox Church in memory of the victims of the NATO bombing of Serbia. This sheds a specific light on the monument to St. Volodymyr which makes it look like a particular political project – far right, anti-Western, and nationalist. And yet, one should be cautious not to overinterpret it – the MAUP park is rather an eclectic collection of everything possible, from the Heydar Aliyev statue mentioned above to the collection of ancient Trypillian art and from models of the Seven Wonders of the World to the gallery of Ukrainian poets and writers. St. Volodymyr appears in this context rather as the protagonist in a historical anecdote.

## 2.5. The Annexation of Crimea and the Russian–Ukrainian Conflict

The annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014 and the subsequent Russian–Ukrainian conflict has dramatically changed the political context of the cult of monuments to St. Vladimir / St. Volodymyr in both countries. Rather than being a symbol of East Slavic unity and common Orthodox faith, St. Vladimir has been deployed in the new culture wars by Russia denying Ukraine’s separate historical identity and Ukraine claiming Kyïvan Rus’ for itself.

Most importantly, however, the baptism of Vladimir in the Greek colony of Chersonesos (Ukrainian and Russian Korsun’), today on the

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<sup>49</sup> Per Anders Rudling, ‘Anti-Semitism on the Curriculum: MAUP – The Interregional Academy for Personnel Management’, in *Doublespeak: The Rhetoric of the Far Right since 1945*, eds. Matthew Feldman and Paul Jackson (Stuttgart: ibidem-Verlag, 2014), 247–70.

territory of Sevastopol', and thus the role of Crimea in the Christianization of Rus', was used by president Putin to justify Russia's historical claim on the peninsula. The Korsun' legend, something of interest mainly for professional historians, was instrumentalized for Russia's territorial expansionism. (In fact, this was happening for the second time in Russian history – the legend of Prince Vladimir's conversion in Korsun' had acquired a special significance already after Russia's conquest of Crimea in 1783.)<sup>50</sup>

In 2015, the first anniversary of the annexation of Crimea coincided with the Millennium of Prince Vladimir's death, marking a new wave of highly political monumental commemorations of St. Vladimir. The scale of the official celebrations in summer 2015 testifies to the political dimension of the issue: an ambitious programme combined cultural and religious events all over European Russia, culminating with a pop concert on Red Square in Moscow.<sup>51</sup> The geography of the celebrations included the newly-acquired Crimea: an Orthodox procession started in Sevastopol' in order to pass through Krasnodar, Rostov, Voronezh, Belgorod, Kursk, Bryansk, and Smolensk. In this way, the new political geography of Russia including Crimea (but omitting Kyïv and other Ukrainian cities) was performed and celebrated in a public religious spectacle centred around St. Vladimir.

As part of the celebrations, a new monument to Vladimir was inaugurated in summer 2015 in Smolensk. The statue, created by the local sculptor Valerïi Grashchenkov, shows Vladimir with a cross held to his chest and extending his right hand towards the Dnipro River. (The embankment of the Dnipro where the monument is situated was also re-named after St. Vladimir.) The monument was consecrated by Patriarch Kirill during a festive inauguration ceremony starting with a liturgy and ending with a pop concert. The special significance of Smolensk (the River Dnipro where Prince Vladimir baptized his people originates in the Smolensk Oblast') was frequently underlined, as for example by the President's special envoy in the Central Federal District, Aleksandr Beglov: "We all are heirs of Prince Vladimir. This is the first monument in Russia to Prince Vladimir on the Dnipro and it is great that it was

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<sup>50</sup> Mara Kozelsky, 'Ruins into Relics: The Monument to Saint Vladimir on the Excavations of Chersonesos, 1827–57', *The Russian Review* 63, 4 (2004): 655–72.

<sup>51</sup> 'Kniazïu ot prezidenta. Na torzhestva v chest' sviatogo kniazia Vladimira potratiat bolee 1 milliarda rublei', 22 May 2015, available at <https://www.rbc.ru/newspaper/2015/05/22/56bcd775a7947299f72bfc2> (last visited 24 October 2019).

erected at its origins”.<sup>52</sup> The legend that Prince Vladimir himself baptized the citizens of Smolensk on his way from Kyïv to Novgorod, although not grounded in any historical evidence, was often referred to in the context of the celebrations. Smolensk, the only big Russian city on the Dnipro, thus symbolically replaced Kyïv in the imagined geography of Russian ‘sacred lands’.

The inauguration of the monument to St. Vladimir in Moscow (fig. 17) was also planned for the Millennium of his death in 2015 but took place one year later. The plan to erect a monument to St. Vladimir in Moscow goes back to 2013, when Putin ordered the establishment of a working group to prepare for the Millennium of the prince’s death.



Fig. 17: Monument to St. Vladimir near the Kremlin’s Borovitskie Gates, Moscow. © Andrey Zaginaylov / Dreamstime.com

In 2014 the working group, with the addition of representatives from Crimea and from the Russian Military-Historical Society (*Rossiiskoe voenno-istoricheskoe obshchestvo*, RVIO), came up with the idea of a monument. Since its establishment in 2012, the RVIO has become an important mnemonic actor in Russian politics. Created by presidential decree to replicate the Imperial Russian Military-Historical Society (1907–17), it is meant to

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<sup>52</sup> ‘V Smolenske otkryt pamiatnik kniaziu Vladimiru’, *Smolenskaia Gazeta*, 30 August 2015, available at <https://smolgazeta.ru/daylynews/23148-v-smolenske-otkryt-pamyatnik-knyazyu-vladimiru.html> (last visited 24 October 2019).



“consolidate the forces of state and society in the study of the military history of Russia, to promote the study of Russian military history and counter attempts at distortion, ensuring the popularization of the achievements of military-historical scholarship, of patriotism, and of raising the prestige of military service”.<sup>53</sup>

The web site of the RVIO mentions “Monumental Propaganda” among its main activities, and indeed, since 2012, the Society has erected more than 250 monuments in Russia and abroad.<sup>54</sup>

Headed by the notoriously conservative minister of culture Vladimir Medinskii, the Society includes top-level officials, businessmen, and prominent representatives of the cultural elite loyal to Putin. According to Russian media, the idea of a St. Vladimir monument in Moscow was put forward by an initiative group including such notorious figures as the leader of the Night Wolves Motorcycle Club, Aleksandr Zaldostanov, and Archimandrite Tikhon (Shevkunov), rumoured to be Putin’s confessor. The latter headed the commission which selected the winning project.

The winner came as no surprise – Salavat Shcherbakov (born 1955) has already created several politically significant projects such as the monument to Pëtr Stolypin inaugurated in the presence of Putin and Medvedev in 2012. The project was under the personal control of Putin, who likes to see himself as a successor of the reform-minded imperial Russian minister. According to media sources, Shcherbakov, due to his good contacts with Vladimir Medinskii and to the influential conservative artist Il’ia Glazunov, was entrusted with a leading role in implementing the “Monumental Propaganda” programme of the Russian Military-Historical Society.<sup>55</sup>

Shcherbakov, who started his career as a non-conformist avantgarde sculptor, thus turned to a historicist style which suits the taste of Putin’s elite. Even more prolific than the notorious Zurab Tsereteli, Shcherbakov has meanwhile been commissioned to create such politically important monuments in central Moscow as the statue of Tsar Alexander I, the monument to the inventor of the legendary Soviet machine gun Mikhail

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<sup>53</sup> See the RVIO website: <https://rvio.histrf.ru/officially/ukaz-1710> (last visited 22 July 2020).

<sup>54</sup> RVIO website, <https://rvio.histrf.ru/activities/monumentalnaya-propaganda> (last visited 22 July 2020).

<sup>55</sup> Kseniia Leonova. ‘Uchenik avangardista, liubimchik ministra. Kak byvshii nonkonformist Salavat Shcherbakov stal glavnyim ofitsial’nym skul’ptorom Rossii’, *Meduza*, 20 December 2017, available at <https://meduza.io/feature/2017/12/20/uchenik-avangardista-liubimchik-ministra> (last visited 24 October 2019).

Kalashnikov, and the statue of Patriarch Germogen (presumably born 1530, died 1612) who inspired the popular uprising against the Poles which put an end to the Time of Troubles (in Russian *Smuta*).

Plans for the monument to St. Vladimir caused lively public debate. One of the reasons was the controversy over the location: the original site envisaged by those who had initiated the idea was the observation platform near Moscow State University (MGU) at Vorob'ëvy Gory (Sparrow Hills), a hill on the right bank of the Moskva River and one of the highest points in the Russian capital. This location would have made an implicit reference to the original St. Vladimir in Kyïv. The inhabitants of the Ramenki District as well as professors and students from MGU protested against the project, referring to security risks (landslide) and the protection of the architectural heritage. While the city of Moscow had nevertheless approved the plan, despite the fact that its implementation promised to be technically too complicated and therefore rather expensive, the initiators – from the Russian Military-Historical Society – suggested an alternative, no less prominent location – in the heart of Moscow, near the Borovitskie Gates of the Kremlin.<sup>56</sup> It was at this site that the monument was then erected and finally inaugurated on the Day of People's Unity on 4 November 2016, in presence of President Putin and Prime Minister Medvedev, Patriarch Kirill, representatives of other confessions, the Minister of Culture and Head of the RVIO, Medinskiï, the Mayor of Moscow, Sobianin, and other symbolic individuals such as the widow of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. The inauguration ceremony of the 17.5 m statue<sup>57</sup> on the 'Day of People's Unity' was supposed to demonstrate the political consolidation of the Russian people around its leadership, interconfessional harmony, and the unity of the state with the Russian Orthodox Church. St. Vladimir is the best suited for this package of political purposes – according to Putin's speech he is "our outstanding ancestor, a particularly revered saint, statesman and warrior, and the spiritual founder of the Russian state".<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> 'RVIO prosit izmenit' mesto ustanovki pamiatnika kniazia Vladimiru', 9 June 2015, available at <https://www.colta.ru/news/7597-rvio-prosit-izmenit-mesto-ustanovki-pamyatnika-knyazyu-vladimiru> (last visited 24 October 2019).

<sup>57</sup> The planned monument on Vorob'ëvy Gory was supposed to be 24 meter high – this would make it the highest Vladimir in the world. The monument installed on Borovitskiï Square is lower than the monument in Kyïv, but the statue itself, without the plinth, is the biggest among all other Vladimirs.

<sup>58</sup> RVIO website, <https://rvio.histrf.ru/activities/monumentalnaya-propaganda/monument-96> (last visited 22 July 2020).

The meaning of the new monument was of course inscribed into the political discourse of post-Crimean Russia. According to Russian historian Nikolai Svanidze, Putin wanted to draw a parallel between Prince Vladimir and himself:

“Prince Vladimir was baptized in Crimea, and Putin ‘returned’ Crimea to Russia. This parallel should raise Putin’s role in the eyes of his contemporaries and ancestors, and sanctify the re-joining of Crimea to Russia.”

Political scientist Aleksei Makarkin also saw the celebrations as an additional legitimization of Crimea’s return to Russia as it sacralized this place which had played such an important role in the Christianization of Russia:

“Prince Vladimir is a consensus figure for both the state and the church. He is considered the great prince who stopped internal conflicts and strengthened the state, and at the same time one of the most revered saints.”<sup>59</sup>

As underscored by the Ukrainian Harvard historian Serhii Plokhy, “more than anything else the monument symbolizes the Russian claim for Kyivan heritage and underlines the importance of Kyivan Rus’ for the historical identity of contemporary Russia”.<sup>60</sup> The message of the St. Vladimir statue, according to the *Kyiv Post*,

“is consistent with the propaganda narrative that the Kremlin has maintained since it annexed Crimea and launched its war on Ukraine in the Donbas in 2014 – the people of Ukraine and Russia are ‘one people’ (a phrase Putin has used many times) and so Ukraine is not really an independent, sovereign state, but an unruly lost province temporarily out of Moscow’s direct control”.<sup>61</sup>

It is this aspect of the new St. Vladimir monument in Moscow which caused most resonance in Ukraine where it was perceived as an attempt to steal Ukrainian history.<sup>62</sup> President Poroshenko, at the inauguration of

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<sup>59</sup> Both citations from: ‘Kniazii ot presidenta’ (see note 1).

<sup>60</sup> Plokhy, *Lost Kingdom* (see note 1), VIII.

<sup>61</sup> Euan MacDonald, ‘Honest History 1: How Kremlin Falsifies History of Kyivan Rus to Undermine Ukrainian Statehood’, *Kyiv Post*, 2 March 2018, available <https://www.kyivpost.com/ukraine-politics/honest-history-episode-1-kremlin-uses-history-kyivan-rus-distort-past-undermine-ukrainian-statehood.html?cn-reloaded=1> (last visited 24 October 2019).

<sup>62</sup> Vasyli Iavir, ‘Volodymyr Sviatyi: Chyikh budesh?’, *Commons*, 23 January 2017, available at <https://commons.com.ua/uk/volodymyr-svyatij-chih-budesh-chastina-1-aktsiya/>; <https://commons.com.ua/uk/volodymyr-svyatij-chih-budesh-chastina-2-reaktsiya/> (last visited 24 October 2019).

the monument to the Ukrainian philosopher Hryhorii Skovoroda in Ljubljana, mentioned “another monument”:

“In the Kremlin near the unburied Vladimir Lenin they inaugurated a monument to our Kyïvan Prince Volodymyr. This is one more attempt at the hybrid appropriation of history.”<sup>63</sup>

The Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) tweeted on 4 November 2016:

“Don’t forget what the real Prince Volodymyr monument looks like. Kyïv brought Orthodox Christianity to the Rus. Kind reminder to @Russia.”<sup>64</sup>

The Russian MFA tweeted back:

“Kind reminder to @Ukraine: Prince Vladimir / Volodymyr united our people through Orthodoxy while you’re abusing it spreading hatred among us.”<sup>65</sup>

Ukrainian social media responded with memes about Prince Volodymyr being lost in Moscow, a city founded more than a century after his death; others joked that after Volodymyr, one could expect other monuments to prominent Ukrainians – Ivan Mazepa or even Stepan Bandera – to emerge in the Russian capital.<sup>66</sup>

While Ukrainian officials and media keep insisting on the authenticity and singularity of Kyïv’s St. Volodymyr, another monument to Volodymyr outside Ukraine was erected in the Polish city of Gdańsk in 2015 (fig. 18). It was initiated by a local Greek Catholic priest and made by the Ukrainian-Polish sculptor Giennadij Jerszow, known for his statues of Taras Shevchenko, Ivan Mazepa, the composer Frédéric Chopin, and the former Polish President Lech Wałęsa. Erected near the local Greek Catho-

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<sup>63</sup> ‘Poroshenko nazvav vidkryttia pam’iatnyka kniazia Volodymyru v Moskvi sproboiu hibrydnogo pryvlasnennia istorii’, *UNIAN*, 8 November 2016, available at <https://www.unian.ua/society/1612661-poroshenko-nazvav-vidkryttia-pamyatnika-knyazyu-volodimiru-v-moskvi-sproboiu-gibridnogo-privlasnennya-istoriji.html> (last visited 24 October 2019).

<sup>64</sup> Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Twitter (@Ukraine), 4 November 2016, 11:37 a.m., available at <https://twitter.com/ukraine/status/794488777838305281?lang=de> (last visited 3 August 2020).

<sup>65</sup> Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Twitter (@Russia), 5 November 2016, 9:25 a.m., available at <https://twitter.com/russia/status/794817949295144960> (last visited 3 August 2020).

<sup>66</sup> ‘Kniaz’ Volodymyr vzhe v Moskvi, na cherzi Mazepa i Bandera – sotsmerezhi’, *Radio Svoboda*, 4 November 2016, available at <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/28097586.html> (last visited 24 October 2019).

lic Church, the monument, according to the Bishop of the Eparchy of Wrocław–Gdańsk, Włodzimierz Juszczak, is meant to appeal to all Ukrainians living in Poland and remind them of their roots. He emphasized the symbolic meaning of the monument for the Ukrainians scattered over Poland by Operation Vistula, as well as for the labour migrants and refugees fleeing the war in Ukraine.<sup>67</sup>



Fig. 18: Inauguration of the statue of St. Volodymyr in Gdańsk, Poland, 23 May 2015. © Grzegorz Spodarek / Nasz Wybór, available at <https://naszwybir.pl/u-gdansku-vidkrito-pam-yatnik-knyazyu-volodimiru/> (last visited 11 August 2020), photo detail.

Prince Volodymyr (in Polish Włodzimierz) holds a cross in one hand and a church in the other and is thus represented as baptizer rather than warrior. The plinth bears inscriptions in Ukrainian, Polish, English, and German about “St. Vladimir the Great ... Co-Founder of Christian Eu-

<sup>67</sup> Paweł Łoza, ‘U Gdansk’u odkryto pam’iatnyk kniazia Volodymyru’, *Nasz Wybór*, 28 May 2015, available at <https://naszwybir.pl/u-gdansku-vidkrito-pam-yatnik-knyazyu-volodimiru/> (last visited 24 October 2019).

rope". The inauguration was attended by the Mayor of Gdańsk, Paweł Adamowicz, the Marshal of the Polish Senate, Bogdan Borusewicz, the member of the Polish Sejm and head of the Sejm commission on national minorities, the Ukrainian activist Miron Sycz, the Head of the Association of Ukrainians in Poland, Petro Tyma, and representatives of the Ukrainian embassy.

Against the backdrop of the current Polish–Ukrainian ‘memory wars’ and the ongoing conflict in the Donbas the inauguration of the monument to St. Volodymyr symbolized the reconciliation and the unity of Christian East and West and the hope for peace in Ukraine. As both Poles and Ukrainians gathered for the inauguration, the monument proved the ‘openness’ of the Hanseatic city of Gdańsk and some speakers found it telling that Volodymyr who was baptized in Crimea found his place on the Baltic coast. In this way, the title of the report “Volodymyr from Sea to Sea” published in the monthly newsletter of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church in Poland suggested a symbolic geography quite different from the Russian one.<sup>68</sup>

Somewhat different again is the local political context of the newest monument to St. Volodymyr, inaugurated in the Ukrainian industrial city of Kryvyi Rih (Dnipro Oblast’) in September 2018, on the occasion of the 1030<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Christianization of Rus’. According to local media, the monument was created on the initiative and with the personal support of the Mayor, Iuriï Vilkul. A member of the Oppositional Block and before that of the Party of Regions, Vilkul won the mayoral elections 2015 in a hard-fought competition with a candidate from the Samopomich Party: the results were contested but Vilkul was able to repeat his success in the 2016 snap election.

In his speech at the inauguration of the monument the mayor stressed that

“despite the extremely difficult situation in the country, Kryvyi Rih is developing into a comfortable European city. While we modernize our city, we respect and preserve its history, keep our national traditions, and transfer them from generation to generation.”

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<sup>68</sup> Bohdan Tkhir, ‘Volodymyr vid moria do moria’, *Blahovist. Misiachnyk Ukraïns’koi Hreko-Katolyts’koi Tserkvy v Pol’sbchi* XXIV, 6 (294) (2015): 1, 3, 10, available at <http://cerkiew.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/blahowist-2015.06.pdf> (last visited 24 October 2019).

The monument to the great prince, the mayor stated, is “the spiritual and state symbol of Ukraine in Kryvyi Rih”.<sup>69</sup> The statue of St. Vladimir was sponsored by “private business” and erected on the site of the former Soviet monument to the Bolshevik leader Artëm, which in 2015 had fallen victim to Ukraine’s decommunization policy. Thus, Prince Volodymyr came to fill the gap (and the empty plinth) left by revolutionary symbolic politics. Bearing in mind the recent ideological polarization in the country this was obviously the best choice from the perspective of a mayor in charge of a big, largely Russian speaking Ukrainian industrial city in the South: a historical symbol which is patriotic enough, but not nationalist, and refers to national traditions, to Europe and to Orthodox Christianity simultaneously. References to Russia were strikingly absent – the monument and the event were Ukraine-centric. Rather, the media emphasized the size of the monument: with a height of 22 meters it was claimed to be the highest not only in Ukraine but in all Europe.

### Conclusion

Grand Prince Volodymyr / Vladimir is a key historical symbol for both Ukraine and Russia because he marks the origins of statehood and cultural identity of both nations. The meaning of this symbol has been, however, fluid and ambivalent. St. Volodymyr / St. Vladimir and his monuments can be interpreted in a number of historically and politically changing contexts: Russian imperial control over Right Bank Ukraine, Ukrainian–Russian ‘brotherhood’, the revival of the Orthodox Church after the collapse of Communism, post-Soviet nation building, decommunization of the urban landscape, and the current Ukrainian–Russian culture wars.

The proliferation of monuments to him in the post-Soviet era must be seen against the background of the nationalization of history and myth-making in Ukraine and Russia, who both lay claims to Kyivan Rus’. For contemporary Russia, St. Vladimir is at the origins of a ‘thousand-year-old great Russian state’ and a unique Orthodox civilization; for Ukraine, St. Volodymyr is proof of Ukraine’s separate historical identity and

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<sup>69</sup> ‘V Krivom Roge otkryt samyi vysokiï v Evrope pamiatnik Vladimiru Velikomu’, *Krivoï Rog Life*, 27 September 2018, available at <http://krlife.com.ua/news/v-krivom-roge-otkryt-samyi-vysokii-v-evrope-pamyatnik-vladimiru-velikomu-foto> (last visited 24 October 2019).

symbolizes the geopolitical choice in favour of Christian Europe. Most of the monuments to St. Volodymyr / St. Vladimir are, however, local projects motivated by traditionalist cultural politics, local branding, and the development of tourism. They are initiated and supported by a broad coalition of actors, including local authorities, business, historians and journalists, and the Orthodox Church. Often, various church-affiliated conservative groups and 'Orthodox sculptors' are the initiators of such monuments.

While statues of saints and their veneration is not part of the Orthodox canon which focuses instead on icons and frescoes, the legacy of Soviet monumental art, even if not explicitly recognized, has contributed to the invention of a new tradition. Orthodox 'monumental propaganda' integrated into the annual celebration of the Day of the Christianization of Rus' is symptomatic of the post-Soviet Russian state's relationship with the Orthodox Church. In Ukraine, with its more pluralistic confessional landscape, St. Volodymyr often appears as an ecumenical symbol accepted by both the Greek Catholic and the Orthodox Church. The proliferation of St. Vladimir monuments also testifies to the re-bordering of Ukraine and Russia after 1991 and in particular to the painful process of adjusting the imaginary memoryscape of Kyïvan Rus' to Russia's post-Soviet state borders.





PAUL ZALEWSKI / OLEKSANDRA PROVOZIN

## CONSTRUCTION AND DESTRUCTION

### HOW ST. GEORGE'S SQUARE IN L'VIV BECAME A BATTLEFIELD

According to the sociology of urban free spaces, ordinary people are usually not aware of the special historic or artistic value of a particular old park.<sup>1</sup> This kind of indifference applies in particular when it comes to smaller public gardens or squares. But this level of awareness can change in situations when such a public space comes under threat. The case of threat and dispute highlighted here below shows how a social conflict over the 'rewriting of the palimpsest' of the cityscape can contribute to and accelerate the development of civil society (on a local level) and how it can bring scientists as well as laypeople together in their efforts to better understand the historical genesis of the city.

This process is illustrated by the example of the plan for the radical transformation of a small, historical park in the centre of L'viv, which was to involve the commemoration of Archbishop Andreï Sheptyts'kyi, a famous figure in local church history. From the very beginning, the plan under discussion for the creation of the monument and the adjoining memorial area proposed mostly destroying the old, landscape-style design of the square. The new monument and the area surrounding it would replace more or less all of the original green space, which had been laid out towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The dispute over the park, accompanied by many different events and interventions, became the top theme in local media reporting in L'viv in 2015. The situation seems to be symptomatic of identity struggles in Eastern Europe today and of the rebalancing of the role of the Church in societies throughout the region.

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<sup>1</sup> Wulf Tessin, *Freiraum und Verhalten* (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2011), 158.

However, before taking a look at the debate itself, let us start with a short historical overview.

### The History of St. George's Square: A Brief Overview

Many of the green spaces in and around the old town of L'viv were created thanks to the activities of planners and municipal garden directors of German origin, Karl Bauer (1818–94) and Arnold Röhring (1840–1913). Bauer created more than 370 and Röhring more than 200 private and public gardens in the landscape style throughout Central Eastern Europe. Röhring's best-known work is Stryśkyi Park in L'viv (formerly known as Park Kilińskiego).<sup>2</sup> The creation of these greenspaces can be considered within the broader framework of the European tendency of beautifying urban environments.

The small St. George's Square (only 1.78 hectares), designed by the municipal garden director Arnold Röhring in 1897, is located in the southwestern part of the city, previously known as the Krakowskie Przedmieście. The square sits in a corner between two characteristic sets of buildings: the larger and more dominant ensemble of the Greek Catholic St. George's Cathedral (1743–72) and the newer and lower-lying group of buildings of the Technical University (built here beginning in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century). The extensive open spaces in this district had previously been used for weekly markets and the so-called St. George's Fairs. The fairs stopped taking place here in 1860, and the area consequently remained in an abandoned state until the 1890s.<sup>3</sup> In the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Röhring started to realize his plan to create a second ring of green spaces around the town centre. The design of St. George's Square was part of this plan. As of 1900, it was one of a chain of green spaces in this district of the city.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> For the current state of knowledge about the work of Röhring, see: *Architectural Studies* 2, 2 (2016). This issue includes the proceedings of a symposium dedicated to the work of Röhring which took place on 19 May 2016 at the L'viv Polytechnic National University.

<sup>3</sup> Halyna Petryshyn, 'The Park in St. Yuri (St. George's) Square – The Jewel in the Emerald Necklace of the City of L'viv', *Technical Transactions: Architecture* 112, 10-A (16) (2015): 12.

<sup>4</sup> Such as the Metropolitan Gardens, the City Garden (Park Kosciuszki), the Garden of the Monastery of the Sacred Heart, and the Garden of the Technical Academy.

The trees chosen for the creation of the square, including beech, black pine, larch, Norway maple, oak, and manna ash, were planted in a picturesque landscape garden style along the pathways and in clusters at various locations in the square. Many descriptions from the period before World War II mention music, because the square was frequently used as a rehearsal space for Polish and Ukrainian choirs.

After the war, the city experienced hard times and a massive turnover of population due to the forced resettlement of many former Polish residents. It is therefore appropriate to speak of a political, cultural, and economic reconfiguration of society, with a range of typical consequences for residents' identification with the cityscape. At that time, green spaces in general and the small St. George's Square in particular did not figure largely in the considerations of politicians or society. However, thanks to their new 'importance for the working class', the parks were enhanced and equipped with a few playgrounds. The last major improvement of greenspace in the city took place in the 1970s and 1980s. Afterwards, there was creeping neglect, documented in some inventory work done during the 1990s. Interestingly, although St. George's Square is located in the buffer zone of the World Heritage Area comprising the Old Town and St. George's Hill, it is slightly too small to be protected by law as a monument of landscape art. According to "The Law of Ukraine on the Protection of Cultural Heritage" of 8 June 2000, only sites with an area of over two hectares can claim protected status.<sup>5</sup> St. George's Square, unfortunately, has an area of less than this minimum size.

### The Monument Competition (and the Chronology of the Dispute)

With the beginning of the independence of the Ukrainian state, the need arose in L'viv to commemorate various outstanding figures of great significance in the history and culture of the Ukrainian nation. One of these important figures was a former Archbishop of L'viv, Andreï Sheptyts'kyï (1865–1944). Born into a Polonized aristocratic family near L'viv, he studied at the universities of Warsaw and Cracow and received doctoral degrees in law and theology. He was only thirty-six when Kaiser Franz Joseph and Pope Leo XIII appointed him as Metropolitan Archbishop of L'viv. Sheptyts'kyï is known above all as the founder of a hospital, the National Museum, and the Theological Academy (today the Ukrainian

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<sup>5</sup> Petryshyn, 'The Park' (see note 3), 13.

Catholic University in L'viv). Sheptyts'kyi, without any doubt an outstanding personality, can be described as a man dedicated to ecumenism and to achieving equilibrium between the various ethnic and religious groups in Ukraine.<sup>6</sup> Although the idea of commemorating him with a monument arose soon after the Declaration of Independence (1991), there was no further progress concerning the idea over the twenty years that followed. A few years ago, the Church finally decided to commemorate his 150<sup>th</sup> birthday (29 July 2015) with the creation of a monument next to the Cathedral where he was buried. A national competition was organized in 2010 but it brought no satisfactory results. The problem with the competition tender was that "urban limits for the installation of the monument were not clearly defined".<sup>7</sup> No first prize was awarded. The two teams who won second prize were asked to make various amendments to their designs. The commission in charge of the competition selected Ukrdesign-group to prepare the design. The vision proposed by this group included the reconstruction of a missing historic statue of Sheptyts'kyi. The reconstructed sculpture and, next to it, parking for forty-seven cars (sic!) on an extensively paved area were to be situated along the existing street between the Cathedral ensemble and St. George's Square. This plan gave rise to the need to move the highway and reorient the overall traffic flow. A four-lane road was subsequently planned, to run next to the building housing the L'viv Polytechnic library (fig. 1, top).

The first thing one notices is that these changes would result in the loss of many old trees and of the original historic landscape design. The persistence with which the municipal council defended the project seems incomprehensible since seven other planning proposals which did not involve cutting down so many trees also emerged from the competition. But they were not recognized or accepted by the municipal council.

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<sup>6</sup> His actions during World War II are controversial and, in part, contradictory. Besides his merit in rescuing Jews and his stance against the Holocaust as well as against the brutality of the German occupation, he also accepted the formation of the Ukrainian Division, which was to fight on the German side for a free Ukraine and against the Soviet Union. This position should, however, be understood within the extremely complex context of Ukrainian-Soviet relations during the interwar period. The highly complex and dynamic situation in the Greek Catholic Church in Ukraine is described by Timothy Snyder in *Black Earth: The Holocaust as History and Warning* (London: Bodley Head, 2015). See also: Yad Vashem International School for Holocaust Studies, 'Sheptytsky Andrei', available at [http://www.yadvashem.org/odot\\_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%20206020.pdf](http://www.yadvashem.org/odot_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%20206020.pdf) (last visited 24 April 2019).

<sup>7</sup> For more information pertaining to the competition see Petryshyn, 'The Park' (see note 3), 16.

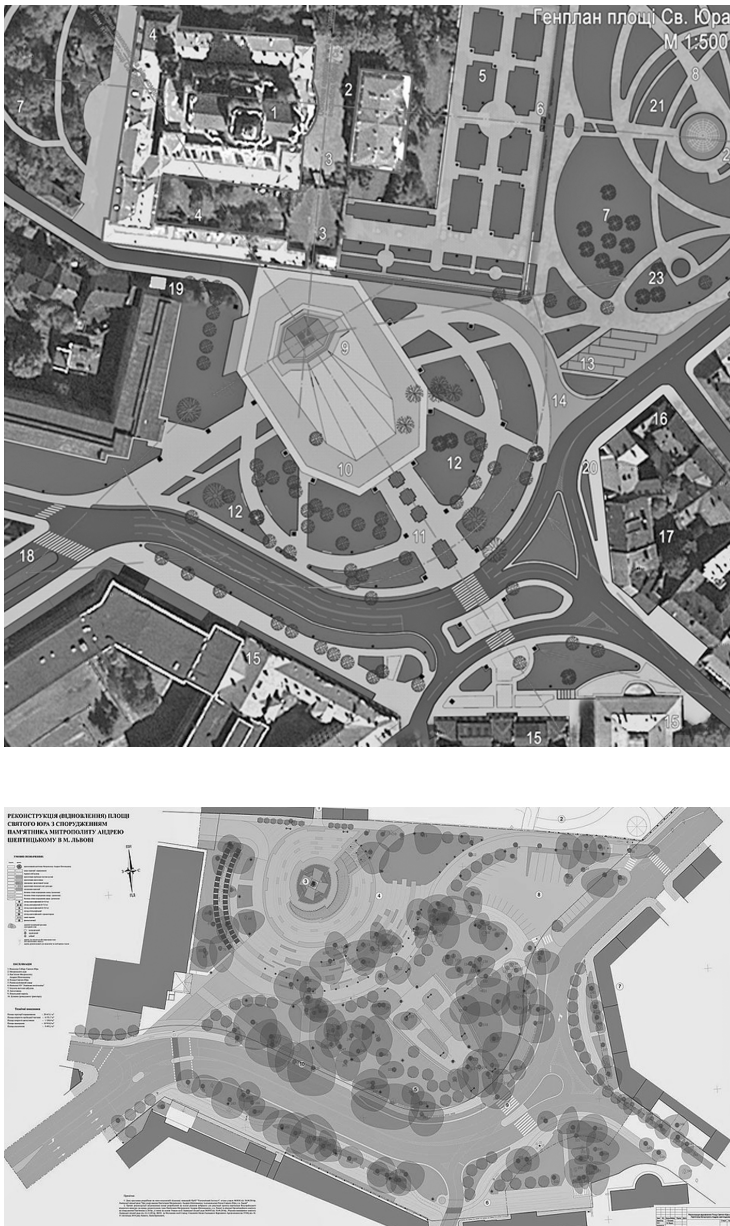


Fig. 1: The first (2014) and second (2015) versions of the ‘reconstruction’ design by Ukrdesigngroup (Ihor Kuz’mak, Mykhailo Fedyk, Mykola Posikira). © Ihor Kuz’mak, Mykhailo Fedyk, Mykola Posikira / The open repository of the ‘Save the Square’ initiative

The plan they chose<sup>8</sup> contained a number of legal contradictions and, above all, involved the destruction of a large part of the small park. Essentially, the design generated objections on two counts. The first comprised conservational and ecological objections; the second focused on the extremely high cost to the local municipal budget and the lack of transparency in the top-down decision-making process.

Let us now take a look at the first set of objections. The professors and scientists in the Departments of Urban Planning and the Department of Architectural Design at L'viv Polytechnic were deeply involved in the debate. Already in 2013, the two departments had invested a lot of energy in producing an inventory and assessment of the state of the trees in the square. The survey had finally concluded that the overall condition of the park was satisfactory.<sup>9</sup> In December 2014, they then published an open letter, including the following passage:

“a comprehensive redevelopment of the area is proposed, including a change to the direction of traffic flows in the surrounding streets. According to the plan only 20 % of the historic park in St. George's Square is to be preserved, with the rest disappearing under pavement, driveways, and parking spaces ... The proposed plan displays a totalitarian megalomania and runs contrary to historically accepted town planning logic.”<sup>10</sup>

Let us now take a look at the second set of objections, to the decision-making process. While the creation of the Sheptyts'kyi monument was supposed to be financed by the Church itself as well as by private donations, the city offered to cover the cost of the overall remodelling of the site. The costs of this work were ultimately estimated at around 32 million hryvnia, equivalent to more than 1,111,000 euros (a vast amount of money, especially when compared with salaries in Ukraine, which are

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<sup>8</sup> Design from 2014: Myroslava Ivanyk, ‘Pam’iatnyk Sheptyts’komu: velyke ne totozhne velychnomu’, *Zbruc*, 16 December 2014, available at <https://zbruc.eu/node/30590>; design from 2015: ‘Ukhvala L’vivs’koï mis’koï rady...’, available at <http://savesquare.wixsite.com/savesquare/results> (both last visited 24 April 2019). Compare the graphic elaboration: in the first version, the greenery does not play any important role, while in the final version, the greenery does seem to play an important role (despite the massive losses).

<sup>9</sup> Petryshyn, ‘The Park’ (see note 3), 13.

<sup>10</sup> The letter was published on 26 December 2014 on the official website of the Chair for Urban Planning of L'viv Polytechnic, but has subsequently been taken down from the site. The cited section is identical with the contents of the letter. See *ibid.*, 17.

currently effectively shrinking).<sup>11</sup> Many local residents saw the budget as extremely over-inflated.<sup>12</sup> The question ‘How can this be possible in a time of war and political instability?’ therefore seems absolutely justified.<sup>13</sup> A harsh critique of the lack of transparency and of premature decision-making on the part of the L’viv municipality and the accusation that it was ignoring the value and potential of the square came from L’viv’s internationally most recognized NGO Environment, People, Law: “Quick decisions have been taken not out of laziness but out of the desire to solve the issue for somebody’s personal benefit using old Soviet methods...”<sup>14</sup>

The dispute which unfolded involved two groups of actors. On the one hand were the supporters of the plan on L’viv City Council, the Archbishop of L’viv, and the authors of the chosen design project. On the other were the protestors including various non-institutional representatives of L’viv civil society, most of whom could be classified as students, scientists, or intellectuals. The protestors coordinated effectively between themselves and highlighted all the different debates and critical voices on social media. They created two Facebook pages, in 2014 and 2015, one in Ukrainian and the other in English. In this one can see a kind of transparency strategy. The English version in particular was created with the intention of involving foreign publicity and demonstrated a self-awareness of belonging to the broader context of European culture. This wish to appeal to a culturally sensitive audience in Central and Western Europe may – especially in L’viv – seems obvious. But it should also be understood in the context of this very special point in time, the time of the

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<sup>11</sup> Nowadays, average salaries are around 150 euros or a little more. See Andreas Stein, ‘Ukrainische Durchschnittslöhne stiegen im Januar auf 4.362 Hrywnja’, *Ukraine Nachrichten*, 6 March 2016, available at [https://ukraine-nachrichten.de/ukrainische-durchschnittsl%C3%B6hne-stiegen-januar-4-362-hrywnja\\_4389](https://ukraine-nachrichten.de/ukrainische-durchschnittsl%C3%B6hne-stiegen-januar-4-362-hrywnja_4389) (last visited 24 April 2019).

<sup>12</sup> According to an open letter from the art critic Nataliia Kosmolins’ka (23 March 2015), who compared it with other much lower municipal expenses for culture, estimated at 6.7 million hryvnia. See <https://www.facebook.com/SaveYurisPark/posts/804941766258796> (last visited 26 July 2017, currently not available).

<sup>13</sup> We should bear in mind that the debate in L’viv unfolded only about a year-and-a-half after the downfall of the Yanukovych government (22 February 2014).

<sup>14</sup> For a long list of detailed critical arguments pertaining to the procedures and bills see: Environment, People, Law (EPL), ‘St. George Square Park – The Place for Making Money and the Place for Manipulation with Community or Wise Administration of Municipal Space?’, 28 February 2016, available at <http://epl.org.ua/en/environment/skver-sviatoho-yura-mistse-dlia-zarobitkiv-ta-maidanchyk-dlia-manipuliatsii-hromadoi-uchy-rozumne-upravlinnia-miskym-prostorom-2/> (last visited 24 April 2019).



## ЧИМ БЕЗГЛУЗДЕ ПЕРЕНЕСЕННЯ ДОРОГИ?

понад **30(!) млн. грн.**  
з міського бюджету розвитку  
марнуються на проект  
що нічого суттєво не  
покрощує у місті

нищиться сквер,  
що має історичну,  
художню та  
екологічну  
цінність

майбутнє твориться  
коштом минулого,  
без поваги до  
культурної  
спадщини

зрізаються рідкісні  
дорослі дерева, що  
перебувають у доброму стані



I WIN, you LOSE



закладається прецедент  
перекроювання громадського  
простору на догоду одній  
із сторін без врахування  
потреб інших  
користувачів

погіршуються умови  
навчання студентів  
НУ «АП»

основні щоденні користувачі  
скверу: студенти НУ «АП»  
відрізаються від нього  
магістральною дорогою

ремонтні роботи  
порушують сформовану  
екосистему скверу, зруйнують  
острівцеві біорізноманіття у місті



Fig. 2: A poster with a simple explanation of the losses and consequences of the transformation of the square and the 'Save' activists during their protest at the site, Kyiv, 22 June 2015. © Andrii Beliaev (top), Iryna Yaniv (bottom).

Euromaidan in Kyiv, as well as characterizing the self-definition of young, well-educated individuals in western Ukraine.

Over only a few days, the Facebook ‘Save the Square’ page, created on 4 March 2015, attracted more than 2,500 members and became the main platform for all the news about the protest and the City Council’s responses to it. The ‘Save’ activists emphasized their respect and support for the idea of the Sheptyts’kyi Monument, but they also commented that the erection of the monument should not take place at the cost of the extensive destruction of historic greenspace (fig. 2, top<sup>15</sup>). They also called on the City Council to justify the cost of such an expensive project. Many activists voted for siting the monument in the middle of the existing green square (fig. 3). In this vision, the monument would remain in harmony with the park – a park constructed during Sheptyts’kyi’s own lifetime! By this logic, the green environment should be regarded as the peaceful contemporary of the great archbishop. This led to alternative studies concerning the possible location of the monument, which became a topic of discussion in spring 2015.

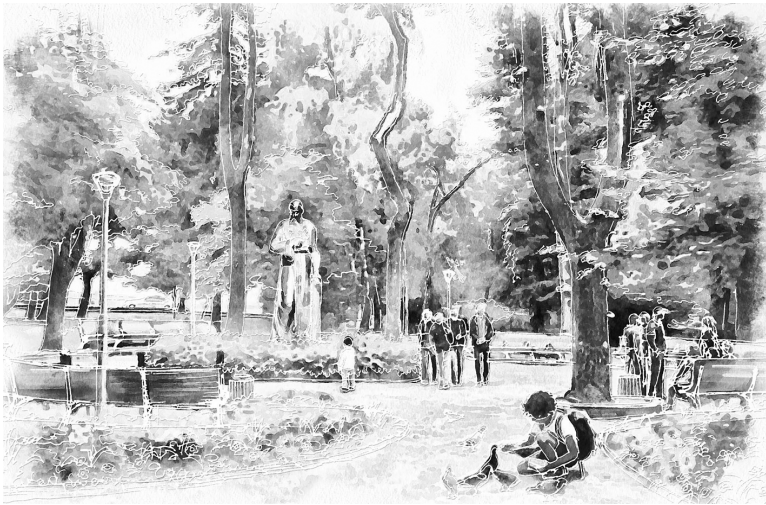


Fig. 3: A sketch which circulated among the ‘Save’ activists. © Andrii Bieliaiev

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<sup>15</sup> Both pictures can be seen at <https://www.facebook.com/savesquare/> (last visited 24 April 2019).

It depicts an alternative placement of the monument, without extensive destruction of the layout of the historic square and the established greenery. While the vision of the municipal planners (fig. 1 above) tries to impress with grandiose overviews and panoramas and ignores the perspective of pedestrians, the sketches of the 'Save' activists concentrate above all on envisioning pedestrian, ground-level perspective.<sup>16</sup>

By comparing the discourse and in particular the positions shown in the visual presentations by the two sides in the dispute (compare fig. 1 and 3), we can conclude the following: the plans and pictures reveal completely contradictory aesthetic concepts and different approaches to cultural capital on each side. Whereas the Church and the city authorities still employed a style of concrete, stone, and a large-scale, empty space with a monument in the middle, the other side associated precisely this style and this materiality with the artificial production of memorial spaces during the socialist period. The historic park landscape and old trees, in contrast, would provide a bridge to the older, 'European' past of the city. The high frequency of visitors to the 'Save the Square' page confirmed the popularity of several actions on the actual site of the Square (fig. 2, bottom). The most popular of these were the Picnics in the Park, the first of which took place on 5 March 2015. The dynamic development of the debate on the Facebook page also attracted the attention of other, 'official' media.<sup>17</sup>

The first mobilization and demonstration of the square preservationists in March 2015 seemed to be a success, but was by no means relaxed. The protests provoked many nervous reactions, especially from the Greek Catholic Church (including some statements by the Archbishop of L'viv<sup>18</sup>) and other 'patriotic' circles, making harsh insinuations about the protestors. It was suggested that they were "an arm of the

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<sup>16</sup> See <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=787015581386295&set=a.280257952062063.69770.100002335828349&type=3&theater> (last visited 24 April 2019).

<sup>17</sup> Local web-based media such as *Tvoiemisto* and *ZIK* frequently provided information about the protests on the square at the beginning of March 2015.

<sup>18</sup> Bishop Liubomyr Huzar defended the idea of the monument by more or less suggesting that the protestors were on the way to cleaving the national unity which was so necessary in these difficult times. See 'Address of His Beatitude Lubomyr to the People of L'viv Regarding the Construction of a Monument to Metropolitan Andrei', Information resource of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, 13 March 2015, available at [http://news.ugcc.ua/documents/zvernennya\\_blazhenn%D1%96shogo\\_lyubomira\\_do\\_lv%D1%96vyan\\_shchodo\\_sporudzhennya\\_pamyatnika\\_mitropolita\\_andreya\\_73238.html](http://news.ugcc.ua/documents/zvernennya_blazhenn%D1%96shogo_lyubomira_do_lv%D1%96vyan_shchodo_sporudzhennya_pamyatnika_mitropolita_andreya_73238.html) (last visited 24 April 2019).

Kremlin” or a “fifth column”.<sup>19</sup> But the initial result of the protest nevertheless proved positive: it brought about the first roundtable meeting (12 March 2015) and the establishment of a working group including representatives from both sides. Unfortunately, after a period of time, the representatives of the Church resigned from the working group and thereby effectively prevented it from functioning further.

The second peak in the activities of the ‘Save’ community took place in the middle of June 2015, provoked by the felling of many trees on the square. The ‘Save’ activists demonstrated on these days in two places, on the square itself and in front of the City Hall. But despite these protests, the statue of Sheptyts’kyi was erected next to the entrance to the Cathedral in July and the surrounding section of the square was paved. This meant that the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Archbishop’s birthday could be celebrated and the memorial site opened to the public on 29 July 2015.

Because the predicted extensive destruction had not yet taken place, discussion of an alternative design for the whole square continued. In the last few days of August 2015, a commission was convened, including independent, and some international, experts from various fields. The commission recommended preserving the authenticity of the site and maintaining a balance between the different representative and recreational expectations of all the stakeholders affected, and proposed a ‘shared space’ concept for the surrounding traffic flows.<sup>20</sup>

The planning company in charge, Ukrdesigngroup, was subsequently commissioned to modernize its existing design, narrowing the road on the edge of the square from four to two lanes of traffic (fig. 1, bottom). In this way, the previously predicted losses in the park would also be somewhat reduced. According to various sources, the previously plan would have caused the loss of thirty per cent of the trees in the park. After the expert commission gave its recommendations, this loss was reduced to ten per cent.

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<sup>19</sup> Facebook post by the art critic Nataliia Kosmolins’ka from 23 March 2015, <https://www.facebook.com/SaveYurisPark/posts/804941766258796> (last visited 30 August 2017, currently not available).

<sup>20</sup> In short: the term ‘shared space’ describes a street space in a city where the divisions between pedestrians and car-traffic are radically reduced, see Aut Karndacharuk, Douglas Wilson, and Roger Dunn, ‘A Review of the Evolution of Shared (Street) Space Concepts in Urban Environments’, *Transport Reviews* 34, 2 (2014): 190–220.

This nevertheless only represented a tentative end to the dispute about St. George's Square.<sup>21</sup> The destruction of the historic structures could not be completely stopped. Now, although works at the square have ceased in the meantime, the activists are still in touch with each other. They use the Facebook page to comment on other developments concerning public space in L'viv and elsewhere.

## Conclusions

What might one learn from the case of St. George's Square? First of all: the story provides a good illustration of Laurajane Smith's statement that "There is no such *thing* as heritage".<sup>22</sup> What Smith means is that heritage is not something that is given, rather that it is a result of ongoing societal discourse about and beyond material artefacts. In this sense, the case of St. George's Square shows the creation of two discursive levels. On the first level, a pragmatically used, unspectacular place becomes an object of controversial debate. This contributed to the dissemination of knowledge about the history of the park design among broader circles of people in L'viv. On the second level, increasing attachment to the park evolved to some degree into a manifestation of not only the aesthetic, but also the political attitudes of the citizens involved. In this way, a piece of city greenspace became a battlefield on which different groups and demographics negotiated their notions about the right content and form of a public space.

Interestingly, when considered from a sociological perspective, this is not self-evident, which means that a brief explanation is necessary. In ordinary situations, the ongoing aesthetic valorization of our surroundings is either strongly reduced or even blended away in everyday life.<sup>23</sup> Georg Simmel, one of the fathers of urban sociology, testified to a loss of visual sensibility among people in big cities.<sup>24</sup> This matters in particular

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<sup>21</sup> There is currently a debate about the extent to which a playground for children should be created on the square – a nice, but also ambivalent idea (because of the further loss of trees). No decision has yet been made.

<sup>22</sup> Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage* (London: Routledge, 2006), 13–14. This statement is, of course, a paraphrase of Margaret Thatcher's famous saying "there is no such thing as society".

<sup>23</sup> Jan Murakovsky, *Kapitel aus der Ästhetik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974), 14.

<sup>24</sup> Georg Simmel, *Die Großstädte und das Geistesleben* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2006), 20. The book was first published in 1903.

with respect to urban green spaces and it can partly be explained by the processes involved in the commoditization and trivialization of nature. As Herbert Marcuse remarked, nature has definitely lost its magical aura since being reduced to a frame for various trivial uses in the era of the Anthropocene (countless motorboats on lakes or countless planes between the clouds degrade the magical value of these two natural surroundings).<sup>25</sup> There are also empirical confirmations that our perception of greenspace in the familiar urban context of everyday life is generally severely reduced. This is because consciously observing and enjoying nature is usually associated with the reference frame of leisure.<sup>26</sup> It means that the majority of city dwellers enjoy green spaces more consciously during a holiday journey. But when the same people are asked to describe a park in their everyday living environment, they use rather general or trivial terms such as 'lovely' or 'relaxing'.

On the other hand, green spaces in the city to some extent symbolize persistence and timelessness. The plants convey neither their precise age or any expectations of the future, nor any purpose, reason, or values. Simply through existing in the world, they express another one of its ambiguous dimensions.<sup>27</sup> They symbolize a sort of escapism, and this makes them into an object of more or less conscious nostalgia.<sup>28</sup> But our need to defend this ephemeral nostalgia first has to be awakened by something unusual. In the case of L'viv, activating this need and enhancing the perception of city inhabitants as well as integrating this unspectacular square into their mental space can be considered an achievement. This matters in particular for the younger generation, who are normally not the most enthusiastic of park visitors.

On the contrary, young people often see themselves as representatives of a counterculture,<sup>29</sup> preferring to spend time together in more disharmonious environments such as post-industrial spaces.<sup>30</sup> The disharmonious character of the St. George's Square dispute consequently played an im-

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<sup>25</sup> Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man* (Boston: Beacon, 1964), 66.

<sup>26</sup> Wulf Tessin, *Ästhetik des Angenehmen* (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2008). Here, especially the chapter 'Einführung in die Rezeptionsästhetik', 12–33.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>28</sup> Anna Chiesura, 'The Role of the Urban Parks for the Sustainable City', *Landscape and Urban Planning* 68, 1 (2004): 129–38.

<sup>29</sup> Gerhard Schultze, *Die Erlebnisgesellschaft: Kultursoziologie der Gegenwart* (Frankfurt am Main, New York: Campus, 1997).

<sup>30</sup> Tessin, *Ästhetik* (as in note 26), 77–85.



portant role in attracting the involvement of young people. It was provoked by the less than transparent competition procedures as well as, to a greater extent, by the desire on the part of the City Council radically to transform the location based on the winning design.

One impetus for the quick and large-scale response to the changes in the park was related to the presence of the nearby Polytechnic. The main library of L'viv Polytechnic is located directly on the square, which explains the strong presence of students and scientists among the protestors. The extensive planned destruction of the square to make way for a four-lane road would have resulted in a loss of recreational options for users of the university library.

The mobilization in this instance can therefore partly be understood as a defensive action against the reduction of the quality of life of this academic community. This reasoning is borne out by the various protest actions jointly organized by students and their teachers.<sup>31</sup> The Polytechnic community could be called a kind of "trust network",<sup>32</sup> a group of people with similar ties and values capable of mobilizing its particular resources in 'dangerous' situations. In the case of St. George's Square, this network did not develop primarily on the basis of family, ethnicity, or nation (although most of the protestors were young Ukrainians), but instead thanks to a knowledge-based pride in the city's heritage. The participation of academic experts against the municipality in particular should be appreciated as a courageous act of resistance, since they directly or indirectly depend on cooperation with the municipal administration.

The municipality's decision-making process was clearly perceived by academic experts in landscape conservation as an affront, as a lack of consideration of the essential issues, and hence as a kind of lack of appreciation of the general contribution of academic research. The German conflict theorist Axel Honneth has provided a theoretical model for this kind of interaction between ignored people and ignorant people.<sup>33</sup> According to him, what lies behind social conflicts and protests is not only aspirations to power or to material goods.

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<sup>31</sup> The organization of an international conference devoted to the oeuvre of Arnold Röhrling on 19 May 2016 (see note 2) can be regarded as an indirect result of the increased interest in green spaces in L'viv.

<sup>32</sup> Charles Tilly, *Trust and Rule* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

<sup>33</sup> Axel Honneth, *Kampf um Anerkennung: Zur moralischen Grammatik sozialer Konflikte* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1992).

One of the basic reasons for such conflicts is also a lack of appreciation. He developed his theory based on the thesis that people generate self-acceptance only through reciprocal, intersubjective relations. They want to be seen not only as creatures with specific needs and want to be accepted not only as equals in society. They want to be appreciated as unique and important contributors as well.

The students involved in the dispute as ‘Save’ activists emphasized the unlawful procedures used by the municipal council on many of their banners. The banner photographed most frequently during protest actions at the site stated: “We are for the monument to Sheptyts’kyi and for the improvement of this historic square but we are against the unnecessary relocation of traffic and against the waste of municipal funds”. At the same time, this claim and other arguments of the ‘Save’ activists<sup>34</sup> were motivated not only by frustration about the square. Frustration about the dichotomy in power relations between those who already have power and those who wish to improve their opportunities for the future was an issue as well. We therefore recognize the typical matrix of a modern social conflict<sup>35</sup> and the reason why the activists found so many supporters outside academia as well.

Moreover, the opposition between the two sides in the dispute was characterized by another interesting contradiction. To use the words of Bourdieu, there is a “habitual” difference (or distinction) concerning aesthetic concepts about monuments in the public space. In their critique, the environmentally-conscious activists and protestors linked opaque procedures from Soviet times<sup>36</sup> with a somewhat negative view of the form the new memorial site would take. The “legacy of social realism” becomes visible again and again, writes Nataliia Kosmolins’ka, the art

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<sup>34</sup> As found, for example, in the notice on the English language version of the Facebook page: “This page is to inform the international community in English that an ecological and cultural injustice is taking place in a small park in L’viv City in Ukraine”. See [https://www.facebook.com/pg/SaveYurisPark/about/?ref=page\\_internal](https://www.facebook.com/pg/SaveYurisPark/about/?ref=page_internal) (last visited 25 April 2017, currently not available).

<sup>35</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, *Der moderne soziale Konflikt: Essay zur Politik der Freiheit* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1992).

<sup>36</sup> In a long internet article criticizing the procedures of L’viv City Council in connection with St. George’s Square, we read: “it is a pity that, despite its ostensibly pro-European position and openness, L’viv City Council [is] afraid of transparently solving problems which have not been thoroughly analyzed. Quick decisions are made not because of laziness, but because of the desire to solve an issue to somebody’s benefit using old Soviet methods”. EPL, ‘St. George’ (see note 14).



critic and author of many publications on the history of L'viv and Galicia as well as editor-in-chief of the art magazine *AZ*.<sup>37</sup> Similar critical opinions voiced by intellectuals – including, among others, Taras Prokhas'ko – can be found on a website along with several documents relating to the various actions involved in the protest.<sup>38</sup>

Moving up the scale of our considerations, we can comment as follows: the case of St. George's Square combines several features characteristic of the development of Eastern European towns and cities during the post-communist transformation period. Throughout Eastern and Central Europe, we see an explosion of investment in modernizing road infrastructure (partly fuelled by EU subsidies) due to residential and commercial suburbanization on the outskirts of cities.<sup>39</sup> Local politics is generally keen to support the modernization of road infrastructure because such investments deliver physical proof of its progress-oriented endeavours. Many of these – partly justifiable – investments are made too quickly and give rise to countless cases of corruption. Such mechanisms as well as various unlawful procedures are easy for journalists to recognize and to disseminate through social networks.<sup>40</sup> This can lead to social protest going far beyond a specific case and even critical of an entire approach to government. We should expect intense pressure on public green areas in all booming cities around the world, but it is only in totalitarian or semi-totalitarian countries that a lack of compromise can turn out to be explo-

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<sup>37</sup> "L'viv has no luck with monuments ... since independence each new one is worse than the previous one. This is a traditional legacy of fifty years of socialist realism – in Ukraine there is no modern school of monumental sculpture, project proponents have no taste, and among those of us who manage urban public space, there is no understanding of its aesthetic and social role. But the stormy conflict which erupted in L'viv in March around the erection of a monument to Metropolitan Sheptyts'kyi showed that the city already has a socially active public ready to change the status quo". Open letter by Nataliia Kosmolins'ka from 23 March 2015, previously available in English on Facebook, still to be read in her blog in Ukrainian. See Nataliia Kosmolins'ka, 'Tubilei Sheptitskogo: test na modernost' ', *Levyi bereg*, 23 March 2015, available at [https://lb.ua/blog/natalja\\_kosmolinska/299548\\_yubiley\\_sheptitskogo\\_test.html](https://lb.ua/blog/natalja_kosmolinska/299548_yubiley_sheptitskogo_test.html) (last visited 24 April 2019).

<sup>38</sup> <http://savesquare.wixsite.com/savesquare/news> (last visited 24 April 2019).

<sup>39</sup> A good description of problems concerning remastering the post-socialist city is provided by F. E. Ian Hamilton, Kaliopa Dimitrovska Andrews, and Nataša Pichler Milanović, eds., *Transformation of Cities in Central and Eastern Europe: Towards Globalization* (Tokyo et al.: United Nations University Press, 2005). In particular the chapter 'Planning and Practices', 173–86.

<sup>40</sup> Marianne Kneuer and Saskia Richter, *Soziale Medien in Protestbewegungen: Neue Wege für Diskurs, Organisation und Empörung?* (Frankfurt am Main, New York: Campus, 2015).

sive (Istanbul, Gezi Park, 2013).<sup>41</sup> Unfortunately, contemporary developments in Poland will provide countless examples of the extensive destruction of green areas in cities and beyond by developers. With this in mind, the case of L'viv presents a model of interaction which not only contributes to the development of social responsibility, but also demonstrates an ability to compromise.

Finally, the large-scale physical implementation of projects involving political symbols and narratives in city centres is characteristic of several countries undergoing political transformation. Traditional, majority churches in particular are very keen on retaining a presence in the public space. It will suffice to take a brief look at the Catholic Church in Poland which has erected countless traditionally-designed monuments to Pope John Paul II. This 'place-making' is, of course, a very old confessional strategy (as can be observed at all sites of pilgrimage since the Middle Ages, etc.). For churches in the countries of Eastern Europe, this is closely connected with compensating for their reduced importance during the long era of Socialism. The Greek Catholic Church generally stays in the shadow of the very successful and fast-growing Ukrainian Orthodox Church, which might explain its determination on the issue of St. George's Square. Its determination might also be understood in the context of the general increase in numbers of Orthodox churches and decrease in numbers of Catholic churches throughout Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>42</sup>

To sum up: in the symbolic sphere alone, the dispute as a whole appears to present paradoxical phenomena mirroring the contradicting ambitions, wishes, and fears which motivate actors either to alter or to preserve a public space. On the one hand, there is the new design of a memorial location, which combines technocratic features with pride in the construction of a symbol of national history. This, however, seems to be possible only at the cost of destroying a historic park which is too neutral to be regarded as the bearer of the symbolic message of the Church. On the other hand, young and mostly well-educated people tried to defend this authentic green space because of their attachment to global

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<sup>41</sup> Lilo Schmitz, 'Die Gezi-Park-Proteste in Istanbul – vom Recht auf Stadt zum Recht auf einen liberalen Staat', *Sozialraum.de* 6, 1 (2014), available at <https://www.sozialraum.de/die-gezi-park-proteste-in-istanbul.php> (last visited 24 April 2019).

<sup>42</sup> See Pew Research Center, 'Religious Belief and National Belonging in Central and Eastern Europe', 10 May 2017, available at <http://www.pewforum.org/2017/05/10/religious-belief-and-national-belonging-in-central-and-eastern-europe/> (last visited 24 April 2019).

visions of the future of cities, in which every green urban square is of inestimable value.

In conclusion, we have just examined how the historic structure in L'viv and a public dispute about it have contributed to an awareness of cultural difference among various social groups and between different generations. This has also created an important momentum with respect to the development of local civil society in the city.

ŽIVILĖ MIKAILIENĖ

## MEMORY CULTURE AND MEMORY POLITICS IN LITHUANIA (1990–2018)

### THE CASE OF LUKIŠKĖS SQUARE IN VILNIUS\*

On 23 August 1991 – Black Ribbon Day, commemorating the anniversary of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact in Vilnius – in one of the largest and most important public squares in the city, known at the time as Lenin Square, the crowd was going wild: the monument to Lenin was being demolished. Although the planned demolition of the monument had not been made public, news had still got round by word of mouth. Taking down the monument could have provoked political unrest, but after the putsch in Moscow on 19 August 1991, fear of the foreign Soviet army still based in Lithuania no longer seemed reasonable. It was hoped that after the putsch in Moscow Soviet army commanders would no longer take extreme action and bloody clashes with unarmed civilians would be avoided. So the road engineers who carried out the operation looped a rope round Lenin's neck: they thought this would make it easier to remove the statue from the pedestal, but while they were dismantling it, it broke at the knees because of the poor quality of the metal. Hanging by the noose, the sculpture of Lenin for the last time waved symbolically to the masses gathered in the square and was loaded onto a truck. These moments were captured by the photographer Antanas Sutkus. For several years the commander of the revolution 'rested' in a Vilnius art workshop until he finally found his place in Grūtas Park near Druskininkai. After the monument had been taken down, the assembled crowds rushed to collect the parts which had broken off during the demolition process. It is

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not known where some parts of the Lenin sculpture disappeared to – the right-hand toe, the loose legs, and parts of the broken pedestal.<sup>1</sup>

This event, which has become part of mythology and marks the end of one historical period and the beginning of another, has become one of the most meaningful symbols of Lithuania's independence. The dramatic removal of the monument to Lenin can be said to have become one of the symbols of the collapse of the Soviet system in Eastern and Central Europe. Soon after, Lukiškės Square got its historical name back and its story was also re-written. The removal of the monument to Lenin – the physical removal of an obvious ideological sign – from one of the most public squares in the capital of Lithuania did not mean that public signs of Soviet ideology, which had been imposed for almost five decades, would suddenly disappear, all the more so since although the monument was dismantled, the Stalinist structure of the square remained unchanged from 1948 until 2017. The complicated relationship with the Soviet past has until now made it difficult to reach certain decisions and achieve a social consensus. Lukiškės Square, as one of the most important *lieux de mémoire*<sup>2</sup> of the capital Vilnius and of Lithuania, remains today a subject of debate, of memory culture, and a barometer of the political and social processes which were used to influence it, used while re-actualizing complex issues: what new historical narrative should be created; which historical events are meant to be forgotten and which are meant to be revived; in the end, how should the square be itself; according to the new narrative, what symbolic value should it carry in terms both of its functional purpose and of its qualities of memorialization? After all, a new visible ideological 'mark' should symbolize a new period in history.

Researchers of memory culture emphasize that a society needs a vibrant culture of memory to remember its past, to comprehend its present,

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<sup>1</sup> The dismantling of the monument to Lenin is figuratively depicted in the recollections of a few contemporaries, see the documentary outline of Lithuanian Radio and Television 'We won: how the knees of Lenin broke', *Penkiolika minučių*, 25 March 2017, available at <https://www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/istorija/mes-nugalejom-kaip-leninokeliai-neatlaikė-582-774154?copied>; also, see 'Kubilius: rugpjūčio 23-ąją reikia prisiminti ir kaip Lenino paminklo nuvertimo dieną', *Alfa.lt*, 23 August 2011, available at <https://www.alfa.lt/straipsnis/12232653/kubilius-rugpjucio-23-aja-reikia-prisiminti-ir-kaip-lenino-paminklo-nuvertimo-diena> (both last visited 23 May 2019).

<sup>2</sup> On the historical, cultural, and urban development of Lukiškės Square, see Eglė Mikalajūnė and Rasa Antanavičiūtė, eds., *Vilniaus paminklai: Kaitos istorija* (Vilnius: Vilniaus dailės akademijos leidykla, 2012); Lina Panavaitė and Saulius Motieka, 'Lukiškių aikštės Vilniuje urbanistinės plėtros evoliucija, pasekmės ir siūlymai', *Acta Academiae Artium Vilnensis*, 76 (2015): 139–45.

and to build a vision of the future. In terms of national movements or processes, therefore, the concept of 'national memory' becomes a particularly important topic, because it includes understanding, a kind of consensus about what we should remember and how. At the same time, we will not find a modern nation which has not experienced internal conflicts and 'memory wars'. National memory is hierarchical, which means that different social groups compete with each other to consolidate their memory in the public space through a hegemonized narrative. In the process of constructing the identity of a modern nation, tools such as the creation of a new historical narrative (the official versions of history presented in school textbooks), changes to the official calendar (new state celebrations, anniversaries), the creation of a new pantheon of heroes and 'martyrs', the remodelling of memorial spaces (new monuments, new *lieux de mémoire*, changes to the urban toponymy), as well as "memory conveyance tools" such as books, movies, and museums, all play a significant integrative role.<sup>3</sup>

In this way, memory policy encompasses many social practices and norms. Memory policy is as inevitable as the politicization of history. Another important aspect, highlighted by Aleksei Miller, is that so-called memory spaces created within a memory policy framework can be 'closed' (closely linked to a certain fixed interpretation of past events or personalities) or 'open' – creating an opportunity for dialogue and various interpretations.<sup>4</sup> These interpretations often cause tensions between different social groups with different conceptions of history, aesthetic tastes, needs, and expectations. The interpretation of these tensions is closely related to discourses of power and dominance. According to the theoretical insights of Michel Foucault, the city is like a battlefield in which different social actors or their groups compete for legitimacy in order to control its system of meanings. One of the most important moments while capturing urban space in both its material and symbolic meaning is the creation of retrospective interpretations of the historic city that essentially reflect not the real events of the past, but create instead a myth of the past. Such myths are about the affirmation of identity and power. A specific feature of memory culture is its institutionalization and ritualization: this type of memory is formed by political regulation. Historical events and images are selected according to their perceived importance to

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<sup>3</sup> Alon Confino, 'Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems and Method', *The American Historical Review* 102, 5 (1997): 1386–1403.

<sup>4</sup> Alexei Miller, 'Russia: Power and History', *Working Papers*, 2 (2010): 14.

the present and the role that is being created for the future. Thus, the management of the discourse of the representation of the past is associated with the maintenance of social order.

The importance of such myths is emphasized in particular in cultural studies of memory,<sup>5</sup> which investigate and explain the phenomenon of how images of the past function in the present. According to Jan Assmann, cultural memory is a system of values expressed through communicative practices and through various forms of actualization or deactivation of the past indicated in collective memory.<sup>6</sup> Cultural memory is formally constructed and communicated through texts, images, rituals, and symbolic coding. Its object is not specific historical events or personalities but memories of them. Pierre Nora's theory highlights the importance of "les lieux de mémoire", revealing how political, ideological, and other factors influence changes in symbols of the past and their visual meanings. *Lieux de mémoire* (places of memory) according to Pierre Nora are perceived as symbolic objects, cultural symbols which create collective associations and have the power to bring together images of collective memory.<sup>7</sup> In terms of the expression of memory culture in the city, the authors indicate one very important aspect, which is that it is closely

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<sup>5</sup> In Lithuania over the last decade studies of memory culture have intensified, see the following publications: Alvydas Nikžentaitis, ed., *Nuo Basanavičiaus, Vytauto Didžiojo iki Molotovo ir Ribbentropo: atminties ir atminimo kultūrų transformacijos XX–XXI amžiuje* (Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos instituto leidykla, 2011); Alfredas Bumblauskas, Šarunas Liekis, and Grigoriū Potashenko, eds., *Naujasis Vilniaus perskaitymas: didieji Lietuvos istoriniai pasakojimai ir daugiakultūris miesto paveldas* (Vilnius: Vilniaus universiteto leidykla, 2009); Alvydas Nikžentaitis, 'Laikinios ir Lietuvos Respublikos sostinių kultūrinės atmintys: lyginamosios analizės bandymas', *Acta humanitarica universitatis Saulensis*, 9 (2009): 235–46; Vasilijus Safronovas, ' "Lietuviškosios" praeities aktualizavimas kaip tapatumo orientacijos raiška pokario Klaipėdoje', *Lietuvos istorijos metraštis*, 2 (2007): 59–84; idem, *Tapatybės ideologijų konkurencija Pietryčių Baltijos jūros regiono mieste: XX amžiaus Klaipėdos atvejo tyrimas (Daktaro disertacija)* (Klaipėda, 2010); Dangiras Mačiulis, 'Kolektyvinė atmintis ir miesto įvaizdis: Šiaulių atvejis', *Acta humanitarica universitatis Saulensis*, 9 (2009): 218–34; Rasa Čepaitienė, 'Sovietinio laikotarpio istorijos ir paveldo įprasminimo problemos Vilniaus mieste', in *Santykis su istorine praeitimi XXI amžiaus Vilniuje*, eds. Alvydas Nikžentaitis and Aivas Ragauskas (Vilnius: LR Seimo leidykla, 2004), 47–59; Rasa Čepaitienė, 'Kolektyvinė atmintis miestovaizdyje (Vilniaus atvejis)', in *Besiformuojantis ir formuojamas kraštovaizdis* (Kaunas: KTU leidykla, 2007), 86–101; Alvydas Nikžentaitis, ed., *Atminties daugiasluoksniškumas: Miestas, valstybė, regionas* (Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos institutas, 2013).

<sup>6</sup> Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka, 'Collective Memory and Cultural Identity', *New German Critique* 22, 65 (1995): 125–33.

<sup>7</sup> Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire', *Representations* 26 (1998): 12.

related to the cultural memory of the dominant community or the dominant historical narrative. This is particularly evident in capital cities. In this case, Vilnius is no exception – cultural memory in the capital is a mirror of the cultural memory of the whole country.<sup>8</sup> All these theoretical insights contribute to a deeper perspective on the question: what role does a particular urban space play in the process of creating national identity by encoding elements of its historical construction or reconstruction?

Not by accident was an analysis of the changes in the memory culture in Lithuania (1990–2018), exemplified by Lukiškės Square, one of the main urban spaces in Vilnius, chosen as the object of research. It represents perfectly both physical changes in the form of urban space in different historical periods and altered semantic content. In other words, the history of Lukiškės Square can be treated much more broadly than just as part of a history of urban development: it also depicts a history of state symbolism. Lukiškės Square, like no other place or monument in Lithuania, is still the subject of stormy debate and arouses the passion of different social groups. At the same time, it perfectly reveals the phenomena which were previously rarely the focus of historical research – historical memory and forms of the expression of the past: representation and power. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to look at the causes and expressions of the conflict encrypted in this space, raising questions about what forms – ideological, architectural, urban, symbolic, or political – they have acquired and are still acquiring, what this says about post-Soviet Lithuanian memory culture and politics, and also to try to understand why there is still no monument in the square which would be meaningful in terms of Lithuanian history.

### Lukiškės Square as a *lieu de mémoire*

Broadly speaking, a public square is a large, empty area which is an architectural and urban feature, part of the structure of a city. In cultural memory studies, the city square is more than just a physically visible structure: it is a place which has symbolic and ideological significance, in other words, a *lieu de mémoire*. What is the history of this *lieu de mémoire* in Vilnius? In the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in the very organically

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<sup>8</sup> Ludwig Steindorff, 'Glavno mesto kot simbol nacionalne države ve vzhodni srednji Evropi', *Zgodovinski Casopis* 54, 1 (2000): 77–87.



developing suburbs of Vilnius – Lukiškės, where there stood one-story wooden houses with gardens, a large square with a marketplace formed. The markets which operated on Pylimo and Tiltos Street were later moved to the marketplace as well. St. George's (Georgijaus, or Jurgio) Avenue (1880) is the main thoroughfare of today's Vilnius New Town (during the Polish period it was called A. Mickevičius Street; during Soviet times it gained the name of Stalin and, later, Lenin Avenue; after independence it was named after Gediminas). In addition to this wide, newly-built street, a large empty space had opened up.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Lukiškės suburbs that stretched to the west of the new avenue and a spacious, undeveloped space in the centre of this area were perceived as territory outside the city boundaries. Due to this remoteness and the other characteristics of this public space, the Vilnius Governor-General Mikhail Murav'ev in 1863 chose the square for the public execution of participants in the 1863 uprising. According to data provided by historians, 21 participants in the uprising – among them the leaders of the uprising in Lithuania, Kostas Kalinauskas and Zigmantas Sierakauskas – were publicly shot or hanged here. Executions taking place in Lukiškės Square were held in the area near the church of the Holy Apostles Jacob and Philip. According to Felix Ackermann, it is then that in the Lukiškės Square and the entry-points to it a “triangle of punishment” was formed by the tsarist authorities: the courthouse building, the public place of execution (the gallows) and the prison (the Lukiškės prison complex was finally completed in 1904).<sup>9</sup>

For a few decades, the square lay far from the city, but during the 19<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> centuries as the city expanded, it grew closer. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, exhibitions of agriculture, circus performances, and film screenings were organized in the square; at the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century, the city theatre opened its doors and performances continued for several years. During the interwar period, when Vilnius was part of the Polish state, there were still markets and fairs on the square, but it was an important moment because the square also became a space for official commemorations and military parades. In 1921, a plate with the inscription “1863” was installed in remembrance of the victims of the uprising. This was the first time that the square had acquired not only the status of a utilitarian space, but also the status of a representative space and a memorial site.

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<sup>9</sup> For more, see Felix Ackermann, ‘Lukiškių kalėjimas kaip XX a. Vilniaus istorijos mikrokosmas’, in *Vietos dvasios beiėškant*, ed. Rasa Čepaitienė (Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos instituto leidykla, 2014), 186–223.

In 1936, the square was named after Józef Piłsudski. After the occupation of Lithuania by the Soviet Union, new plans were drawn up for Soviet Vilnius, under which the square was to become one of the most important public spaces in the city, an area which together with the surrounding buildings would form the so-called ideological knot. The monument to Lenin was erected in the square in 1952 as a modified copy of the monument in Voronezh created by Nikolai Tomsii. The square was laid out according to plans drawn up by the Vilnius City Chief Architect Vladislavas Mikučianis.<sup>10</sup> During the Soviet period in Vilnius, a “knot of symbols” was created, communicating an unambiguous ideological “message” to the public.<sup>11</sup> To achieve this goal, a complex of objects and toponyms – a visual focus (a monument to Lenin, embodying the revolutionary narrative), street names, and the function of nearby buildings (government buildings) – were used. Lenin Square became the symbolic centre of the city, an important representational focus of official Soviet memory culture. Since the beginning of the Soviet period it had been called Soviet Square and retained that name for some years; in 1952 it acquired the name of Lenin Square and became the main place for official Soviet ideological celebrations. During the Soviet era, the “triangle of punishment” formed by the tsarist government still functioned around the square and only the place and methods of execution changed.

During the period when independence was regained and in the first decades afterwards, rejection of Soviet heritage was intense and widespread, as was the destruction of signs of this particular hated foreign identity.<sup>12</sup> After Lukiškės Square had been liberated from its Lenin monument, it became not only one of the first symbolic sites of struggle with Soviet heritage in the Vilnius cityscape and a focus of the ‘re-writing the history’ but also a site of attempts to reconcile the memories of different social groups.

After the dismantling of the monument to Lenin, there were immediately new ideas for ways to use Lukiškės Square. One of the most popular ways to neutralize former Soviet ideological space is by its ‘decontemplation’ and because of that there was a desperate attempt by political forces at that time to replace the old monument with a new one, together

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<sup>10</sup> For more, see the memoirs of Vladislavas Mikučianis: Vladislavas Mikučianis, *Norėjam dirbti Lietuvoje* (Vilnius: Vilniaus dailės akademijos leidykla, 2001).

<sup>11</sup> Rasa Čepaitienė, ‘Interpretuojant daugiakultūrį Vilnių: kontekstai, problemos ir galimybės’, in *Naujasis Vilniaus perskaitymas* (see note 6), 59.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

with the creation of a completely new vision for Lukiškės Square.<sup>13</sup> It was evident that a square with the monument to the commander of the October Revolution standing in the middle of it and constructed according to the main Soviet ideological canons could not be an example for further reconstruction projects of the square that were carried out with the aim of a fundamental transformation of that important city space. In the context of the problematic issue of what this vision for Lukiškės Square should be, we should focus our attention on the preconditions for the formation of cultural memory and on the memory policy implemented in the first decades of Lithuania after independence.

### The Problem of Creating a Historical Narrative in the First Decade After Independence

After 11 March 1990 in the restored state of Lithuania the creation of a unified, coherent historical narrative was a complicated process. Naturally enough the newly-emerging state institutions were not immediately able to propose a memory culture strategy. After the restoration of independence, conventional typology suggests several basic types of historical narrative construction, Marxist, liberal, and national,<sup>14</sup> but we must not forget the resistance of postmodern supporters to these three dominant historical narrative types, creating instead the so-called ‘small’ historical narratives which partly contest the great narrative of history.<sup>15</sup> Political attitudes have also had a major impact on priorities for the selection of multiple narrative elements.

After the collapse of the great Marxist narrative, the ideological vacuum had to be filled quickly with appropriate new content. During the revival period, Lithuania’s right-wing anti-Soviet political forces were of the utmost importance. It was they who established the processes for the formation of a new identity and for seeking its origins in the past. As mentioned above, the focus at first was on Lithuania after the presidency

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<sup>13</sup> Giedrė Jankevičiūtė, ‘Sovietinis paveldas verčių konflikto akivaizdoje’, in *Patogus ir nepatogus paveldas: Mokslinio seminaro-diskusijos medžiaga* (Kaunas: UAB “Arx reklama”, 2016), 38.

<sup>14</sup> For more, see Rasa Čepaitienė, *Laikas ir akmenys: Kultūros paveldo sampratos modernioje Lietuvoje* (Vilnius: LII leidykla, 2005).

<sup>15</sup> Šarūnas Liekis, ‘Žydų paveldo atgaivinimas ir kultūrinė atmintis Vilniuje’, in *Naujasis Vilniaus perskaitymas* (see note 6), 202.

of Antanas Smetona.<sup>16</sup> However, soon the idealization of this period caused not only historians but also parts of the public to realize that, in order to support the democratization of the life of the newly-restored Lithuanian state, Lithuania's 'velvet' authoritarian model was hardly a fitting example.<sup>17</sup> This shift in memory culture was demonstrated in the results of public surveys carried out in 1991 and 1994.<sup>18</sup>

In the first decade of independence, emphasis on the 'national suffering' experienced during the Soviet period was particularly evident in the creation of a larger historical narrative. According to the historian Rasa Čepaitienė, exaggerated victimization and martyrology encouraged pessimism and passivity in society in the face of existing problems, while also preventing an adequate response to other issues or future plans.<sup>19</sup> According to the sociologist Irena Šutinienė, post-totalitarian societies have indeed faced the daunting task of reconciling the memory of various groups to allow them to live together in a society without tension, while creating a common future both for victims of the regime and the former organizers and perpetrators of repression.

In relation to the repression of the past in societal memory and behaviour, the following strategies are seen most frequently: collective amnesia, when the burdensome moments are 'forgotten' and avoided in public memory; the transfer of shared guilt for killings, defeat, and other evils to separate groups of people and the demonization of these groups (for

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<sup>16</sup> As an example could be mentioned the years 1989–90 when the concept of a national school was announced by what at the time was the Ministry of Education of the LSSR. According to Šarūnas Liekis, this concept was based on reform of the education system, which was to change the model of secondary education introduced in the Soviet period and to create a new model based on the creation of fundamentally new content, on reformation of the structure of the education system, and on innovation in tools for learning and pedagogy. This step could be treated as a first attempt publicly to declare that independent Lithuania was the legal successor to inter-war Lithuania. For almost ten years Lithuanian history, as a history of national Lithuanians, played a unifying, consolidating role for the nation in the process of political mobilization. However in the early 1990s, Lithuania's aspirations for the EU and NATO membership led to a decrease in the importance of the popular interwar values – nationalism and monoculturalism – which no longer answered the new challenges of pluralism and multiculturalism. See *ibid.*, 204.

<sup>17</sup> Čepaitienė, *Laikas ir akmenys* (see note 15), 297.

<sup>18</sup> If in 1991 most of the respondents considered the interwar period to be the Lithuanians' 'golden age', in 1994 it became the period after 1988 – Atgimimas, see Irena Šutinienė, 'Tautos praeities interpretacijos ir nacionalizmo ideologija', in *Lietuvos socialinės panoramos kontūrai*, ed. Romualdas Grigas (Vilnius: Lietuvos filosofijos ir sociologijos institutas, 1998), 54–5.

<sup>19</sup> Čepaitienė, *Laikas ir akmenys* (see note 15), 299.

example, ‘the bourgeoisie’, ‘communists’, ‘Nazis’); the relativization of responsibility and suffering (‘everyone who suffered’, ‘all collaborators’, etc.); victimization, as when the victim group or community are still perceived as victims; and the constant discussion and rethinking of memory, called “memory work” by Jürgen Habermas.<sup>20</sup> It is also important to note that the Soviet era is a complicated concept. Even now, it is quite common to interpret many ‘unpleasant’ phenomena today as part of the Soviet legacy, which usually has a negative connotation,<sup>21</sup> and is most often associated with heritage which is dissonant, hard, ‘inconvenient’, or controversial.<sup>22</sup>

### Lukiškės Square – Only Urban or Memorial Space?

In 1995, the first competition for the reconstruction of the square was to be held in two phases. The first phase involved the creation of a purpose for Lukiškės Square and decisions about its future functions, whether representative, memorial, or recreational. In the second phase, it was decided to imbue Lukiškės Square with a new urban quality, to commemorate the history of Lithuania and Vilnius, and to reconstruct it accordingly. Only the first stage of the competition actually took place. Five prize-winning projects offered different visions of the square: to build public and commercial buildings on some parts of the square; to create recreational spaces and memorial zones. Although the second stage of the competition did not take place, a granite plaque with an inscription appeared in one corner of Lukiškės Square that same year: “This square will commemorate the memory of the unknown partisan and fighter for the freedom of Lithuania. 20 May 1995”.

In 1997, a competition was organized for the temporary reconstruction of the square, the aim of which was to redesign the square without imposing any particular memorial emphasis. In 1998, a second competition for the reorganization of the square was announced: it was seen as a kind of intermediate variant until there was a decision on the urban nature of the square – whether representational, memorial, or recreational. Although a

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<sup>20</sup> Irena Šutinienė, ‘Posovietinė dilema’, *Delfi*, 25 January 2005, available at <https://www.delfi.lt/archive/posovietine-dilema.d?id=5917442> (last visited 23 May 2019).

<sup>21</sup> Čepaitienė, *Laikas ir akmenys* (see note 15), 192.

<sup>22</sup> Rasa Čepaitienė, ‘Disonuojantis, erzinantis, nepatogus? Pasmerkųjų politinių režimų palikimas Europoje’, in *Patogus ir nepatogus paveldas* (see note 14), 11.

winner was announced, the project remained unrealized. It should be noted that following the organization of these competitions, the issues of Lukiškės Square as an urban space, of its reconstruction, and of any monument or memorial were somehow separated from each other and consequently, in the absence of an understanding of the square as a single urban, cultural, and historical object, affected by the problems which developed later on.

On 11 February 1999, the Seimas of the Lithuanian Republic adopted a resolution on Lukiškės Square, announcing that it would become the main public commemorative and ceremonial square of the State of Lithuania with a memorial emphasis on struggles for freedom.<sup>23</sup> The purpose of the square was thereby defined as memorial and representative. The square and the buildings surrounding it gradually became memorial structures for struggles for freedom. Already in 1992 in a building near the square, the Museum of the Victims of Genocide opened at the former KGB headquarters (it had formed part of the abovementioned Soviet “triangle of punishment”); next to it, on Victims’ Street, a memorial was built, an altar made of stones brought from elsewhere by freedom fighters or their relatives. In 1998, the surnames of 195 victims of the Bolshevik Terror were engraved (by the sculptor Gitenis Umbrasas) into the foundation of the building housing the Genocide Museum. In 2006, on the initiative of the Brotherhood of the Laptev Sea Deportees a monument to the deportees to Yakutia was erected on Aukų Street (by the sculptor Jonas Jagėla).<sup>24</sup>

The *status quo ante* remained, however, on Lukiškės Square. On 17 October 2000, a law was adopted ‘On Lukiškės Square in Vilnius’, indicating that the government would now be responsible for looking after the square. Then President Valdas Adamkus vetoed the law, arguing that

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<sup>23</sup> ‘Resolution of the Seimas of the Lithuanian Republic No. VIII-1070 “On the functions of Lukiškės Square in the State Capital”, passed on 11 February 1999’, *Valstybės žinios*, 2 February 1999.

<sup>24</sup> The monument to the deportees from Lithuania who suffered and died in Yakutia was prepared for construction in the city of Yakutsk on the initiative of the Laptev Sea Brotherhood ‘Lapteviciai’ and the Lithuanian Community of Yakutia ‘Gintaras’. In 2003, the Mayor of Yakutsk approved the idea of erecting the monument and ensured the allocation of a site for it. In 2005, the monument was consecrated in Lithuania and prepared for sending to Yakutsk. However, the Yakutsk city government, having received the instruction from the Presidential Administration of the Russian Federation, changed its opinion, claiming that the monument to Lithuanian deportees was undesirable and refusing to receive it. For more, see: ‘Paminklas Lietuvos tremtiniam’, available at <http://genocid.lt/centras/lt/471/a/> (last visited 23 May 2019).

the issue of Lukiškės Square should be resolved by the Vilnius City government, taking into account the opinion of the Seimas. This meant reducing the official status of the square from national to municipal. According to the town planner Algis Vyšniūnas, the status of the capital's principal state square was designated as a "town square or street" at the disposal of the municipality, which is why politicians with municipal rank and public administration specialists focused their energy on public relations rather than action.<sup>25</sup> This in turn led to an endless debate about the purpose of Lukiškės Square and the issue of a monument: reconstructions of the square were put on hold and no result, as will be seen from further competitions and debates, has so far been achieved.

#### Lukiškės Square Issues in the Context of the Millennium Celebrations of the State of Lithuania

The issue of Lukiškės Square was revived again in preparation for the celebration of the Millennium of Lithuania. In 2006, following a resolution adopted by the Seimas, the Vilnius City Municipality prepared terms for a new Lukiškės Square reconstruction competition. They invited proposals for the creation of a modern memorial with an emphasis on freedom, reflecting the struggle for freedom and victory of the Lithuanian people.<sup>26</sup> This rather abstract description of a "memorial with an emphasis on freedom" created wide opportunities for various interpretations of the subject – how the monument should commemorate the struggle for freedom and immortalize the memory of those who died fighting for it, as indicated by the terms of the competition.

In February of the following year, Vilnius City Municipality organized creative workshops for proposals on public spaces in central Vilnius and access routes to Lukiškės Square. More than three dozen creative groups, not only artists and architects but also theorists, chose to participate. Vilnius City Municipality declared that the event sought to supplement and amend the proposal for the reconstruction of Lukiškės Square according to ideas expressed by the participants. It was emphasized that

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<sup>25</sup> Algis Vyšniūnas, 'Lukiškių aikštė – socialinio užsakymo evoliucija. Paminklas laisvės kovų dalyviams ar simbolis "Laisvė"?', *Urbanistika ir architektūra* 32, 4 (2008): 208, 219.

<sup>26</sup> Vilnius City Municipality, 'Resolution "On the ratification of the conditions of the competition for the architectural-artistic project of replanning Lukiškės Square and creating the symbol of *Freedom*"', November 2006.

any monument should be compatible with the memorial and representational purposes of the square. In April, the municipality announced the terms of the future competition. The jury was composed of 21 individuals – members of the Seimas, representatives of state institutions, sculptors, and architects. In April 2008, the works of various artists were selected and exhibited at the Museum of Applied Art in Vilnius.

The contest, which created a huge new wave of discussions, took place in two stages but an overall winner was never announced. Second place was taken by a proposal from the design company of Šarūnas Kiaunė – to grow grass throughout the square, to arrange paths crossing the square asymmetrically, and to build a stela for a memorial in the southeast corner of the square.<sup>27</sup> Although all the groups agreed that in the square there should be some kind of symbolic object representing the state, what kind of state symbol it should be and what form it should take have been the subject of heated debate. In May 2008, the jury shortlisted seven entries for participation in the second stage. However, this phase also reached a dead end and at the beginning of 2009 the Chairman of the Competition Commission, Juozas Imbrasas, the Mayor of Vilnius, announced that the organizers had failed to inform the public about the progress of the project.<sup>28</sup>

In a broader context, debates on memorialization in Lukiškės Square correlated with changes in the narrative of Lithuanian history as a means of shaping historical policy. In 1998, a new qualitative education concept had been developed – the ‘Living History Programme: Historical Culture for the Formation of Contemporary Consciousness’, devoted to a wide range of issues concerning cultural and collective memory in society.<sup>29</sup> This programme had also become a theoretical part of the introduction of the 2009 Millennium commemoration programme. An important qualitative shift had taken place – the main focus to date on the interwar history of Lithuania had shifted to other periods in Lithuanian history, with a

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<sup>27</sup> ‘Competition for the arrangement of Lukiškės Square’, available at <http://www.architektusajunga.lt/las-konkursai/pasibaige-konkursai/lukiskiu-aikstes-vilniuje-sutvarkymo-architekturinis-konkursas> (last visited 21 October 2019).

<sup>28</sup> Paulius Gritėnas, ‘Užburtas Lukiškių aikštės ratas: diskusijos dėl paminklų tęsiasi nuo pat Lenino nuvertimo’, *Penkiolika minučių*, 6 December 2017, available at <https://www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/lietuva/uzburtas-lukiskiu-aikstes-ratas-diskusijos-del-paminklu-tesiasi-dar-nuo-lenino-nuvertimo-56-892744?copied> (last visited 23 May 2019).

<sup>29</sup> The author of this programme is the historian Alfredas Bumblauskas. For more, see Alfredas Bumblauskas, *Gyvosios istorijos programa: istorinė kultūra šiuolaikinės sąmonės formavimui* (Vilnius: Kultūros paveldo institutas, 1998).



particular emphasis on the period of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. It is important not to forget the context of European integration, in which not only the Millennium of Lithuania was interpreted, but also the history of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania as a multicultural tolerant state and the prototype of the European Union.

The Living History Programme introduced a new emphasis in public discourse and historiography – the symbols of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, with their emphasis on multiculturalism and a spirit of tolerance, began to offer serious competition to the more nationalistic symbolism of interwar Lithuania. According to the historian Česlovas Laurinavičius, this revival of the vision of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania arose on the assumption that relations between Lithuania and Europe in the interwar period had been highly ambiguous. As a result it was decided to confine the more recent memory construction campaign to the fact of the occupation of Lithuania in 1940 and on these grounds to raise the issue of damage compensation, and the full potential of the history of ties between Lithuania and Europe was ‘transferred’ to the time of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.<sup>30</sup> This is when the new emphasis on the Vytis (the Lithuanian coat of arms, an armoured knight on a horse) arose: it became part of the debate about the monument in Lukiškės Square, representing and uniting the heroic battles for freedom of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries with the impressive history of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The Vytis became axiomatic to plans for the Millennium.<sup>31</sup> Thus, the monument to the Vytis in Lukiškės Square was logically thought to become a symbol connecting in one historical narrative the heroic battles of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the 20<sup>th</sup> century struggles for freedom, symbols of which surround Lukiškės Square.

Differences of opinion on the monument in Lukiškės Square and the purpose of the square itself were not a novelty, but it was during 2008–9 that broader groups of people increasingly started to be involved. They began to criticize and question decisions made by politicians. On the other hand, the debate also revealed a clear division in public opinion. The older part of society proposed a monument with more traditionally perceived symbolism, while younger and more liberal people wanted a

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<sup>30</sup> Česlovas Laurinavičius, ‘Klausimai minit Lietuvos vardo tūkstantmetį’, *Metai*, 7 (2009), available at <http://tekstai.lt/zurnalas-metai/5369-ceslovas-laurinavicius-klausimai-minint-lietuvos-var-do-tukstantmeti> (last visited 23 May 2019).

<sup>31</sup> See Rasa Čepaitienė, ‘Nacionalinis pasakojimas versus lokalis istorijos’, in *Atminties* (see note 6), 229–64.

relaxed urban space and suggested a historically neutral object instead of a monument.<sup>32</sup> In March 2009, the Commission postponed the decision-making process, because of public pressure and a failure to reconcile the interests of both sides. They chose to appeal to lawyers to mediate the conflict and its legal aspects. The Union of Lithuanian Political Prisoners and Deportees had previously contacted the conservative Prime Minister Andrius Kubilius and the then Mayor of Vilnius Vilius Navickas with a proposal to stop the Lukiškės Square reconstruction competition and change the jury.

On 12 March 2009 the Association of Architects had a meeting to discuss the issue and concluded that since the Council considered that stage two of the competition had not revealed a clear favourite, it would be expedient to complete this stage of the competition by selecting some of the most promising works. Taking into account the expectations of society, the economic situation, and trends in urban development, the objectives and conditions of the competition would be reviewed and the competition would continue later. The result – the final decision was to postpone a decision. According to the then Mayor of Vilnius Juozas Imbrasas, “there was a competition, but we did not force through a decision, ... the same men who had already spoken then came to a Commission of the Seimas. They argued that the variants presented by the architects did not match the patriotic spirit we sought. Therefore no one was in a hurry. We then listened to other opinions”.<sup>33</sup>

Andrius Kubilius, the former Prime Minister of Lithuania (2008–12), said that the number of proposals received at that time was high and that representatives of the diaspora had been particularly active. “We didn’t proceed far, because the project needed money and at the time we didn’t have much. The question was delayed and was postponed”.<sup>34</sup> The project was stuck again with no result and the fight for memory continued. Basically, in this struggle, actively broadcasted in the public space, one can observe the collision of several major narratives of history. In the opinion of urbanist Algis Vyšniūnas, while trying to solve the question for

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<sup>32</sup> The public discussion on the Lukiškės Square projects revealed the opinions of different groups of society on the purpose of the Square. The majority of Vilnius inhabitants stated that there was a lack of vitality in the square and there should be more trees, greenery, flowers, and fountains; whereas former deportees and historians missed the symbolism of the eternal flame and the symbolism of the unknown soldier’s grave.

<sup>33</sup> Gritėnas, ‘Lukiškių aikštės’ (see note 29).

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

Lukiškės Square, two separate models of Lithuania are battling each other, or two historical narratives – the partisan patriotic “give to your Homeland what you must”, and the second representing the “even then we worked for Lithuania” discourse.<sup>35</sup> This controversy surrounding the Lukiškės Square question, which is determined by two cardinal opposites, also reflects the general principle of the formation of historical narrative in Lithuania.

### Battles for Memory

In 2010, the question of Lukiškės Square was revisited once again. The Lithuanian Cultural Heritage Department defined the boundaries of the territory of Lukiškės Square and confirmed which parts of it were of particular value. The list of objects to be protected included the plaque with the inscription “1863”, six benches, ten lighting fixtures, and a plan of a trapezoidal square.<sup>36</sup> In the same year, the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania announced a Lukiškės Square competition and first place was taken by R. Palek’s ARCHstudio project Tranquility (*Taika*). In the autumn of 2012, a competition for a monument was announced, the conditions of which included the requirement to integrate the Eternal Flame, the Tomb of the Unknown Partisan, national symbols, and also inscriptions identifying the different stages of Lithuanian struggles for freedom from the 5<sup>th</sup> century until 1991: the war for freedom since ancient times and the defence of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania; uprisings against Russian occupation (1794, 1831, 1863); the Lithuanian Wars of Independence, or Freedom Struggles (1919–20) and the Klaipėda Uprising (1923); key moments in the fight against Soviet occupation (1941, 1944–53/69, 1991). The economic crisis halted any decision on the monument for Lukiškės Square and it was revived again only in 2018, in celebration of the Centenary of Lithuanian statehood.

In a public arena controlled by politicians there were also some interesting private initiatives which did not set out to replace the ‘grand narra-

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<sup>35</sup> Urbanist Algis Vyšniūnas expressed this opinion in his lecture in Šiauliai district Povilas Višinskis public library on 19 February 2019, see the recording of the lecture: ‘Susitikimas su prof. Algiu Vyšniūnu’, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ByFcaB42Ej4> (last visited 23 May 2019).

<sup>36</sup> ‘Apibrėžtos Lukiškių aikštės teritorijos ir patvirtintos vertingosios savybės’, available at <http://testinis.kpd.lt/lt/node/1210> (last visited 21 October 2019).

tive', but to supplement it with an alternative version. One such alternative, in the abovementioned form of a 'small historical narrative', was the story of Brod (the name was derived from Broadway in New York, USA) – the name given to Lenin Prospect by Soviet-era hippies and others connected with Western culture. In October 2011, a monument to commemorate one of the most prominent Brod personalities, the musician and actor Vytautas Kernagis, and the Brod 'children' – the hippies, was created – a bronze bench with a guitar beside it (by the sculptor Daniel Sodeika and the architect Rimvydas Kazickas) and it was unveiled in Lukiškės Square.<sup>37</sup> The bench became a monument for the hippies, known as Brod's children, commemorating the fact that 40 years ago they had sat there playing guitars, talking, and protesting. The bench was made exclusively with the support of private individuals – Vytautas Kernagis' friends and other like-minded individuals – and was created on their initiative and with their funding. Those of Kernagis' companions and friends who had said they needed to immortalize the artist on Brod also took responsibility for making the idea come to life, with the money they had raised and with the installation of the bench.<sup>38</sup> In 2012, during the Vilnius Capital Days Festival on Lukiškės Square, the Latvian artists 'Frostiart Baltic' installed a huge sand sculpture of John Lennon. The pun, reflecting the artistic idea 'Lenin – Lennon', illustrated the break between the Soviet past and faith in a positive democratic future.<sup>39</sup>

As a rule, issues around memory locations became increasingly lively in the periods preceding important public anniversaries. On 2 May 2017 the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, with 91 votes in favour and no

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<sup>37</sup> In 2009, a bronze sculpture by the sculptor Romas Kvintas was unveiled in the centre of Nida to commemorate the actor and musician Vytautas Kernagis. For more, see 'Skulptūra Vytautui Kernagiui atminti', available at <http://visitneringa.com/lt/kapamatyti/tyti/skulpturos-paminklai/skulptura-vytautui-kernagiui-atminti> (last visited 23 May 2019).

<sup>38</sup> For more, see 'Paminklinis suoliukas Vytauto Kernagio kūrybinio kelio pradžiai jamžinti', available at <http://www.kernagis.lt/projektai/iamzinimas/> (last visited 23 May 2019). Another example mentioning private initiatives is the idea of the artist and photographer Saulius Paukštys and the art critic Saulius Pilinkus generated in 2015 to build in Vilnius a monument to John Lennon. Since the singer had no direct relationship with Lithuania and had never been here, the necessity for this monument in Vilnius was widely and publicly discussed. The initiators of the project believed that the monument would become a symbol of the generation who had grown up with the music of The Beatles. The monument was built using private funds on Mindaugas Street.

<sup>39</sup> For more, see 'Džonas Vinstonas Lenonas (John Winston Lennon)', available at <http://www.vilnijosvartai.lt/personalijos/dzonas-vinstonas-lenonas-john-winston-lennon/> (last visited 23 May 2019).

votes against or abstentions, adopted a resolution “On urgent action on the layout of Lukiškės Square in Vilnius and on building a memorial to commemorate the fighters for Freedom of Lithuania for the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Restoration of the State of Lithuania”.<sup>40</sup> On adopting the resolution, the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania took into consideration the fact that Lukiškės Square in Vilnius constituted the foremost public square in the state of Lithuania, with memorial emphases on the different fights for freedom, but eighteen years after the original resolution was passed by the Seimas, there had been no clarity on the completion of the works in Lukiškės Square until the commemoration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the restoration of the state of Lithuania.

The Seimas asked the Government to allocate additional funds to complete the works at Lukiškės Square and approve the initiative of the Vytytis Support Fund to build a memorial to commemorate Lithuanian freedom fighters with a sculpture of the Vytytis. At the same time, the Seimas urged the Government and the Vilnius City Municipality, in co-operation with the Vytytis Support Fund, promptly to resolve all organizational issues.

Nevertheless the project faced financial problems with implementation because the funding which had been allocated by the Government was not enough even for the completion of the most important modifications to the layout and there were no funds allocated for the monument to Lithuanian freedom fighters. In addition, we should take into account that the idea to unveil a monument “For those who have struggled through the ages and died for the freedom of Lithuania” (in a form of Vytytis – the symbol of the nation and the state) on 16 February 2018 was endorsed and supported by public patriotic organizations. For example, on 30 November 2017 the Public Council of the Freedom Fighters’ Commission of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania released the memorandum addressed to the President, the Speaker of the Seimas, and the Prime Minister in regard to the urgency of erecting a memorial to the fighters for the freedom of Lithuania, with the symbol Vytytis, commemorating the

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<sup>40</sup> ‘Seimas priėmė rezoliuciją dėl Lukiškių aikštės sutvarkymo’, 2 May 2017, available at <https://www.regionunaujienos.lt/seimas-prieme-rezoliucija-del-lukiskiu-aikstes-sutvarkymo/> (last visited 23 May 2019). Full text of the Resolution: ‘Rezoliucija dėl neatidėliotinių veiksmų siekiant sutvarkyti Lukiškių aikštę Vilniuje ir pastatyti Kovotojų už Lietuvos laisvę atminimo įamžinimo memorialą Lietuvos valstybės atkūrimo šimtmečio progai, 2017 m. gegužės 2 d. Nr. XIII-341’ available at <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/0e4f4ed0308d11e79f4996496b137f39?jfwid=rivwzvypvg> (last visited 26 August 2020).

centenary of the restoration of the State of Lithuania, by 16 February 2018.<sup>41</sup> In November 2017, after a year and a half of reconstruction, the hoardings round the square were finally removed and it was revealed to the public. Remigijus Šimašius, the Mayor of Vilnius, presented the reconstruction works which had been carried out on the square and emphasized that “today we are walking for the first time in a European, rather than a Soviet-era square”.<sup>42</sup> An extremely optimistic perspective was adopted to suggest how the public would be able to use the square – there would be interactive fountains and children’s playgrounds as well as a monument to be built on the basis of ideas selected by local citizens. For a whole month in November there were stands displaying different plans for the monument in the square.

Like any issues related to nationality, the question of whether the Vytis should be a traditional monument or a modern one with historical elements has provoked a massive public reaction. The will of the politicians has been challenged. These discussions have in part shown that democratization processes in Lithuania are growing stronger and that society is becoming more involved in decision-making and more actively expresses an opinion. On the other hand, they have also shown that the authorities and the public frequently disagree, and that it is not easy to reach a consensus. According to the architect Gintaras Čaikauskas, we can view the Seimas resolution as a political and legal document expressing the intuitive will of society to transform this former Soviet ideologized public space into a symbol of independent Lithuania. However, he continues, this physical and artistic expression of freedom has so far remained unfinished because the patriotic forces which acted underground during the Soviet period and created the preconditions for the collapse of the Soviet Union have not found a direct, sincere, and acceptable response in the imaginations of the artists so far involved.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Full text of the Memorandum: ‘Memorandumas dėl Lukiškių aikštės’, *XXI amžius*, 8 December 2017, available at [http://www.xxiamzius.lt/numeriai/2017/12/08/liet\\_01.html](http://www.xxiamzius.lt/numeriai/2017/12/08/liet_01.html) (last visited 23 May 2019).

<sup>42</sup> ‘Vilniuje po rekonstrukcijos atidaryta Lukiškių aikštė’, *Vilniaus diena*, 2 November 2017, available at <https://www.diena.lt/naujienos/vilnius/miesto-pulsas/ketvirtadienio-vakara-atidaroma-lukiskiu-aikste-835828> (last visited 23 May 2019).

<sup>43</sup> Gintaras Čaikauskas, ‘Atskirtys visuomeninėje aplinkos sampratoje. Būdingi prieštaravimai viešųjų erdvių formavimo pavyzdžiuose’, 3 March 2010, available at <http://www.architektusajunga.lt/nuomones/arch-prof-g-caikauskas-atskirtys-visuomenineje-aplinkos-sampratoje-budingi-priestaravimai-viesuju-erdviu-formavimo-pavyzdziuose/> (last visited 23 May 2019).

The commission formed by the government selected five projects. Almost all of them included the symbol of the Vytis, but some members of the Seimas and other public figures expressed resentment that the idea of a traditional monument to the Vytis had been abandoned. At the beginning of October 2017, the Ministry of Culture and the Centre for Contemporary Art presented the five best works selected by the expert commission: the Vytis Foundation project “Remember and Honour” (by the collective: Gintaras Čaikauskas, Kęstutis Akelaitis, Linas Naujokaitis, Rimantas Dichavičius, and Arūnas Sakalauskas); the work of the architect-theorist Tomas Grunskis and the Aexn Association “To Enlighten Through Truth” (this project proposed a shining altar in the shape of the Vytis cross, which would be responsive to human touch with interactive symbolic lighting elements on the paving); a project by the sculptor and designer Andrius Labašauskas (this project proposed installing a memorial wall in the square with tree motifs recalling partisan bunkers); the ethnographer Algimantas Lelešius put forward a plan for a memorial with nine small pools set in the shape of the Vytis cross; and the project proposed by Darius Žiūra, who makes films and art installations – his idea of the memorial was to involve every visitor coming to Lukiškės Square and to give the opportunity to perform the role of a symbolic guard of honour in virtual form: the portrait of the person would be scanned and the videos of people reflecting one’s emotion and civic position would then be displayed on projectors in the square.<sup>44</sup>

The best project had to be selected both by expert opinion and by public vote, each weighted at 50 % of the final decision. Citizens were able to express their preference by voting online. While the online vote was taking place (3–16 November), there was a ‘battle for memory’ in the public space. At the end of the public voting period, several hundred people took part in a protest campaign organized by the public movement *Talka kalbai ir tautai* (Help for Language and Nation) and voiced their opinion.<sup>45</sup> In October, the Vilnius Forum Organizational Group had

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<sup>44</sup> Evaldas Činga, ‘Penki pasiūlymai Lukiškių aikštės memorialui išsamiai pristatomi parodoje ŠMC’, 23 November 2017, available at <https://madeinvilnius.lt/pramogos/parodos/penki-pasiulymai-lukiskiu-aikstes-memorialui-issamiai-pristatomi-parodoje-smc/> (last visited 26 August 2020).

<sup>45</sup> See the speech of the historian and specialist in heritage protection Rasa Čepaitienė: Rasa Čepaitienė, ‘Lukiškių aikštė kaip vidinės kolonizacijos atspindys’, *Pro Patria*, 20 November 2017, available at <http://www.propatria.lt/2017/11/rasa-cepaitiene-lukiskiu-aikste-kaip.html>; also, see ‘Keli šimtai protestuotojų agitavo už Vyčio skulptūrą Lukiškių aikštėje’, *Delfi*, 17 November 2017, available at <https://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/>

distributed a petition calling for support for the idea of the Vytis. The petition stated that

“Despite the resolution of the Seimas, clearly expressed by the decision of the Seimas and the results of the public survey broadly supporting this decision, the monument planned in 1999 to the heroes of the struggles through the ages for the freedom of Lithuania has not yet been built. The endless discussion about the concept for the monument and the efforts of the Minister of Culture and some Vilnius Municipality politicians to prevent the erection of a monument symbolizing and affirming Lithuania’s statehood indicates the publicly undisclosed ideological and political context of a societal conflict which is becoming increasingly aggravating.”<sup>46</sup>

There was a fear that the intention was to erase in various ways the concepts of nation and state from the historical memory of the population. In addition, there was a fear that these continuing actions amounted to the extermination of history policy and were essentially a continuation of the policy pursued during the Soviet period.<sup>47</sup> There was a call for the contest to be declared illegal and for the selection of an unlawful monument to be interpreted as demeaning and destructive to the idea of Lithuanian statehood. Since the monument competition had provoked social conflict it must be the case that the leading projects were somehow disdainful of the idea of the state; the freedom fighters too had intentionally caused a public backlash. It followed that the results of the design competition should be nullified and a new competition for plans for Lukiškės Square should be organized and monitored by “representatives of the public”.<sup>48</sup>

However, despite the fears expressed by right-wing patriotic forces, after the online vote<sup>49</sup> and expert assessment, the Vytis did not win. The winner was Andrius Labašauskas’ memorial to the freedom fighters, “The Hill of Freedom”, and it was scheduled to be built on 1 December 2018.

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[lithuania/keli-simtai-protestuotoju-agitavo-uz-vycio-skulptura-lukiskiu-aiksteje.d?id=76382731](http://lithuania/keli-simtai-protestuotoju-agitavo-uz-vycio-skulptura-lukiskiu-aiksteje.d?id=76382731) (both last visited 23 May 2019).

<sup>46</sup> For the full text of the Petition, see ‘Vilniaus forumas. Pareiškimas dėl Lukiškių aikštės memorialo’, *Pro Patria*, 22 October 2017, available at <http://www.propatria.lt/2017/10/vilniaus-forumas-pareiškimas-del.html> (last visited 26 August 2020).

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> ‘Vilniaus forumas: neteisėtas ir neskaidrus Lukiškių aikštės konkursas turi būti anuliuotas’, *Pro Patria*, 30 November 2017, available at <http://www.propatria.lt/2017/11/vilniaus-forumas-neteisetas-ir.html> (last visited 23 May 2019).

<sup>49</sup> For more regarding the results of the vote, see Jūratė Mičiulienė, ‘Lukiškių aikštėje – pagrindžio simbolika’, *Lietuvos žinios*, 28 November 2017, 5.



It seemed that after almost twenty years of unsuccessful attempts to erect a monument in Lukiškės Square, the city would finally see a result.<sup>50</sup> However, a few days later the Department of Cultural Heritage questioned the legality of the contest, claiming that the “The Hill of Freedom” project would damage some of the officially listed heritage characteristics of the square. The decision was unpopular with supporters of the second-placed Arūnas Sakalauskas and his Vytis sculpture but received support from some politicians. The selection procedures for the memorial were also questioned by representatives of the Seimas’ State Historical Memory Commission.

The delay over the question of Lukiškės Square has shown the political forces involved to be not only incompetent or uninterested in making decisions, but also incapable of reaching a compromise with the public opinion. This impression was heightened because the process of finding solutions to the Lukiškės Square issue had involved important anniversary dates – according to one of the draft laws advocating for the need to build the Vytis monument in Lukiškės Square. According to Laurynas Kaščiūnas, a conservative member of the Seimas, Vilnius has a particular historical and cultural heritage and has borne witness to a long, uninterrupted period of Lithuanian statehood and therefore the situation in which there is still no square in the city suitable for the proper celebration of state holidays is untenable. On the hundredth anniversary of the state and starting preparations for the commemoration of the 700<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the capital city Vilnius, and in commemorating the year 1949 with the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Partisan Declaration, the layout of Lukiškės Square was extremely important.<sup>51</sup> He stated that he had spotted an opportunity to reconcile Labašauskas’ memorial project with a sculpture the Vytis.

The Mayor of Vilnius, Remigijus Šimašius, also took part in the discussions, supporting Labašauskas’ project and arguing that the discussion was not really about the Vytis monument or a memorial to freedom fighters – it was more a question of the fulfilment of promises and the right of citizens to decide for themselves:

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<sup>50</sup> Mindaugas Jackevičius, ‘Lukiškių aikštėje iškils kalva’, *Delfi*, 27 November 2017, available at <https://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/lukiskiu-aiksteje-iskils-kalva.d?id=76467223> (last visited 23 May 2019).

<sup>51</sup> Eleonora Budzinauskienė, ‘Konservatoriai: sprendimo dėl Lukiškių aikštės vilkinimas kompromituoja seimą’, *Vilniaus diena*, 8 February 2019, available at <https://www.diena.lt/naujienos/vilnius/miesto-pulsas/konservatoriai-sprendimo-del-lukiskiu-aikstes-vilkinimas-kompromituoja-seima-900539> (last visited 23 May 2019).

“Vilnius is an open city with free and happy residents who have voted and have chosen to support the artistic idea of Andrius Labašauskas. In addition, I want to ask each member of the Seimas to consider the damage that the Seimas’ decision could cause to the law as a symbol in the eyes of society – and as one of the most important symbols of Lithuania.”<sup>52</sup>

However, after all these discussions, there remains the question which emerged from the very first competitions: what does symbolize freedom? The range of interpretations relating not only to history but also to different value orientations was quite wide – for some people there was a direct relationship to the freedom fighters and the freedom they achieved; for others the interpretation was wider and more personal, involving not only the state itself, but also the human freedom of every citizen living in the state. When no place was found for the Vytis in the capital city of Lithuania, the sculpture was instead built with private funds in Kaunas.<sup>53</sup>

It should be noted that if a list was drawn up of the most complicated state projects in Independence period, Lukiškės Square in Vilnius would definitely be near the top: since 1999 there have been eight competitions for the reconstruction of the square and the erection of a new monument<sup>54</sup> and all with no results. Lukiškės Square has been hostage to power games and games of political will for a long time. According to Almantas Samalavičius, the square may be in the centre of the city, but has been left on the margins of urban culture.<sup>55</sup> A number of politicians have stressed that the issue of monument in Lukiškės Square is unresolved, because public consultations, surveys, contests, workshops, and polls do not convince them that this kind of approach is capable of producing a really good quality result in connection with the wisdom and

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<sup>52</sup> Rima Janužytė, ‘Vilniaus meras dėl Lukiškių aikštės kreipėsi į aukščiausius šalies vadovus’, *Verslo žinios*, 13 December 2017, available at <https://www.vz.lt/laisvalaikis/akiraciai/2017/12/13/vilniaus-meras-del-lukiskiu-aiksteskreipesi-i-auksciausius-salies-vadovus#ixzz5lQhVRgqB> (last visited 23 May 2019).

<sup>53</sup> Jurgita Šakienė, ‘Vytis – jau prie Kauno pilies’, *Kauno diena*, 29 June 2018, available at <https://kauno.diena.lt/naujienos/kaunas/miesto-pulsas/vytis-jau-rieda-kauno-gatvemis-870481>; Mantas Jokubauskas, ‘Vilniui nereikalingu tapęs Vytis – jau Kaune’, *Delfi*, 29 June 2018, available at <https://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/vilniui-nereikalingu-tapes-vytis-jau-kaune.d?id=78440927> (both last visited 23 May 2019).

<sup>54</sup> Greta Jankaitytė, ‘Kritikos strėlės: Lukiškių aikštės ir Vyčio įstatyme – teisinė painiava’, *Verslo žinios*, 15 December 2017, available at <https://www.vz.lt/verslo-aplinka/2017/12/15/kritikos-streles-lukiskiu-aikstes-ir-vycio-istatyme--teisine-painiava#ixzz5lQgxzwZu> (last visited 23 May 2019).

<sup>55</sup> Almantas Samalavičius, ‘Preke paverstos viešosios erdvės’, *Kultūros barai*, 2 (2009): 11.

creative responsibility of a good artist.<sup>56</sup> It has been suggested that if social consensus is no longer possible, it would perhaps be better to plant a meadow and leave that to the people instead. The very need for the monument is even questioned now. It would be seen as problematic to build a monument in haste without really considering the historical context.

Another important point is that post-war Lithuania's struggle for freedom, as demonstrated by the constructive, comprehensive search for a solution to the Lukiškės issue, does not provide the grounds for social consensus in Lithuania. It is easier to reach agreement on monuments to the grand dukes of Lithuania or personalities associated with the rebirth of the nation than to find a consensus on the commemoration of the post-war Defenders of Freedom. Claus Leggewie, speaking on European memory, says that today, European collective memory cannot tolerate political manipulation because the full context of open-ended historical situations and processes and different national and regional perspectives are not compatible with each other.<sup>57</sup> In other words, a single proper version and unified interpretation of historical events is impossible and therefore competing versions are presented for public debate. It can be said, however, that in the process of attempting to solve the issue of Lukiškės Square as a 'place of memory', some integration was achieved through the conflict that this involved. The most important thing is to reach some kind of consensus, even if the consensus is that there is no single consensus.

However, as a result of the role it has played in this conflict, Lukiškės Square has become rather a strange place: according to the terminology of local urban planning, it is not a square, but neither is it a municipal park; it cannot be termed a place of recreation, which would be attractive to the residents of Vilnius, or even a place of commemoration where symbolically important official state and public celebrations and ceremonies could be held. This is probably due to the fact that from the very beginning the issue of Lukiškės Square in terms of urban planning and the issues regarding the Lukiškės Square monument were always considered separately, when they should have been considered together in order to achieve a

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<sup>56</sup> As an example, the opinion of the former Prime Minister Andrius Kubilius, see Gritėnas, 'Lukiškių aikštės' (see note 29).

<sup>57</sup> Claus Leggewie, 'Kova dėl Europos atminties iš naujos Vilniaus perspektyvos', *Bernardinai.lt*, 7 November 2017, available at <http://www.bernardinai.lt/straipsnis/2017-11-07-kova-del-europos-atminties-is-naujos-vilniaus-perspektyvos/165734>, last visited 21 October 2019).

complex holistic solution. A number of town planners have emphasized that when it comes to Lukiškės Square as the main square of the capital city of Lithuania, the issue is fundamental. This is because the problem of state signs, symbols, and monuments is relevant always as an element of state policy and it is necessary clearly to distinguish the basis of the artist's ambitions and the nation's identity, as well as the basis of the pride and self-esteem of the state itself.<sup>58</sup>

Until the question of the monument in Lukiškės Square is resolved, the huge Vytis flag flies in the middle of the square, next to the Centenary Ring memorial (*Šimtmečio žiedas*) that was created in 2018, but is barely noticeable in the wide expanse of the square and consisting of four buried capsules containing the relics of the freedom fighters<sup>59</sup> with descriptions of them. This memorial site has been desecrated – one of the four capsules and a list of relics was stolen, another capsule containing relics was simply removed and left nearby. There were many different interpretations of the event in circulation, but in principle the media called it an incitement to anti-national hatred.<sup>60</sup> Jonas Burokas, a representative of the Union of Lithuanian Freedom Fighters, also had no doubt that it was an act of vandalism: “This is the remains of Soviet heritage, these are the acts of those who do not want the people who fought and died for the freedom of the homeland to be immortalized in Lukiškės Square”.<sup>61</sup>

### Some Conclusions

To return to the question raised at the beginning of the article, namely, why a monument in Lukiškės Square which would be meaningful to

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<sup>58</sup> See Vyšniūnas, ‘Lukiškių aikštė’ (see note 26), 201.

<sup>59</sup> The relics had been collected from all over Lithuania – from the Hill of Crosses, the main places of death of the Partisans and their desecration sites, as well as from the battlefields of Žalgiris, Saulė, Salaspilis. It is mostly soil or flags but there are also exceptional relics related to prominent partisan resistance personalities – the famous partisan's commander Adolfas Ramanauskas-Vanagas' clothing thread, partisan Antanas Kraujelis' hair strands, relics of the Lukšai family, and their descriptions.

<sup>60</sup> Ainis Gurevičius, ‘Viena pagrindinių paminklo Lukiškių aikštėje išniekinimo versijų – relikvijų vagi skatino nacionalinė neapykanta’, *Delfi*, 26 June 2018, available at <https://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/crime/viena-pagrindiniu-paminklo-lukiskiu-aiksteje-isniekinimo-versiju-relikviju-vagi-skatino-nacionaline-neapykanta.d?id=78412401> (last visited 23 May 2019).

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

contemporary Lithuanian society and state, and symbolize central emphases of the national historical narrative is still missing, it should be stated that this question, as the research has revealed, has many facets and levels. The ongoing debate over how Lukiškės Square should be memorialized and what historical narrative it should represent in regard to the culture and politics of the independent Lithuanian state reveals a number of different things.

First of all, we are still trapped in a complicated relationship with our past, especially with the Soviet legacy. This is illustrated by the nature of the debate and the nature of the memorial in Lukiškės Square. Both among political elites and in society itself, the idea that cultural resources must first and foremost be used to promote political and ideological interests is still much in evidence. This is because there is no solid, coherent historical narrative and society is divided into several camps, or two Lithuanian models – the patriotic (or partisan), for whom national symbols are vital for the survival of the nation, and the other, proclaiming the idea of a ‘new global Lithuania’, for whom national symbols in Lukiškės Square are approached from a more liberal point of view. This conflict between two concepts of freedom (responsible freedom and freedom which might be called voluntaristic or consumeristic freedom) really portrays a struggle for values, and so far this struggle is unresolved because of the unstable balance of power maintained by government policy on Lukiškės Square, while the public unexpectedly fluctuates between these two positions.

This conflict of values in Lithuanian society also entails a conflict between generations whose life experiences are very differently encoded – older people are nationally-oriented (a portion of them suffered the cruelty of the Soviet regime), while younger people are often neoliberal consumers. This was noted by James E. Young, invited to Lithuania in 2017 to help solve the question of Lukiškės Square and “look at the situation from different sides and possibly move on from an awkward point of controversy”.<sup>62</sup> The Lithuanian population, though quite homogeneous from the point of view of religion, language, and ethnicity, has different age-related cultural experiences because half of the population was born

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<sup>62</sup> See the interview of Rasa Antanavičiūtė with James E. Young: ‘Nepabaigiamas atminties darbas: Lukiškių memorialo istorija tarptautinio eksperto akimis’, *Penkiolika minučių*, 21 December 2017, available at <https://www.15min.lt/kultura/naujienu/vizualieji-menai/nepabaigiamas-atminties-darbas-lukiskiu-memorialo-istorija-tarptautinio-eksperto-akimis-929-900328> (last visited 23 May 2019).

and raised in Soviet Lithuania and the other half in a more pro-Western, democratic, and liberal society.<sup>63</sup> For the liberal consumer, the existence of Lukiškės Square as a place of entertainment, with fountains in the summer and ice-skating in the winter, is likely to suffice whereas patriotic citizens feel hurt and outraged that the Lukiškės Square question still drags on, that the fighters for Lithuania's freedom have been left without a memorial, and that the square has become a chaotic space which does not convey a clearly patriotic message.

On the social level, the case of Lukiškės Square has shown that the involvement of the public in decisions relating to the democratic processes is increasing. As the art critic Skaidra Trilupaitytė has observed, the forms of consumption which stimulate constant change in democratic societies also change the physical boundaries of public space and our concept of it. Public urban space is a social and communicative sphere which promotes dialogue between citizens and democratic decision-making and these form part of the discourse of civil society.<sup>64</sup> However, as shown in this article, political forces often manipulate the democratic processes and choices made by local people.

In addition, it is clear that there is still a huge need for the voice of historians to be heard more loudly and for their active role in the formation of historical and political culture. The public debate over Lukiškės Square gives the impression that historians still doubt their ability to act in relation to the consciousness and values of their society. Various theories and interpretations, as the historian Aurimas Švedas has pointed out, are as a rule created in narrow academic circles, involving little interaction with public life.

Therefore, these important issues of historical memory are taken up by politicians who are not qualified to address them. And politicians seeking to consolidate different social strata, to enhance the prestige of the state, and raise national self-esteem use traditional measures which have stood the test of time: their reactions to the challenges of social processes are very situational and opportunistic; they use selectively the ideas of certain intellectuals and cultural figures or certain interest groups or lobby groups; and the fact that society often sympathizes with ideas which

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Skaidra Trilupaitytė, 'Viešojo kultūros, vartojimo ar *kultūringo vartojimo* erdvė? Vilniaus atvejis', in *Lietuvos kultūros tyrimai 2: Muziejai, paveldas, vertybės*, ed. Rita Repšienė (Vilnius: Lietuvos kultūros tyrimų institutas, 2012), 86.

emphasize continuity (or stagnation)<sup>65</sup> rather than change is also often taken into account.

It is likely that complicated historical experience has resulted in that a large part of society perceives the nation and the state in the 21<sup>st</sup> century not as two institutions united in pursuing a project of freedom and collective endeavour, but as the result of historical circumstance and special cultural destiny. The effect of the processes of de-Sovietization, Europeanization, globalization, and postmodernization on the self-perception of Lithuanian society first of all manifests itself in the answer to the question what does it mean to have been Lithuanian during the Soviet period, to have regained independence, to have become members of the EU, and to be on the highway of globalization in the face of the relativization of ideas and values?<sup>66</sup>

It seems that when we speak of Lukiškės Square as a place of memory and of commemoration, this question, related to a clear definition of identity – who we are and how we are affected by our particular historical, cultural, and political context, remains crucial but still unanswered. The Lukiškės Square situation has shown that the conflict arising from the discussion of different perspectives on representations of the past as perceived by different groups in society and the demand for their resolution and reconciliation at the highest political level cannot be solved without answering this complicated, multi-layered, and multi-faceted question.

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<sup>65</sup> Aurimas Švedas, 'Lietuvos idėjos paieškos: elito projekcijos', in *Epochas jungiantis nacionalizmas: tautos (de)konstravimas tarpukario, sovietmečio ir posovietmečio Lietuvoje*, ed. Česlovas Laurinavičius (Vilnius: LLI leidykla, 2013), 368.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

# THE EUROMAIDAN, THE DONBAS WAR, AND ITS TRANS-BORDER DIMENSIONS





ALEXANDR OSIPIAN

## WORLD WAR II MEMORY POLITICS IN RUSSIA AND UKRAINE AND THEIR USES DURING THE CONFLICT IN THE DONBAS (SPRING–SUMMER 2014)\*

In his speech on Victory Day on 9 May 2018 in Moscow, President Putin emphasized that Russia would not allow what he called the falsification of history regarding the Second World War:

“But attempts are being made today to remove from the story the deeds of the people who saved Europe and the world from slavery and from the horrors of the Holocaust; to distort the events of the war and to bury its true heroes in oblivion; to rewrite, corrupt and forge accounts of history itself. We will never allow this to happen.”<sup>1</sup>

Putin did not identify those who are allegedly attempting to falsify accounts of Russia’s contribution to WWII. Why? Because they are well-known to his audience in Russia and to ‘compatriots’ abroad. Through many years of official memory politics, WWII has been used to sustain an updated national identity in Putin’s Russia and has become its soft power in the ‘near abroad’. It is propaganda discourse that, rather than shedding light on the past, accuses of lying those who question Russia’s greatness.<sup>2</sup>

The critical deconstructions of Soviet narratives of WWII which formed during the 1990s<sup>3</sup> were put aside on Putin’s accession to power.

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<sup>1</sup> Vladimir Putin, ‘Speech at the Military Parade’, 9 May 2018, available at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/57436> (last visited 23 July 2020).

<sup>2</sup> Miguel Vázquez Liñán, ‘History as a Propaganda Tool in Putin’s Russia’, *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 43, 2 (2010): 177.

<sup>3</sup> Nina Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead: The Rise and Fall of the Cult of World War II in Russia* (New York: Basic Books, 1994).

After a severe identity crisis during the ‘freewheeling 1990s’, Russia’s military glory, internal cohesion, and impact on international affairs had to be restored through the official glorification of Russia’s particular role in WWII.<sup>4</sup> The war was re-interpreted by historians, men of letters, moviemakers, painters, and singers; instrumentalized by politicians and journalists; and re-enacted by the growing re-enactment movement, supported with money by senior officials, by statists, and by an audience including the Minister of Defence himself.<sup>5</sup> Thus in Putin’s Russia the cultural memory of WWII effectively became a substitute for the ideology evidently lacking in the authoritarian regime. This updated myth of WWII is deployed by Russia in its relations with the newly independent states which experienced both Nazi and Soviet occupation during WWII. In post-Soviet Ukraine both narratives, anti-Soviet and Russified Soviet, have been used by competing elite factions to manipulate the electoral behaviour of voters.<sup>6</sup> The growing escalation of the narrative competition instrumentalized and communicated in Ukraine during 2011–13 was smoothly channelled by Russia into the ‘Russian Spring’ and insurgency in the Donbas in 2014, represented by the Russian mass-media as a sequel to WWII, this time fought between ‘Ukrainian fascists’ and ‘the people’s militia of the Donbas’. Thus, the ground for Russia’s interference in Ukraine and for igniting the military conflict in the Donbas was prepared long before 2014.

This paper explores how competing narratives of WWII were turned into the symbolic political resources finally used in the military conflict in the Donbas. Accordingly, it starts with an analysis of how in the 2000s the Soviet-style memory of WWII was integrated into Russian foreign

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<sup>4</sup> Elizabeth A. Wood, ‘Performing Memory: Vladimir Putin and the Celebration of WWII in Russia’, *The Soviet and Post-Soviet Review* 38, 2 (2011): 172–200; Julia Sweet, ‘Political Invasions into Collective Memories: Russia’, *International Journal of Communication* 10 (2016), 4512–31; Igor Torbakov, ‘The Past as Present: Foreign Relations and Russia’s Politics of History’, in *After the Soviet Empire: Legacies and Pathways*, eds. Sven Eliaeson, Lyudmila Harutyunyan, and Larissa Titarenko (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2016), 358–80; Nikolai Koposov, *Memory Laws, Memory Wars: The Politics of the Past in Europe and Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 207–37.

<sup>5</sup> Shaun Walker, ‘Replica Reichstag Stormed at Russian “Military Disneyland”’, *The Guardian*, 24 April 2017, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/apr/24/russians-storm-replica-reichstag-military-disneyland-patriot-park> (last visited 23 July 2020).

<sup>6</sup> Alexandr Osipian and Ararat Osipian, ‘Regional Diversity and Divided Memories in Ukraine: Contested Past as Electoral Resource, 2004–2010’, *East European Politics and Societies* 26, 3 (2012): 616–42.

policy in order to oppose what Russians see as Western expansionism, particularly in relations with Poland and the Baltic states. It then goes on to examine what commemorative practices were selected and employed to legitimize and stabilize the authoritarian regime in Russia. Then it analyses how memory politics were used in Ukraine to divide society and manipulate electoral preferences. The final section focuses on the uses of WWII symbols reinvented in Putin's Russia and adopted by pro-Russian insurgents to legitimize the insurgency in the Donbas in 2014.

### Competing War Memories in Post-Communist Europe

In Russian cultural memory and official commemorations, the Second World War of 1939–45 is reduced to the years 1941–5 and called the Great Patriotic War. Left out of this are thus almost the first two years, from 1 September 1939 to 22 June 1941, as well as the final defeat of Japan in August 1945. Moreover, all the other theatres of military operations, in the Pacific, in North Africa, the Mediterranean, the Atlantic, and Western Europe, are represented as secondary in comparison to the German–Soviet war. The main message of the Soviet narrative, which has also been fully adopted in post-Soviet Russia, is therefore that Nazi Germany was defeated on the 'Eastern Front' and that the USSR and its 'Red Army' were the main liberators of Europe from the 'brown plague' of fascism. The separation of the Great Patriotic War from the Second World War helps to construct a narrative of Soviet / Russian exclusiveness: the number of German divisions defeated by the Red Army is much bigger than the number defeated by the Western Allies; the number of 'Soviet people' who perished because of the war is much bigger than all the casualties of other nations put together; the material losses of the USSR are much bigger than all the destruction suffered by other nations.

After 1991, and particularly during the Putin presidency, the terms 'USSR' and 'Red Army' were gradually replaced by 'Russia' and 'Russian soldiers'. Thus, Russia appropriated the 'Great Victory' in the same way that it inherited all the other assets of the USSR: financial assets, embassies and real estate abroad, nuclear weapons and navies, permanent membership of the UN Security Council, etc. This approach culminated in a statement made by Putin (then Prime Minister) at his annual press conference on 12 December 2010 in which he claimed that Russia would have won the war against Nazi Germany even without Ukraine since "seventy per cent of the casualties were suffered by Russia". According to him, "the

war was won because of Russia's human and industrial resources".<sup>7</sup> Interestingly, when he made this statement, Ukraine was ruled by the Russia-friendly president Viktor Yanukovych, who subscribed to the Soviet narrative of the war in his rhetoric and official commemorations.

These chronological, topical, and narrative manoeuvres are also reflected in the history curriculum. In the USSR and, after 1991, in Russia, as well as in some other post-Soviet states, there are two historical subjects on the secondary school and university curriculum: General History (*Vseobshchaia istoriia*) and National History (*Otechestvennaia istoriia*). In General History, students are taught about the Second World War of 1939–45 while in National History, they are taught about the Great Patriotic War of 1941–5. In National History, the USSR is represented as the victim of Nazi German aggression on 22 June 1941 while the early period of the war, from 1 September 1939 to 21 June 1941, seems to have happened somewhere abroad and is studied as part of General History. During the Soviet period this way of teaching was used to hide the fact that the USSR had taken part in WWII from the very beginning, in September 1939, when it acted as an ally of Nazi Germany.<sup>8</sup>

The notorious secret protocols of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact of 23 August 1939, which had resulted in Stalin's westward expansion of the Soviet Union in 1939–40, were long denied by the Soviet leadership. In Soviet schools, students learned about the German invasion of Poland on 1 September 1939 in the framework of General History, whereas National History taught them about the liberation of the fraternal west Ukrainians and Belarusians from the Nazi menace on 17 September 1939.

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<sup>7</sup> Television channels Rossiia and Rossiia 24 and radio stations Maiak and Vesti FM have started broadcasting the annual Q&A session. For the transcript, see 'A Conversation with Vladimir Putin, Continued', available at <http://archive.government.ru/eng/docs/13427/>; for the video, see 'A Conversation with Vladimir Putin, Continued 2010 (English Subtitles)', available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E8B9wGcDWVI> (both last visited 24 April 2018).

<sup>8</sup> Tatiana Zhurzhenko, 'From the "Reunification of the Ukrainian Lands" to "Soviet Occupation": The Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact in Ukrainian Political Memory', in *The Use and Abuse of Memory: Interpreting World War II in Contemporary European Politics*, eds. Christian Karner and Bram Mertens (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2013), 229–48; Germ Janmaat, 'Identity Construction and Education: The History of Ukraine in Soviet and Post-Soviet Schoolbooks', in *Dilemmas of State-Led Nation Building in Ukraine*, eds. Taras Kuzio and Paul D'Anieri (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002), 171–90; Lina Klymenko, 'World War II in Ukrainian School History Textbooks: Mapping the Discourse of the Past', *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education* 44, 5 (2014): 756–77.

Nazi-Soviet military cooperation during 1939–41 and the Soviet mass atrocities against the populations of the territories between them are thus comprehensively glossed over.

### From Controversies to Memory Wars

In Russia some earlier activities were criticized as revisionist efforts aimed at diminishing Russia's role in the liberation of Europe and thereby questioning its privileged status as a superpower and permanent member of the UN Security Council. The Russian leadership saw these critical deconstructions of Soviet narratives of WWII as a part of Western expansion into the former Soviet sphere of influence, the enlargement of NATO (1999 and 2004) and the EU (2004 and 2007). Since then, the use of WWII in Russia's foreign and internal politics has reflected the growing revanchist mood in the Russian leadership and Russian society. On 10 February 2007 at the Munich Security Conference, Putin openly criticized the USA for its striving for a unipolar world and thereby, from the Russian point of view, breaking the post-WWII world order.<sup>9</sup>

Putin's efforts to restore the bi-polar (or multi-polar) world order were accompanied by the growing use of memories of WWII for the mobilization of ethnic Russians, Russophones, and 'people of Russian culture' in the 'near abroad', ambiguously described in Russia's official discourse as compatriots (*sootechestvenniki*).<sup>10</sup> For the first time, shortly after Putin's Munich speech, there was violence. On 15 February 2007, the Estonian parliament took the decision to relocate the Soviet WWII memorial in Tallinn, the so-called Bronze Soldier, from the city centre to the military

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<sup>9</sup> Vladimir Putin, 'Speech and the Following Discussion at the Munich Conference on Security Policy', 10 February 2007, available at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24034> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZlY5aZfOgPA> (both last visited 24 April 2018).

<sup>10</sup> Mikhail Suslov, '“Russian World”: Russia's Policy Towards its Diaspora', *Russie. NEI Visions / Notes de l'Ifri*, 103 (2017), particularly pp. 22–7, available at [https://www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/suslov\\_russian\\_world\\_2017.pdf](https://www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/suslov_russian_world_2017.pdf); Vera Zakem, Paul Saunders, and Daniel Antoun, 'Mobilizing Compatriots: Russia's Strategy, Tactics, and Influence in the Former Soviet Union', *CNA's Occasional Papers*, November 2015, available at [https://www.cna.org/cna\\_files/pdf/DOP-2015-U-011689-1Rev.pdf](https://www.cna.org/cna_files/pdf/DOP-2015-U-011689-1Rev.pdf); Igor' Zevelev, 'Granitsy russkogo mira. Tranformatsiia natsionalnoi identichnosti i novaia vneshne-politicheskaia doktrina Rossii', *Rossia v global'noi politike* 12, 2 (2014), available at <https://www.globalaffairs.ru/number/Granitsy-russkogo-mira-16582> (all last visited 24 April 2018).

cemetery.<sup>11</sup> On 26–27 April 2007, hundreds of ethnic Russians, accompanied by some Russian citizens, took part in night riots in Tallinn, known as the Bronze Nights, to prevent the relocation.<sup>12</sup> For several months Russian mass-media provided almost daily coverage of the controversy which was represented as an effort by Estonian nationalists, the descendants of Nazi collaborators, to delete all traces of the heroic deeds of the Soviet Army.<sup>13</sup> For nine days protestors in Moscow besieged the Estonian embassy and physically attacked the ambassador.<sup>14</sup>

On 3 June 2008, the Prague Declaration on European Conscience and Communism was signed by prominent European politicians, former political prisoners, and historians, calling for “Europe-wide condemnation of, and education about, the crimes of communism”.<sup>15</sup> On 23 September 2008, the European Parliament adopted the Declaration and proclaimed 23 August the European Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Stalinism and Nazism.<sup>16</sup>

In response, Russia’s president established the Presidential Commission of the Russian Federation to Counter Attempts to Falsify History to the Detriment of Russia’s Interests on 19 May 2009.<sup>17</sup> According to an official statement, the commission was established to “defend Russia

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<sup>11</sup> Pilvi Torsti, ‘Why do History Politics Matter? The Case of the Estonian Bronze Soldier’, in *The Cold War and the Politics of History*, eds. Juhani Aunesluoma and Pauli Kettunen (Helsinki: University of Helsinki, 2008), available at [https://helda.helsinki.fi/bitstream/handle/10224/4043/bronze\\_soldier2008.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://helda.helsinki.fi/bitstream/handle/10224/4043/bronze_soldier2008.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y) (last visited 24 April 2018).

<sup>12</sup> Ivo Mijnsen, *The Quest for an Ideal Youth in Putin’s Russia I: Back to Our Future! History, Modernity and Patriotism According to Nasbi, 2005–2013*, 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 105–10; Marko Lehti, Matti Jutila, and Markku Jokisipilä, ‘Never-Ending Second World War: Public Performances of National Dignity and the Drama of the Bronze Soldier’, *Journal of Baltic Studies* 39, 4 (2008): 393–418.

<sup>13</sup> Torsti, ‘History Politics’ (see note 12), 28–30.

<sup>14</sup> Mijnsen, *Ideal Youth* (see note 13), 110–14.

<sup>15</sup> See ‘Prague Declaration on European Conscience and Communism’, 3 June 2008, available at <http://www.praguedeclaration.eu/> (last visited 24 April 2018).

<sup>16</sup> See ‘Declaration on the Proclamation of 23 August as European Day of Remembrance for Victims of Stalinism and Nazism’, 23 September 2008, available at <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P6-TA-2008-0439+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN> (last visited 24 April 2018). See also: Stefan Troebst, ‘Der 23. August 1939. Ein europäischer Lieu de memoire?’, *Osteuropa* 59, 7–8 (2009): 249–56.

<sup>17</sup> President of Russia, ‘O Komissii pri Prezidente Rossiiskoi Federatsii po protivodeistviu popytкам fal’sifikatsii istorii v ushcherb interesam Rossii’, available at <http://kremlin.ru/acts/bank/29288> (last visited 24 April 2018).

against falsifiers of history and those who would deny the Soviet contribution to victory in WWII".<sup>18</sup> The commission existed for less than three years and was dissolved on 14 February 2012. Probably it was found to be ineffective. Although the commission included some historians, its goal had not been to uncover 'blank spots' from the past, as had been the case in other post-Communist countries, but to 'stop the falsifications'. The commission could not by definition be successful. However, the Russian leadership had recognized the importance of memory politics and the year 2012 was proclaimed a 'Year of History' in Russia. But this time the state authorities preferred to appropriate grass-roots initiatives.

### 'The Great Patriotic War' Reinterpreted and Instrumentalized as Russia's Primary Myth and Instrument of Soft Power Abroad

After the dissolution of the USSR and what was in large part the unjust privatization of former socialist state property in the 1990s, Russian society was deeply divided between a minority which had 'won' in the course of the transformation and the majority which had substantially lost out. In order to stabilize the regime, the Russian leadership needed a substitute for communist ideology to unite the nation and manipulate it. The myth of the Great Patriotic War makes Russian citizens aware of their mission in the world, proud of their history, and united around their leadership.<sup>19</sup> However, this 'renovated' myth lacks some important features: it makes no reference to the leading role of the Communist Party or to socialist society and its superior values. So an internally coherent continuity has been constructed from the pre-1917 Russian Empire through the USSR to post-1991 Russia.

An authoritarian regime was gradually established in Russia after 1993, when the State Duma was shot at and set on fire from tanks under the orders of the Russian president. Supreme power was then handed from the president to his heir (*preemnik*): from Yeltsin to Putin in 1999, from Putin to Medvedev in 2008, and back again in 2012. In this way, presiden-

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<sup>18</sup> President of the Russian Federation, 'Dmitrii Medvedev's Keynote Speech at the Assembly of the Russian Organizing Committee "Victory"', 27 January 2009, available at <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/2958> (last visited 24 April 2018).

<sup>19</sup> Olga Malinova, 'Political Uses of the Great Patriotic War in Post-Soviet Russia from Yeltsin to Putin', in *War and Memory in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus*, eds. Julie Fedor et al. (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 43–70.



tial elections were transformed into a ceremonial display of the people's loyalty to the regime. The Russian leadership was consequently busy developing an uncontroversial cultural memory as a corollary: a state-centred narrative involving a strongman leading the country from victory to victory through every hardship.

Putin's regime claims that Russia was the main contributor to the defeat of Nazism in the Great Patriotic War of 1941–5, and thereby makes itself immune to criticism from abroad as well as from inside the country. The Russian leadership, shocked by the victory of the Orange Revolution in Ukraine in December 2004 which was seen as part of the West's expansion, started to look for alternative symbols. In 2005, on the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Victory Day, the news agency *RIA Novosti* and a civic youth organization launched a campaign calling on volunteers to distribute the St. George's Ribbon<sup>20</sup> (*Georgievskaja lentā*) in the streets ahead of Victory Day. The ribbon has been adopted by Russian nationalist and government loyalist groups. The 'Victory Banner', that is, the red banner of the 150<sup>th</sup> Idritskaia Rifle Division (Order of Kutuzov 2<sup>nd</sup> Class), which was raised over the Reichstag in Berlin on 1 May 1945, was made the main symbol of the victory in WWII by the Russian parliament on 7 May 2007.<sup>21</sup>

The regime also uses grass-roots initiatives to refresh and instrumentalize collective memories. On 5 May 2010, a bus decorated with a portrait of Stalin and called a *stalinobus* operated on Nevskii Prospect, the main street in St. Petersburg. Then in 2011–13 on Victory Day, in early May, the *stalinobuses*, renamed as Victory buses, operated in two dozen Russian cities. Money for decorating them was raised online. Since Stalin is too controversial a figure, the *stalinobus* idea did not receive the necessary support from the authorities and shortly afterwards was abandoned.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> The St. George's Ribbon is a replica of the Guards' Ribbon (*Gvardejskaia lentā*) introduced in 1942 in the Red Army. In turn, the Guards' Ribbon was a replica of the St. George's Ribbon established in 1769 in the Russian Empire.

<sup>21</sup> Anne M. Platoff, 'Of Tablecloths and Soviet Relics: A Study of the Banner of Victory (*Znamia Pobedy*)', *Raven* 20 (2013): 55–83.

<sup>22</sup> Fabian Burkhardt, '“Stalinobus” Cruises While Russians Debate', *Radio Free Europe*, 6 May 2010, available at [https://www.rferl.org/a/Stalinobus\\_Cruises\\_While\\_Russians\\_Debate/2034682.html](https://www.rferl.org/a/Stalinobus_Cruises_While_Russians_Debate/2034682.html); Ostop Karmodi, '“Stalinobus” Kills the Mood ahead of WWII Victory Day Festivities', *The Observers France24*, 23 April 2012, available at <http://observers.france24.com/en/20120423-russia-estonia-latvia-stalinobus-kills-mood-ahead-world-war-two-victory-day-festivities>; 'Stalinobus Gets Cold Reception in St. Petersburg', *transpress nz*, 24 April 2012, available at <http://transpressnz.blogspot.com/2012/04/stalinobus-gets-cold-reception-in-st.html> (all last visited 24 April 2018).

But local journalists in the city of Tomsk, Siberia, came up with an alternative initiative. On 9 May 2012, they organized a march by city residents carrying the portraits of their late relatives who had taken part in the war. They called the initiative the Immortal Regiment (*Bessmertnyi polk*). Next year the march spread to many other cities in Russia. Because almost every family in the USSR had suffered losses in WWII, the introduction of the Immortal Regiment march made it easy for ordinary Russians to adopt the official narrative of Victory Day as promoted by the regime. Then in May 2014, this grass-roots initiative received official support and on 9 May 2015 the Immortal Regiment march joined the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations on Red Square in Moscow. This time, and for all subsequent celebrations of Victory Day, the march in Moscow was led by Putin with a portrait of his late father. Thus, the regime appropriated a grass-roots initiative.

Russia's irremovable president, who had lost some popular support in the course of the anti-government rallies of 2011–12, now demonstrated his unity with the masses and the unification of the Russian people around a common memory and leader. In 2013 and the years that followed, the march was held in the capital cities of some of the former Soviet republics, in Kyïv, Tallinn, Riga, and Bishkek, as well as in countries with large Russophone diasporas (e.g. Israel and Germany) which shared this Soviet cultural memory. The Immortal Regiment march and the demonstrations on 9 May thereby became an important demonstration of Russia's soft power, particularly in Ukraine and the Baltic states.<sup>23</sup>

### Competing Narratives of the Second World War in Ukrainian Politics

Ukraine's political model could be defined as 'competitive'; however, it is far from a truly competitive democracy, mainly due to the presence of a rampant kleptocracy. Also, from the very beginning, memory was used competitively in Ukrainian politics. Until 2003 the political leadership tried to present the leader as maintaining a balance between two competing narratives, the Soviet and the nationalist (this latter having been preserved in the Ukrainian diasporas of North America and, after 1991, imported to Ukraine). Since 2003, the tensions between both 'memory factions' have grown: each side presents itself in the public sphere as the

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<sup>23</sup> Julie Fedor, 'Memory, Kinship, and the Mobilization of the Dead: The Russian State and the "Immortal Regiment" Movement', in *War and Memory* (see note 20), 307–45.

defender of the only 'true history' and creates strong identificatory markers for the electorate by accusing the opposing faction of falsifying history.<sup>24</sup> Although Ukraine's history is full of events and figures which are susceptible to controversial interpretation, ultimately the Second World War emerged as the most conflict-inducing of all of them, and as such was seen by some members of the elite as the most suitable for the purposes of dividing the electorate.<sup>25</sup>

In the 1990s, a new master-narrative of recent Ukrainian history was created by means of the cursory combination of the conventional nation-state (nationalist) narrative with the old Soviet one. At the same time, there was much space left for non-mainstream memories, especially at a local level and in different regions: to the glorification of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and its leader Stepan Bandera and to the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) and its leader Roman Shukhevych in western Ukraine (mostly in Galicia), as well as to celebrations of the 'socialist industrialization of the 1930s' in the South-East. This balancing of competing narratives enabled presidents Leonid Kravchuk (1991–4) and Leonid Kuchma (1994–2004) to position themselves between the two opposing poles in society – the communists and the nationalists.<sup>26</sup>

By the early 2000s the political parties in Ukraine had turned into political lobby groups owned by various oligarchs, whose main purpose

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<sup>24</sup> Lina Klymenko, 'World War II or Great Patriotic War Remembrance? Crafting the Nation in Commemorative Speeches of Ukrainian Presidents', *National Identities* 17, 4 (2015): 387–403; Olesya Khromeychuk, 'The Shaping of "Historical Truth": Construction and Reconstruction of the Memory and Narrative of the Waffen SS "Galicia" Division', *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 54, 3–4 (2012): 443–467; Volodymyr Kravchenko, 'Fighting Soviet Myths: The Ukrainian Experience', *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 34, 1/4 (2015–16): 447–84; Wilfried Jilge, 'The Politics of History and the Second World War in Post-Communist Ukraine (1986/1991–2004/2005)', *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 54, 1 (2006): 50–81.

<sup>25</sup> Wilfried Jilge, 'Competing Victimhoods: Post-Soviet Ukrainian Narratives on World War II, Shared History – Divided Memory', in *Jews and Others in Soviet Occupied Poland, 1939–1941*, eds. Elazar Barkan, Elizabeth Cole, and Kai Struve (Leipzig: Leipziger Univ.-Verl., 2008), 103–31; Oxana Shevel, 'The Politics of Memory in a Divided Society: A Comparison of Post-Franco Spain and Post-Soviet Ukraine', *Slavic Review* 70, 1 (2011): 137–64; Oxana Shevel, 'No Way Out? Post-Soviet Ukraine's Memory Wars in Comparative Perspective', in *Beyond the Euromaidan: Comparative Perspectives on Advancing Reform in Ukraine*, eds. Henry Hale and Robert Ortung (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016), 21–40.

<sup>26</sup> Andrii Portnov, 'Memory Wars in Post-Soviet Ukraine (1991–2010)', in *Memory and Theory in Eastern Europe*, eds. Uilleam Blacker, Alexander Etkind, and Julie Fedor (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 238–9.

it was, and still is, to control and abuse state-owned property and the state budget. Political parties which could be qualified as left or right, liberal or conservative, in accordance with the conventional criteria of political science, are not to be found in Ukraine today. All the parties are structured around a leader with strong support from an oligarch or group of oligarchs. All parties make active use of populist rhetoric: they do not identify themselves with a certain social group, but rather with regional ones. In political contests, therefore, the past has increasingly been used to maintain regional difference and to link the regional identity of the electorate with particular narratives from Ukrainian history.<sup>27</sup>

With President Viktor Yushchenko, who was elected president after the so-called Orange Revolution of 2004–5, the official politics of memory shifted markedly. There were two basic dimensions: the first involved a narrative of victimization and the representation of national history as martyrdom, with the Great Famine of 1933 (*Holodomor*) as the apotheosis of the suffering of Ukrainians under Russian / Soviet rule. The second dimension revolved around the glorification of the OUN–UPA and other historic groups, figures, and battles fought by Ukrainians against Russians. The Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance (*Ukrains'kyi instytut natsional'noi pam'iaty*) was established in 2006 by the government in order to study both the Great Famine and the OUN–UPA, as well as all other crimes of the Communist regime. That same year the Ukrainian parliament passed a bill defining the Holodomor as a deliberate act of genocide against Ukrainians.<sup>28</sup> The National Memorial Museum of the Victims of the Holodomor was opened in Kyiv in 2008. President Yushchenko officially rehabilitated two of Ukraine's most controversial World-War-II-era figures, the commander of the UPA Roman Shukhevych and the leader of the OUN Stepan Bandera, and awarded them both with the title of Hero of Ukraine in 2007 and 2010 respectively. Yushchenko's decision was celebrated in western Ukraine, which had been the main site of OUN–UPA anti-Communist resistance between 1939–53, dismissed in south-east Ukraine, and condemned by the European parliament as well as by many in Poland and Russia. Elected in 2010,

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<sup>27</sup> Alexandr Osipian, 'The Overlapping Realms of Memory and Politics in Ukraine, 2004–2012', *Interstitio* IV, 1–2 (7–8) (2012): 39–60.

<sup>28</sup> 'Law of Ukraine No. 376–V "On Holodomor of 1932–33 in Ukraine"', 28 November 2006', published on the website of the Embassy of Ukraine to Canada on 24 April 2013, available at <https://canada.mfa.gov.ua/en/embassy/3572-zakon-ukrajini-376-v-progolodomor-1932-1933-rr-v-ukrajini> (last visited 24 July 2020).

President Viktor Yanukovych announced on 5 March 2010 that he would repeal the decrees. On 2 April 2010 the Donetsk District Administrative Court ruled that Yushchenko's presidential decrees awarding the title of Hero of Ukraine had been illegal. In January 2011, the award was officially annulled.<sup>29</sup>

### Inventing the 'Ukrainian Fascist' Threat, Drawing the Dividing Lines, Performing the Battles

By the end of 2013 and thanks to the memory politics of the Party of Regions, the ground was well prepared for Russian proxy intervention in Ukraine. This, however, had not been the intention of the party's leadership. The use of history by the administration of President Viktor Yanukovych (2010–14) was mainly geared towards securing re-election in the presidential elections of March 2015, while most of the institutions set up by his predecessor remained intact. As Yanukovych's Party of Regions received its strongest support from voters in the eastern and southern parts of Ukraine, much of his campaigning aimed at generating among his electoral base a fear of other (i.e. mostly central and western) regions. To this end he made active use of historical myths and stereotypes originating from Soviet historiography and propaganda about 'Banderite nationalists'<sup>30</sup> and 'Nazi collaborators' in the western parts of Ukraine.

Through a series of highly controversial commemorative activities, WWII was re-invented as a war between cruel Ukrainian nationalists, the so-called Banderites, and their opponents, i.e. peaceful Ukrainians and Russians and the soldiers of the Red Army. In this way Nazi Germany as the main enemy in the war was gradually and relatively successfully substituted by 'Ukrainian fascists' and, in more recent terms, by 'neo-Nazis' (the Svoboda Party and other far-right groups like Tryzub and Patriot Ukraïny).

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<sup>29</sup> Oksana Myshlovska and André Liebich, 'Bandera Memorialization and Commemoration', *Nationalities Papers* 42, 5 (2014): 750–70; Eleonora Narvselius, 'The "Bandera Debate": The Contentious Legacy of World War II and Liberalization of Collective Memory in Western Ukraine', *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 54, 3–4 (2012): 469–90.

<sup>30</sup> Banderites (*Banderivtsi*) – colloquial term for members and supporters of the fraction of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN–B) led by Stepan Bandera. This term has been used pejoratively in Soviet propaganda. For more details, see David R. Marples, *Heroes and Villains: Creating National History in Contemporary Ukraine* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2007).

The construction of the image of the 'Ukrainian fascist' enemy was developed further during the spring of 2011, when competing historical myths clashed in the course of preparations for the Victory Day celebrations, provoking a hysterical reaction in the government- and oligarch-controlled mass media. The 2011 controversy was sparked by the official introduction of a new commemorative symbol that year: the Victory Banner adapted from the one used in Russia. On 21 April 2011, with a majority vote from the Party of the Regions and its supportive junior partner the Communist Party, a bill was passed in the Ukrainian parliament according to which replicas of the original Victory Banner should be used in official Victory Day ceremonies countrywide.<sup>31</sup>

In western Ukraine, however, regional and city councils refused to comply with the law. Provocations were then organized with the help of the pro-Russian nationalist organizations Russian Unity (*Russkoe edinstvo*) (Crimea) and Motherland (*Rodina*) (Odesa) supported by the Party of Regions. Activists from these organizations were bused into L'viv on 9 May 2011 with the aim of provoking clashes with local Ukrainian nationalists.<sup>32</sup> This was followed by the creation of the International Anti-Fascist Front shortly thereafter.<sup>33</sup>

The logic behind these political tactics was simple: the aim was to convince Yanukovich's disillusioned electorate that fascism was gaining strength in Ukraine, that only Yanukovich was capable of protecting

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<sup>31</sup> Platoff, 'Of Tablecloths' (see note 22), 74–5.

<sup>32</sup> Volodymyr Musyak, 'Clashes Break Out in Lviv During Victory Day Events', *The Ukrainian Weekly*, 15 May 2011, available at [http://ukrweekly.com/archive/2011/The\\_Ukrainian\\_Weekly\\_2011-20.pdf](http://ukrweekly.com/archive/2011/The_Ukrainian_Weekly_2011-20.pdf) (last visited 24 April 2018).

<sup>33</sup> 'The International Anti-Fascist Front' was created in Kyiv on 9 September 2011. According to Wikipedia, this was the initiative of more than thirty different NGOs, including veterans' groups, military groups, and peacekeeping groups from Ukraine and abroad, and the Ukraine-wide NGO Human Rights' Public Movement 'Russophone Ukraine'. The URL given for the Front on Wikipedia (<http://www.antifashyst.org>) does not appear to be operational. The Front is affiliated with another organization – World Without Nazism (WWN; in Ukrainian *Mir bez natsizma*). The organization was founded and is led by Boris Spiegel, a Russian oligarch with close ties to Putin. It was founded in Kyiv on 22 June 2010. The organization claims to campaign against 'neo-fascism' in the countries of the former Communist Bloc, particularly in the Baltic states and Ukraine. The URL given for the WWN on Wikipedia (<http://worldwithoutnazism.org/>) does not appear to be operational. Also see Orysia Lutsevych, 'Agents of the Russian World: Proxy Groups in the Contested Neighbourhood', *Chatham House Research Paper: Russia and Eurasia Programme*, April 2016, particularly pp. 16–18, available at <https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/publications/research/2016-04-14-agents-russian-world-lutsevych.pdf> (last visited 24 April 2018).

ordinary people from this threat, and that therefore it would be best to vote for Yanukovych rather than for his likely main rival, the Svoboda leader Oleh Tiahnybok. High-ranking politicians from the Party of Regions frequently referred to their political opponents from Svoboda openly as fascists or neo-fascists.<sup>34</sup>

In the run-up to Victory Day in 2013, the Party of Regions organized a Ukraine-wide ‘Memory Watch’ campaign called We Are Proud of the Great Victory.<sup>35</sup> Later, the Party also initiated a series of rallies under the slogan ‘Into Europe – Without Fascists’ (*V Evropu – bez fashistov*). The rallies started off in various parts of the country on 14 May and culminated in a final ‘Anti-fascist March’ accompanied by brawling between Svoboda and the Berkut riot-police on St. Sophia’s Square in Kyiv on 18 May.<sup>36</sup> On 17 May, around 20,000 people gathered for a rally in Donetsk under the slogan “Donbas against Neo-Fascism”.<sup>37</sup>

Re-enactors were widely used by the Party of Regions and by Svoboda to re-enact battles from WWII. They did this to help the public visualize the war in the course of the commemorations, to attract as many specta-

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<sup>34</sup> Oleksii Byk, ‘Partiia Rehioniv vidkryvaie “antyfashysts’kyi front”’, *Glavkom*, 31 October 2013, available at <https://glavcom.ua/publications/122632-partiia-regioniv-vidkrivaje-%C2%ABantifashistskij-front%C2%BB-dokument.html>; ‘Donetskies “regionaly” prosiat zapretit’ “Svobodu” kak neofashistskuiu organizatsiiu’, *LB.ua*, 13 May 2013, available at [https://lb.ua/news/2013/05/13/199214\\_donetskies\\_regionali\\_prosyat.html](https://lb.ua/news/2013/05/13/199214_donetskies_regionali_prosyat.html); ‘Luganskikh studentov sgoniaiat na antifashistskii marsh Partii regionov’, *LB.ua*, 14 May 2013, available at [https://lb.ua/news/2013/05/14/199447\\_luganskikh\\_studentov\\_silom\\_gonyat.html](https://lb.ua/news/2013/05/14/199447_luganskikh_studentov_silom_gonyat.html); Nazar Tymoshchuk, ‘“Antyfashysts’ki” temnyky’, *LB.ua*, 21 March 2014, available at [https://lb.ua/news/2014/03/21/260239\\_antifashistski\\_temniki\\_.html](https://lb.ua/news/2014/03/21/260239_antifashistski_temniki_.html) (all last visited 24 April 2018).

<sup>35</sup> ‘Spasibo za zhizn’!’, *Luganskaia oblastnaia organizatsiia Partii regionov*, available at <http://www.pr.lg.ua/tags/%E2%E0F5F2%E0+%EF%E0EC%FF%F2%E8/> (last visited 24 April 2018, currently not available).

<sup>36</sup> ‘Draka v tsentre Kieva glazami ochevidtsev’, *Korrespondent.net*, 20 May 2013, available at <http://korrespondent.net/ukraine/1560673-draka-v-centre-kieva-glazami-ochevidcev>; Stanislav Kozliuk, ‘U Kyievi startuvav “antyfashysts’kyi marsh” rehionaliv’, *Tyzhden.ua*, 18 May 2013, <http://tyzhden.ua/News/79826>; Milan Lielich, ‘U Kyievi vynykla sutyчка mizh “svobodivtsiamy” i “Berkutom”’, *Tyzhden.ua*, 18 May 2013, available at <http://tyzhden.ua/News/79835> (all last visited 24 April 2018).

<sup>37</sup> ‘Donbass protiv neofashizma!’, official website of the Party of Regions, 18 May 2013, available at <http://partyofregions.ua/news/51975c4fc4ca42047c000320> (last visited 18 May 2013, currently not available). See also: ‘“Donbass pashet, a oni kulakami mashut”: Donetsk trebuie zapretit’ “Svobodu” fotoreportazh’, *REGNUM*, 18 May 2013, available at <https://regnum.ru/news/polit/1660180.html> (last visited 30 July 2020).



tors as possible,<sup>38</sup> and to intensify the emotional effect on the public and on TV news audiences, thereby increasing empathy towards ‘our’ soldiers and ‘our’ politicians.

The re-enactors’ (role-play) movement has been gaining in popularity in Ukraine since the 1990s. The total number of the various re-enactors’ clubs in Ukraine is estimated to involve up to 10,000 people.<sup>39</sup> Initially, the re-enactment of medieval and early modern history received more news coverage as something exotic and entertaining but also for the more practical purpose of attracting more tourists and visitors to the re-enactment events (festivals, tournaments, etc.) held in provincial towns with well-preserved medieval castles.<sup>40</sup> During 2011–13 the re-enactors re-creating WWII received much more mass-media coverage than ever before. However, the WWII commemorations and accompanying re-enactments were organized differently in south-east Ukraine and in Galicia (west Ukraine). These re-enactments were supported by the local authorities – the Party of Regions in the south-east and Svoboda in Galicia. In south-east Ukraine the re-enactments represented battles between Soviet and German soldiers. Red Army veterans and guests from Russia were invited to attend the events.<sup>41</sup> The role games in Galicia showed battles between the UPA and NKVD.<sup>42</sup> UPA veterans were invited to the re-enactments

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<sup>38</sup> The re-enactment in the big industrial city of Zaporizhzhia in 2013 had attracted over 80,000 spectators. ‘U Zaporizhzhii vidbulasia naimasshtabnisha v Ukraïni viis’kovohistorychna rekonstruktsiia chasiv Velykoï Vitchyznianoi viiny’, official web site of the Zaporizhzhia Oblast’ State Administration, 14 October 2013, available at <http://www.zoda.gov.ua/news/21105/u-zaporizhzhii-vidbulasya-naymasshtabnisha-v-ukrajini-viyskovohistorychna-rekonstruktsiya-chasiv-velikoji-vitchiznyanoi-viyni.html> (last visited 24 April 2018).

<sup>39</sup> Maksim Butchenko and Timur Vorona, ‘Srednevekov’e kakoe-to. Ukrainskie rekonstruktory dobyvaiut sebe mirnye pobedy’, *Novoe vremia*, 15 June 2016, available at <https://nv.ua/publications/srednevekov-e-kakoe-to-ukrainskie-rekonstruktory-dobyvajut-sebe-mirnye-pobedy-148050.html> (last visited 24 April 2018).

<sup>40</sup> Khotyn, Kam’ianets’-Podil’s’kyi, Luts’k, Sudak, to mention a few.

<sup>41</sup> ‘U Zaporizhzhii vidbulasia’ (see note 39); ‘V Zaporozh’e sostoialas’ samaia masshtabnaia v Ukraine voenno-istoricheskaia rekonstruktsiia vremen Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny’, official website of the Party of Regions, 4 October 2013, available at <http://partyofregions.ua/project/511cfaa3fcd0bb730000d3/news/525be701c4ca423d6f0000a6> (last visited 14 October 2013, currently not available).

<sup>42</sup> NKVD – the People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs was the interior ministry of the Soviet Union. The NKVD undertook mass extrajudicial executions of great numbers of citizens and conceived, populated, and administered the Gulag system of forced labour camps. NKVD units were also used to repress the UPA partisan war in west Ukraine in 1944–53.



and refreshments. The events were accompanied with Svoboda political meetings and “UPA glory marches”.<sup>43</sup> The WWII re-enactors are well-connected with the amateur archaeologists (*poiskoviki*) involved in excavations on WWII battlefields.<sup>44</sup> Some of them are busy discovering, identifying, and burying the remains of Red Army soldiers, while many others (*chërnye kopateli*)<sup>45</sup> are looking for Soviet and German arms and ammunition to be sold on the black market into private collections.<sup>46</sup> Many WWII re-enactors took part in the military conflict in east Ukraine in 2014, well-indoctrinated and zealous in fighting the enemy.

### From Memory War to Proxy War: WWII Performed During the Military Conflict in the Donbas<sup>47</sup>

The well-elaborated narrative of the ‘fascist threat’ was used by the Russian mass-media and by pro-Russian activists during the insurgency in the

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<sup>43</sup> ‘V Ivano-Frankovske sostoialas’ rekonstruktsiia boia UPA s NKVD’, *Korrespondent.net*, 27 May 2012, available at <https://korrespondent.net/ukraine/events/1353760-v-ivano-frankovske-sostoiyas-rekonstrukciya-boya-upa-s-nkvd>; ‘Vo L’vove proshla istoricheskaia rekonstruktsiia boia voinov UPA s voïskami NKVD’, *UNIAN fotobank*, 14 October 2012, available at <https://photo.unian.net/rus/themes/35823> (both last visited 24 April 2018).

<sup>44</sup> See ‘Soiuz poiskovykh otriadov Ukrainy’, available at <http://www.spou.com.ua/>; ‘Spisok poiskovykh otriadov Ukrainy...’, 8 September 2010, available at [http://1941-1945.at.ua/blog/spisok\\_poiskovykh\\_otriadov\\_ukrainy/2010-09-08-25](http://1941-1945.at.ua/blog/spisok_poiskovykh_otriadov_ukrainy/2010-09-08-25) (both last visited 24 April 2018); ‘U seli Pereviz pid Kyevom siogodni khovaly soldativ velykoi vitchyznianoi,’ *TSN channel*, 20 July 2013 (last visited 20 July 2013).

<sup>45</sup> *Chërnye kopateli* – literally, “the black diggers”. For more details, see [https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%A7%D1%91%D1%80%D0%BD%D1%8B%D0%B5\\_%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%BF%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%B5%D0%BB%D0%B8](https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%A7%D1%91%D1%80%D0%BD%D1%8B%D0%B5_%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%BF%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%B5%D0%BB%D0%B8) (last visited 24 April 2019).

<sup>46</sup> Warren Jane, ‘Grave Robbing Ghouls Who Trade in Nazi Relics’, *Express*, 8 September 2012, available at <https://www.express.co.uk/expressyourself/344760/Grave-robbing-ghouls-who-trade-in-Nazi-relics> (last visited 24 April 2018).

<sup>47</sup> In this paper, analysis is limited to late August 2014 since by that time the Russia-backed insurgency was gradually turning into Russian military invasion. It was established by Bellingscat Investigation Team that cross-border artillery attacks from Russia against Ukraine occurred on or before 16 July 2014. See Sean Case and Klement Anders, ‘Bellingscat Report: Putin’s Undeclared War, Summer 2014 – Russian Artillery Strikes Against Ukraine’, available at [https://www.bellingscat.com/app/uploads/2016/12/ArtilleryAttacks\\_withCover\\_EmbargoNote.pdf](https://www.bellingscat.com/app/uploads/2016/12/ArtilleryAttacks_withCover_EmbargoNote.pdf) (last visited 30 July 2020); see also ‘Bellingscat Report: Origin of Artillery Attacks on Ukrainian Military Positions in Eastern Ukraine between 14 July 2014 and 8 August 2014’, available at <https://www.bellingscat.com/news/uk-and-europe/2015/02/17/origin-of-artillery-attacks/> (last visited 24 April 2018).

Donbas in spring 2014. The military conflict was intended to be perceived by the TV news audience as a kind of sequel to WWII.<sup>48</sup> The so-called Euromaidan revolution in Kyiv was presented as a neo-Nazi *coup d'état* and the interim government was called a 'fascist junta'. The Russian mass-media ascribed the main role in this *coup d'état* to a small radical nationalist group, the 'Right Sector' (*Pravyi sektor*), and described them as fascists.<sup>49</sup> In this way calls for the federalization of Ukraine, demands for a referendum, and, finally, for secession from Ukraine, including appeals to Putin to send Russian troops to Ukraine, were legitimized by the spreading of fears that 'Ukrainian fascists' were approaching the Donbas to persecute the locals as alleged supporters of the ousted President Yanukovich.<sup>50</sup>

On 12 April 2014 the Russian commandos of Colonel Girkin (*nom de guerre* Strelkov), with the support of local insurgents seized the central police departments in Slov'ians'k and Kramators'k. On the night of 19–20 April the insurgents faked a 'Right Sector' assault on one of their road-blocks. Among other items supposedly retrieved from the wreckage following the attack on the checkpoint and displayed on Russian television (*LifeNews*) as proof of *Pravyi sektor*'s involvement were a machine-gun. The self-proclaimed 'People's Mayor' of Slov'ians'k, Viacheslav Ponomarev, commented as follows in a press conference devoted to the incident: "On the battlefield we also found this Yugoslav machine gun – an analogue of the German MG 42, used by the German army during the Great Patriotic War".<sup>51</sup> Though it was a Yugoslav machine gun, Pono-

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<sup>48</sup> Alexandr Osipian, 'Historical Myths, Enemy Images and Regional Identity in the Donbass Insurgency (Spring 2014)', *Journal of Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society* 1, 1 (2015): 109–40.

<sup>49</sup> Irina Khaldarova and Mervi Pantti, 'Fake News: The Narrative Battle over the Ukrainian Conflict', *Journalism Practice* 10, 7 (2016): 893–4; see also: 'Ukraine's Far-Right Leader Moves HQ to the East, Forms New Squadron', *Russia Today*, 24 April 2014, available at <https://www.rt.com/news/154452-right-sector-yarosh-unit/>; 'Viacheslav Likhachëv: V Rossii v 2014 "Pravyi sektor" upominalsia v SMI tak chasto, kak i Edinaia Rossiia', *UKRLIFE.TV*, 29 May 2017, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a4hUeKW04uY> (both last visited 24 April 2018).

<sup>50</sup> Here and further, if the source is not specified, a statement is based on my own personal observations and conversations.

<sup>51</sup> 'Mer Slavianska: u ubitogo boevika pri sebe byl zheton "Pravogo sektora"', *TASS*, 20 April 2014, available at <https://tass.ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/1134411>; 'Glava opolcheniia Slavianska: U ubitogo pod Slavianskom boevika pri sebe byl zheton "Pravogo sektora"', *Russia Today*, 20 April 2014, available at <https://russian.rt.com/article/28614> (both last visited 24 April 2018).

marëv deliberately referred to the German army and WWII to evoke associations between *Pravyyi sector* and the Wehrmacht. Ponomarëv also commented: “Our opponents continue to advance their fascist ideology by using the weapons of their teachers”.<sup>52</sup> Ponomarëv then called on Putin to send Russian troops to Ukraine.<sup>53</sup>

The insurgents used the WWII symbols inherited from the USSR and promoted in Putin’s Russia. In the early stages of the insurgency, in March–April 2014, when the insurgents lacked the symbols uniting all the south-eastern provinces into the imagined ‘Novorossiiia’, they used the Victory Banner alongside the flags of the Russian Federation, the Russian Empire, and the USSR. The St. George’s Ribbon, worn by the ‘militia’ as a marker of their identity,<sup>54</sup> has been transformed into the main symbol of the insurgency,<sup>55</sup> thereby establishing a link with the memory of the Great Patriotic War.

In late April and early May, the insurgents and their adherents spread rumours that celebrations of Victory Day would be forbidden in Ukraine by the government in Kyïv as proof of the fascist nature of the ‘junta’.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> “Vizitka Iarosha”, ili Piat’ punktov TV-propagandy’, *BBC Russkaia sluzhba*, 22 April 2014, available at [http://www.bbc.co.uk/russian/international/2014/04/140422\\_russia\\_ukraine\\_propaganda\\_5points](http://www.bbc.co.uk/russian/international/2014/04/140422_russia_ukraine_propaganda_5points) (last visited 24 April 2018).

<sup>53</sup> Andreï Kots, “Narodnyï mer” Slavianska poprosil Vladimira Putina vvesti rossiïskih mirotvortsev v Donetskuiu i Luganskuiu oblasti’, *Vecherniaia Moskva*, 20 April 2014, available at <https://vm.ru/news/185406-narodnyj-mer-slavyanska-poprosil-vladimiraputina-vvesti-rossijskih-mirotvorcev-v-doneckuyu-i-luganskuyu-oblasti> (last visited 30 July 2020).

<sup>54</sup> In 2015, Russia’s Kazan Textile Factory upped its production of orange-and-black ribbon from 4,000 kilometres to 10,000, much of which has turned up in Crimea, separatist-held territories in eastern Ukraine, Transdnier, and Georgia’s breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Ihar Karney and Daisy Sindelar, ‘For Victory Day, Post-Soviets Show Their Colors – Just Not Orange And Black’, *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 7 May 2015, available at <https://www.rferl.org/a/victory-day-st-george-ribbon-orange-and-black/26999911.html> (last visited 24 April 2018).

<sup>55</sup> On 16 May 2017 the St. George’s Ribbon was officially banned in Ukraine. ‘Ukrainian Lawmakers Back Ban on Ribbon Embraced as Patriotic Symbol in Russia’, *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 16 May 2017, available at <https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-bans-st-georges-ribbon-separatist-symbol/28491961.html> (last visited 24 April 2018).

<sup>56</sup> At that time, when describing the conflict, the Ukrainian leadership made only case-by-case references to some Soviet symbols of the Great Patriotic War, which could be explained by the strong inertia of Soviet education and mass culture imbedded in the minds of older and middle generations. Andrii Portnov, ‘The “Great Patriotic War” in the Politics of Memory in Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine’, in *Civic Education and Democratisation in the Eastern Partnership Countries*, ed. Dieter Segert (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2016), 191–2.

Equally, Victory Day celebrations on 9 May 2014 were used to mobilize the masses in the Donbas to vote in the secessionist referendum on 11 May. In the city of Mariupol' the celebrations on 9 May were used by local paramilitary insurgents to attack the central police department.<sup>57</sup> An 'anti-fascist' meeting was organized by the insurgents in Donetsk on 28 May 2014, on the day after their unsuccessful attempt to seize Donetsk International Airport. Next, efforts were made to mobilize locals for the illegal paramilitary grouping People's Militia of the Donbas. Well-known Soviet-era visual images were used to build historical continuity. In a series of billboards set up in Donetsk in summer 2014, the insurgency was put in a sequence with the Civil War of 1918 and the Great Patriotic War of 1941–5, thereby representing the insurgents as fighting 'on the right side'. In this way the deployment of historical narrative helped to legitimize the insurgency in the eyes of some locals as well as to mobilize many Russian nationalists, Cossacks, criminals, and adventurers to fight against 'fascism' in Ukraine.<sup>58</sup>

In some cases, material objects from WWII were used by the insurgents to prove their direct connection with the 'holy war against fascism'. For instance, on 26 July, the insurgents of the 'Steppe' Battalion took from the museum in the town of Ienakiïeve a banner of the Ienakiïeve–Danube 40<sup>th</sup> Rifle Division with the legend "Death to the German Occupiers".<sup>59</sup> On 5 June the insurgents removed from its pedestal a memorial tank in the town of Kostiantynivka. They mounted a modern machinegun on the old tank. On its fuel tanks they wrote "On Kyïv" and "On L'viv", thus expressing their plan to attack in future the two strongholds of 'Ukrainian fascism'.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Shaun Walker and Oksana Grytsenko, 'Ukraine Crisis: "Three People Killed" in Fighting at Mariupol Police Station', *The Guardian*, 9 May 2014, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/09/ukraine-crisis-mariupol-police-station> (last visited 24 April 2018).

<sup>58</sup> For more details on Russia's interference, see Nikolay Mitrokhin, 'Infiltration, Instruction, Invasion: Russia's War in the Donbass', *Journal of Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society* 1, 1 (2015): 232–6.

<sup>59</sup> 'Narukavnye znaki (nashivki) vooruzhennykh formirovaniï DNR i LNR', available at <http://www.sammmler.ru/index.php?showtopic=144117&page=8>. See also photos on pro-insurgent forums, available at <http://phorum.bratishka.ru/viewtopic.php?f=40&t=11421> (currently not available) and <https://www.yaplakal.com/forum28/st/50/topic869104.html> (all last visited 24 April 2018).

<sup>60</sup> 'Opolchentsy "ozhivili" pamiatnik tanku vremen voïny', *TV Zvezda*, 6 June 2014, available at [https://tvzvezda.ru/news/vstrane\\_i\\_mire/content/201406052305-zy5e.htm](https://tvzvezda.ru/news/vstrane_i_mire/content/201406052305-zy5e.htm); 'Ukrainskie voennye pokazali otbitiï u opolchentsev tank IS-3', *TV Zvezda*, 3 August

By using this form of words they made reference to the siege of Berlin when Red Army soldiers daubed on their tanks, canons, and artillery shells “On Berlin!” It was thereby as if they were re-enacting WWII by fighting against the ‘Ukrainian fascists’. In reality, however, the memorial tank never took part in the Great Patriotic War. That particular model, the IS-3 (‘Joseph Stalin’), only went into production after May 1945. On 4 July the insurgents seized from the Museum of the Great Patriotic War in Donets’k two canons, and on 7 July a Soviet T-54 tank.<sup>61</sup> Though, as the insurgents themselves acknowledged, they did it for practical purposes: to renovate the weapons and use them against the approaching Ukrainian Army.<sup>62</sup> In the end only a few insurgent units tried to appropriate some material symbols of WWII, since the majority of them were busy looting banks and car shops.

The ‘performance’ of WWII by the insurgents culminated on 24 August 2014. On that day Ukrainians celebrated their Independence Day with a military parade in Kyïv. In Donets’k the insurgents staged a ‘Parade of the Defeated’ – a parade mocking the Ukrainian army and celebrating the death and imprisonment of its soldiers. Up to 100 captive Ukrainian soldiers, policemen, and volunteers, bruised and unshaved, some with bandaged arms and heads, wearing fetid camouflage uniforms, were marched down the main street of the city, guarded by insurgents with bayoneted guns. About a thousand onlookers<sup>63</sup> shouted “fascists!” and “murderers!” and pelted the prisoners with empty beer bottles, eggs, and tomatoes. Three street-cleaning machines followed the column, spraying water onto the street in a theatrical gesture to indicate that the men were unclean. The mockery parade received broad coverage in the Rus-

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2014, available at [https://tvzvezda.ru/news/vstrane\\_i\\_mire/content/201408030956-ujgh.htm](https://tvzvezda.ru/news/vstrane_i_mire/content/201408030956-ujgh.htm); ‘Opolchentsy zaveli IS-3 s postamenta Konstantinovki’, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cvdCsXevMnI> (currently not available); ‘Ukrainskii voiennye pokazali otbitii u opolchentsev tank IS-3’, *Weazel News*, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oUvFgXoGeP4> (all last visited 24 April 2018).

<sup>61</sup> The first T-54 prototype was completed by the end of 1945. Then various models of the T-54 were produced in 1946–1961.

<sup>62</sup> Sergei Chernykh, ‘Donchane panikuiut’, *Munitsipal’naia gazeta*, 11 July 2014, available at <http://mungaz.net/line/14447-donchane-panikuyut-no-sluhi-oprovergayutsya.html>; ‘V Donetske terroristy pokhitali tank iz gorodskogo parka (Foto. Video)’, *24TV*, 7 July 2014, available at [https://24tv.ua/ru/v\\_donetske\\_terroristi\\_pohitali\\_tank\\_iz\\_gorodskogo\\_parka\\_foto\\_video\\_n461760](https://24tv.ua/ru/v_donetske_terroristi_pohitali_tank_iz_gorodskogo_parka_foto_video_n461760) (both last visited 24 April 2018).

<sup>63</sup> Mostly family members of the insurgents who had fled from their initial stronghold in Slov’ians’k, Kramators’k, Druzhkivka, and Kostiantynivka on 5 July 2014.

sian, Ukrainian, and Western mass-media.<sup>64</sup> Very few Western reporters noted that the rules of the Geneva Convention on the treatment of prisoners of war prohibit parading them in public.<sup>65</sup>

All the Western reporters missed the main message of the organizers, easily recognized by middle-aged and older Russians and Ukrainians with a Soviet background. The mockery parade performed by the insurgents was an exact copy, though on a much smaller scale, of the 'Parade of the Defeated' held in Moscow on 17 July 1944 when 57,600 German prisoners-of-war were marched through the city centre.<sup>66</sup> The only difference was that the thousands of Muscovites were completely quiet. The documentary of 1944 'parade' was used constantly in the course of Victory Day celebrations during the later years of the USSR and thereby deeply embedded in the memory of its citizens. The main message of the parade was therefore to convince the audience that in East Ukraine local insurgents alongside Russian volunteers were fighting a reincarnated 'Ukrainian fascism' now.<sup>67</sup> The Russian mass-media emphasized the similarity between the parades in 1944 and 2014 to explain the main message to a younger generation lacking the Soviet-era memory of WWII.<sup>68</sup> On the day before, on 23 August 2014, regular detachments of the Russian army covertly entered eastern Ukraine in a counteroffensive

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<sup>64</sup> Richard Balmforth and Thomas Grove, 'Ukraine Defiant on National Day, Rebels Parade Captives', *Reuters*, 24 August 2014, available at <https://www.reuters.com/article/ukraine-crisis-idINKBN0GO0HJ20140824>; 'Ukraine Conflict: Donetsk Rebels Parade Captured Soldiers', *BBC*, 24 August 2014, available at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-28919683>; Aleksandr Kots and Dmitrii Steshin, 'V Donetske proshël "parad" plennykh', *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*, 24 August 2014, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P-EzdyHQRA> (all last visited 24 April 2018).

<sup>65</sup> Andrew E. Kramer and Andrew Higgins, 'In Eastern Ukraine, Rebel Mockery Amid Independence Celebration', *New York Times*, 24 August 2014, available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/25/world/europe/ukraine.html> (last visited 24 April 2018).

<sup>66</sup> 'Prokonvoirovanie voennoplennykh nemtsev cherez Moskvu', available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6pMcDCKgVAo>; 'Marsh plennykh nemtsev v Moskve 17 iulia 1944 goda', available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BYpighVl-A> (both last visited 24 April 2018).

<sup>67</sup> We may suppose that the actual idea and scenario of the parade was initiated by Aleksandr Borodai, a Russian nationalist and Moscow political technologist, who became 'prime minister' of the Donetsk insurgents 16 May–7 August 2014 and then the main adviser of new 'prime minister' Aleksandr Zakharchenko until early October 2014.

<sup>68</sup> 'V den' nezavisimosti Ukrainy v Donetske ustroili "marsh voennoplennykh"', *Moskovskii komsomolets*, 24 August 2014, available at <https://www.mk.ru/politics/2014/08/24/opolchency-otvetili-voennomu-paradu-poroshenko-marshem-voennoplennykh-v-donecke.html> (last visited 24 April 2018).

to safeguard the insurgents besieged in Donetsk and Luhansk.<sup>69</sup> The mockery parade was therefore performed, among other reasons, as a way of opening a new chapter in the military conflict.

Despite these most telling incidents of re-enacting or referencing symbols and items from the time of the Second World War, in general the insurgents did not pay too much attention to issues relating to WWII. The names they choose for their battalions – Batman, Leshyi (Sylvan), Oplot (Stronghold), Prizrak (Ghost), Somali, Sparta, Step' (Steppe), Vostok (East), Zaria (Sunrise) – make no reference to the War or to Russian history more generally.<sup>70</sup> Whereas the propagandist framework for the insurgency mostly created by the Russian mass-media has over-exploited the cultural memory of WWII, the insurgents' imagination is shaped rather by mass-culture consisting of a mixture of Hollywood movies, football, and crime news.

## Conclusions

After the proclamation of Ukraine's independence in 1991 two competing historical narratives strove for dominance in Ukrainian politics. The Soviet narrative (a modernized version of Karamzin's Russian imperial one) inherited from the USSR depicts Ukraine as a more or less autonomous part of the 'Russian World' or Moscow-centric 'Slavia Orthodoxa'. Alternatively, the nationalist narrative (normal for any emerging nation-state) focuses on the centuries-long struggle for independence. The memory of WWII was re-interpreted by both narratives. Political parties sometimes defined as pro-Russian re-interpret the Great Patriotic War of 1941–5 as a high point in Ukraine's history when Ukrainians alongside Russians defeated 'German fascism' and freed the world from the 'brown plague'. The proponents of that narrative are trying to convince their

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<sup>69</sup> Mitrokhin, 'Infiltration' (see note 59), 241–6.

<sup>70</sup> Zaria was named after the football club of Luhansk, while Somali makes evident reference to the Somalian pirates. In September 2008, the pirates captured the Ukrainian cargo ship Faina and held it till February 2009. All that time the destiny of the ship and its Ukrainian-Russian crew was in mass-media coverage, making the story quite popular in Ukraine and Russia. Finally, despite the aggressive anti-Americanism of the insurgents, two of their units – Batman and Sparta – were named after the famous Hollywood movies – *Batman* (2005, 2008, 2012) and *300* [Spartans] (2006). It was the same with the nicknames (*noms de guerre*) the insurgents took for themselves as well as for their tanks and armoured vehicles – there are no traces of the triumphalist memory of WWII.



voters in favour of economic (and political / cultural / religious) integration with Russia in the present. Political parties sometimes defined as pro-Western when arguing for maximum distancing from Russia re-interpret WWII as involving Ukrainian resistance against two totalitarian regimes, the Stalinist USSR and Nazi Germany, though the role of the latter has gradually been marginalized and the 'Ukrainian segment' of WWII is represented as a fight between Ukrainian OUN-UPA and Soviet NKVD troops.

The Soviet narrative dominates collective memory and public commemorations in south-east Ukraine while the nationalist one triumphed in the early 1990s in western Ukraine and then spread gradually to the centre of the country which is still ambivalent in its preferences. This regional diversity enables the instrumentalization of the competing narratives by political parties. By representing themselves as the defenders of 'historical truth' they manipulate electoral preferences, masterfully shifting the attention of the electorate away from their own inefficiency in public reform and replacing the actual social and economic agenda with a commemorative one. At this point Russia enters the game using the WWII narrative as its main form of soft power in Ukraine – as well in other former Soviet republics – to keep it in the Russian sphere of influence. Particularly after the Orange Revolution of 2004 in Ukraine, the Russian leadership gradually elaborated a multifaceted strategy to mobilize 'Russian compatriots' abroad against integration with the EU. Since then pro-European governments and parties have been blamed by Russia for revisionism in the memory of WWII, for the glorification of 'German-fascist collaborators', or even for being neo-Nazis / neo-fascists as was the case with the 'fascist junta in Kyiv' in 2014.

Soviet-style WWII commemorations were actively deployed by President Yanukovich and the ruling Party of Regions during 2011–13 to mobilize his disappointed electorate to vote for him again in March 2015. At the same time, Yanukovich campaigned in support of the Association Agreement with the EU to win over the moderate pro-Western electorate. In both cases he intended to reduce his opponents' electoral base to the ethno-nationalist minority represented by the far-right Svoboda Party. In the course of the opposing commemorative programmes (glorifying the Red Army and the OUN-UPA) supported by the two parties the re-enactor clubs were deployed. These re-enactments were intended to attract numerous spectators, create visualizations of the image of the enemy and draw clear-cut borders between 'us' and 'them'.



The series of commemorations and re-enactors' performances intensified between February–October 2013 when Russia's efforts to invite Ukraine to join its Customs Union failed. Finally, in the course of the insurgency in spring–summer 2014, narratives and symbols were used in Russian propaganda to legitimize the illegal actions of the insurgents in the eyes of local residents in the Donbas. The new government in Kyiv and the Ukrainian armed forces were represented as the ideological descendants of WWII fascists while the insurgents were represented as fighting a second round of the war against the 'fascist threat'. The few cases when the insurgents used the memorial-tanks, the banner, and the mockery-parade were perceived by the pro-insurgent audience as a sequel-performance of WWII, this time fought against 'Ukrainian fascists', as evidenced by the hundreds of comments they left on Youtube.

FELIX ACKERMANN

## HISTORY AS A MEANS OF HYBRID WARFARE?

### THE IMPACT OF THE ONGOING WAR IN EASTERN UKRAINE ON HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS IN LITHUANIA

The events of the Euromaidan in Kyïv were followed by Lithuanian society not as distant news, but as a reflection of more general developments in the region lying between Russia and the EU. For many of Lithuania's three million inhabitants, the subsequent annexation of Crimea triggered fears of Russian aggression in the Baltics. The ongoing war in the eastern part of Ukraine has already altered how the media reflects on 20<sup>th</sup> century Lithuanian history.

After Lithuania took over the EU presidency in late 2013, the shadow of the war in Ukraine brought considerable change in Lithuanian politics. The intensive preparations for the EU presidency as well as the Euromaidan in Kyïv increased the sensitivity of Lithuanian society to external threats. After the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation, this feeling was intensified primarily by the practices of hybrid war being used in the Donbas region and beyond, accompanied by an ongoing propaganda war, directed at, among others, the Russian-speaking inhabitants of the Baltics.

In Lithuania, public discourse centred on debates about historical interpretations of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1</sup> The history of societies under Ger-

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<sup>1</sup> An earlier exploration of the subject by the author was published previously: Felix Ackermann, 'Repercussions of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania? The Public Perception of the Ukrainian War in Lithuania', *Cultures of History Forum*, 27 June 2014, available at <http://www.cultures-of-history.uni-jena.de/focus/ukrainian-crisis/lithuania-repercussions-of-the-grand-duchy-of-lithuania-the-public-perception-of-the-ukrainian-war/> (last visited 24 April 2019); idem, 'Der Krieg vor der Haustür. Litauen und die Ukraine-Krise', *Merkur* 69, 798 (2015): 81–6. A prior version of this text was published in German as: Idem, 'Aktualisierte Gewalterfahrung. Litauens Geschichtspolitik und Russlands Ukrainekrieg', *Ost-*

man and Soviet occupation during the Second World War is the subject of bitter conflicts in Ukraine extending far beyond the interpretation of other historical events.<sup>2</sup> The logic of contemporary hybrid warfare is imposed on discussions about the great ruptures of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Lithuanian society is no longer able to conceive of itself without reference to the war in Ukraine.

### The Public Representation of State-Driven Public History

Since the emergence of the Lithuanian *Sąjūdis* independence movement in the 1980s, politicians have drawn a historical-political narrative continuum between the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the new independent state. This serves to present Lithuania as historically strong and large.<sup>3</sup> In 2002, this vision started to materialize with the building of a new palace of the Grand Duchy between the cathedral in Vilnius and Castle Mountain. The construction project aroused controversy and public protests about its considerable expense. Although the *Valdomų Rumai* was built on top of archaeologically documented foundations, the architectural style of the new building was based on a small number of 18<sup>th</sup>-century watercolours. The ruins of the palace, which had already fallen down before the partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, were removed under Russian rule. Politicians construed the building of the new palace as an act of symbolic defence against Russian rule, although the ruins could also be seen as a symbol of the growing weakness of the Commonwealth.

The art historian Vidas Poškus complained that the architectural design lacked authenticity and accused the government of protecting false cultural heritage. He compared the commemorative quality of the new building to the concrete sarcophagus around the Chornobyl' nuclear reactor.<sup>4</sup> The architect Augis Gučas defended the new palace in the public

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*europa* 66, 3 (2016): 111–28. Thanks to Helen Ferguson for translation and the edition of this text.

<sup>2</sup> Audrius Bačiulis, 'Kovo 11 protestas prieš valdžios nutautintą šventę', *Veidas*, 20 February 2013, available at [www.veidas.lt/kovo-11-aja-%E2%80%93-protestas-pries-valdzios-nutautinta-svente](http://www.veidas.lt/kovo-11-aja-%E2%80%93-protestas-pries-valdzios-nutautinta-svente) (last visited 24 April 2019).

<sup>3</sup> Barbara Christophe, *Staat versus Identität: Zur Konstruktion von 'Nation' und 'nationalem Interesse' in den litauischen Transformationsdiskursen von 1987 bis 1995* (Köln: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1997).

<sup>4</sup> Vidas Poškus, 'Pietinis fasadas: Mintys apie valdovo rūmų "atkūrimą"', *Spyntos meno dienos*, 9 February 2007, available at [http://www.culture.lt/7md/?leid\\_id=742&kas=straipsnis&st\\_id=6816](http://www.culture.lt/7md/?leid_id=742&kas=straipsnis&st_id=6816) (last visited 24 April 2019).

debate which raged for years. To illustrate the necessity of reconstructing the palace, he drew a parallel between the 40 years of Socialist rule in East Germany and several centuries of Russian rule and argued that the long-term consequences of dictatorship must be combated aggressively.<sup>5</sup> In cultural political discussions about the meaning of historicizing palace constructions, which are also familiar to the Berlin Republic, other publicists and activists criticized the centralization of state cultural policy.<sup>6</sup> The decision to support a new building in the centre rather than old structures on the country's periphery can be seen as an attempt to overhaul what Lithuania perceives as its peripheral position in Europe and in the EU in particular. In June 2013, when the palace was officially opened as part of the programme of Lithuania's presidency of the EU, the web portal *Kauno Diena* highlighted the significance of the building as a new symbol of Lithuanian statehood.<sup>7</sup> The neo-Renaissance building is also an architectural attempt to emphasize Lithuania's bond with the West through its membership of the EU and NATO.<sup>8</sup>

Alongside the re-centring of Lithuania, there is also the use of history as an instrument. The permanent exhibition in *Valdovų rūmai*, the new Grand Duchy palace, is designed to emphasize the Grand Duchy of Lithuania as a European power during the Middle Ages and the 'Saddle Period'. At that time, the state covered a considerably larger territory, but by presenting maps with clearly drawn borders, it gives the impression that it was a modern state exerting a monopoly on physical violence over a specific territory. The pictorial presentation serves the same function as the Grand Duchy palace: it transposes the image of a strong, large, and influential Lithuania from the past onto the present and the near future. The palace was hurriedly completed in summer 2013 so that it could provide the backdrop for the EU summit in December of the same year

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<sup>5</sup> Augis Gučas, 'Kita nuomonė apie Valdovų rūmus', *Kultūros barai*, 7–8 (2009): 30–31, available at [http://v1.valdovurumai.lt/Apie\\_mus/Gucas\\_Kita\\_nuomone\\_apie\\_Valdovu\\_rumus.lt.htm](http://v1.valdovurumai.lt/Apie_mus/Gucas_Kita_nuomone_apie_Valdovu_rumus.lt.htm) (last visited 24 April 2019).

<sup>6</sup> A graduate of Vytautas Didžiojo University in Kaunas contributed to the discussion through their blog, see <https://valdovurumai.wordpress.com/kita-nuomone-gera-apie-valdovu-rumus/> (last visited 24 April 2019).

<sup>7</sup> Laima Žemulienė, 'Atidaryti trečdali milijardo litų kainavę Valdovų rūmai', *Kauno diena*, 8 July 2013, available at <http://kauno.diena.lt/naujienos/lietuva/atidaryti-trecdali-milijardo-litu-kainave-valdovu-rumai-402317> (last visited 24 April 2019).

<sup>8</sup> Evas Nekrašas, 'Litauen: Auf der Suche nach einer regionalen Identität', in *Fortsetzung folgt. Essays über Litauen und Europa*, eds. Paulius Subačius et al. (Frankfurt am Main: Inter Nos, 2002), 197–216.

under the Lithuanian presidency of the EU, although parts of the building were still unfinished.

The same principle of cartographic national state-building was applied to the renovation of the parliament building and its grounds. Built in 1980 by the architects Vytautas and Algimantas Nasvytis as the Supreme Soviet of the Lithuanian Socialist Soviet Republic, like Vilnius' television tower, the building today is a symbol of Lithuania's independence movement and the decision of the people confirmed in 1991 to secede peacefully from the Soviet Union.<sup>9</sup> The parliament building was restored and 28 flagpoles were erected for the EU member states. The late-Soviet expressionist flagpole was repaired, but there was not enough money to renovate the pyramid-shaped fountain and its complex steel structure.<sup>10</sup> In summer 2013 as part of an art project, it was wrapped in plastic sheeting, on which are depicted the various stages of expansion of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. In contrast with the permanent exhibition at *Valdovų Rūmai*, it showed not only the modern states from the 14<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> centuries, but the sharp outlines projected onto a political map of 21<sup>st</sup> century Europe.<sup>11</sup> The outline of historical Lithuania in black against a grey background symbolically pushed the Grand Duchy beyond the boundaries of the current state and into the territories of the Republic of Belarus and Ukraine. Although the key to the map attempted an explanation, this depiction triggered protests from Belarusian bloggers who see the Grand Duchy as a proto-Belarusian state and part of shared Lithuanian–Belarusian heritage.<sup>12</sup>

The former Museum of the October Revolution, which had been refurbished and reopened as the National Art Gallery in 2009, became the

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<sup>9</sup> Though built during Soviet times, the parliament building is one of the most outstanding works by the Nasvytis brothers: 'Mirė garsus architektas, Parlamento ir kitus žymius pastatus suprojektavęs V. Nasvytis', *Delfi*, 8 January 2016, available at [www.delfi.lt/veidai/kultura/mire-garsus-architektas-parlamento-ir-kitus-zymius-pastatus-suprojektavęs-v-nasvytis.d?id=70060504](http://www.delfi.lt/veidai/kultura/mire-garsus-architektas-parlamento-ir-kitus-zymius-pastatus-suprojektavęs-v-nasvytis.d?id=70060504) (last visited 24 April 2019).

<sup>10</sup> The architects considered it a violation of their piece and protested: 'Seimo fontano bėdas palaidojo po skalda ir juodžemiu', *Lietuvos diena*, 24 May 2013, available at <https://lietuvsdiena.lrytas.lt/aktualijos/2013/05/24/news/seimo-fontano-bedas-palaidojo-po-skalda-ir-juodzemiui-5005485/> (last visited 24 April 2019).

<sup>11</sup> 'Seimo fontano vietoje – kontroversišku žemėlapiu puošta piramidė', *TV3*, 1 July 2013, available at <https://www.tv3.lt/naujiena/740928/seimo-fontano-vietoje-kontroversisku-zemelapiu-puosta-piramide> (last visited 24 April 2019).

<sup>12</sup> Arūnas Dimalakas, 'Seimo fontano žemėlapiai kliūva baltarusiams', *Lietuvos diena*, 14 July 2013, available at <https://lietuvsdiena.lrytas.lt/aktualijos/2013/07/14/news/seimo-fontano-zemelapiai-kliuva-baltarusiams-4958249/> (last visited 24 April 2019).

press centre for the EU summit. This building on the right bank of the river Neris stands in a park commemorating the Japanese Consul General in Kaunas. Chiune Sugihara disobeyed the orders of his government and issued hundreds of visas to Lithuanian Jews, enabling them to survive the war.<sup>13</sup> This heroic act is commemorated by a garden of cherry trees, visited by thousands of people every spring.<sup>14</sup> A helicopter-landing site was built in the garden so that important EU heads of state could land directly for the press conference. Ubiquitous bunting consisting of the EU flag alongside flags of the EU states demonstrated how important the summit was for city and nation, because public veneration of the symbols of statehood is one of the many daily practices retained from the Soviet period, but simply involving new content.

### The European Neighbourhood Policy on Trial

When the backdrop of the Seimas, the National Art Gallery and *Valdovų Rūmai* were ready and a legion of multilingual volunteers had been assembled, on 1 July 2013 the EU presidency could begin. Lithuanian political and media circles viewed it from the outset as an opportunity to alter the country's own perceived position on the periphery for one historical moment. The main concern was to realign and strengthen foreign policy towards the states between the EU and the Russian Federation: Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, and the states of the South Caucasus. By establishing closer ties between the EU and these states, the hope is that Lithuania will become more central in the union, protecting it against any attempt by Russia to expand into the 'near abroad'. Due to the absence of a common foreign policy and a shift in perceptions of the 'Arab Spring', which dominated the attention of Western Europe after 2011, the EU had little to offer to the people of Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova.<sup>15</sup>

Negotiations between Ukraine and the EU were followed closely in Lithuania. The posturing around the Association Agreement seemed to increase the significance of the summit, which was meant to create a

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<sup>13</sup> Linas Venclauskas, *Chiune Sugihara: Visas for life* (Vilnius: Versus Aureus, 2009).

<sup>14</sup> Michael Mustillo, 'Japan's Schindler: The Spy Who Became a Lifesaver', *The Baltic Times*, 27 January 2016, available at [https://www.baltictimes.com/japan\\_\\_\\_s\\_schindler\\_the\\_spy\\_who\\_became\\_a\\_lifesaver/](https://www.baltictimes.com/japan___s_schindler_the_spy_who_became_a_lifesaver/) (last visited 27 July 2020).

<sup>15</sup> See an overview of the arguments at stake in issue no. 15 of *Belarus-Analysen*, 18 December 2013, available at [www.laender-analysen.de/belarus/pdf/BelarusAnalysen15.pdf](http://www.laender-analysen.de/belarus/pdf/BelarusAnalysen15.pdf) (last visited 24 April 2019).

breakthrough before the summit in Vilnius planned for 28–29 November 2013. But when, under pressure from Russia, the Ukrainian president Viktor Yanukovych refused to sign the agreement, the existing borderlines were revealed: those of the EU Neighbourhood Policy, the Lithuanian EU Presidency, and also the symbolic invocation of the historical heritage of the Grand Duchy. Yanukovych's decision not only exposed the limitations of the foreign policy capacity of the EU in the region but also demonstrated Russia's readiness to use annexation and wars of intervention in neighbouring states as a means of asserting its own interests.<sup>16</sup>

From the Lithuanian perspective, the core of the Association Agreement negotiated with Ukraine went far beyond the relationship between the periphery and the centre, a rivalry over integration between Russia and the EU, or the construction of a counterweight to Russia. This particular historical sensibility, born out of the experience of having suffered under the Hitler–Stalin pact with its secret additional protocols, is concerned with more than military threat and the demarcation of zones of influence. The core of the historical experience, shared by Lithuania, Poland, and other states in Central East Europe, is a loss of sovereignty. From the point of view of Lithuanians who only demanded the return of their independence in 1991, it was not a question of the EU making greater efforts in the region, but of defending the basis of any form of democracy in Lithuania: the sovereignty and autonomy of Lithuanian society.

In Lithuania, there is a social consensus on this issue which goes beyond allegiance to any political group. So the former leader of *Sąjūdis*, Vytautas Landsbergis, invoked the right to self-determination of Ukrainian society in relation to the Lithuanian independence movement: “As a small country, we won not only our own freedom, but also the freedom of other peoples in the Soviet Union”.<sup>17</sup> The historical necessity that Ukrainian society owed its own sovereignty was from the Lithuanian perspective the heart of the drama in December 2013. Under the influence of Putin's politics, Viktor Yanukovych had already questioned the right of Ukrainian society to make sovereign choices. This was perceived by Lithuanians across the political spectrum as a threat to their own exis-

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<sup>16</sup> Thomas Vogel, ‘Überforderung und Desinteresse: Die EU, die Nachbarschaft und die Ukraine’, *Osteuropa* 64, 9–10 (2014): 51–65.

<sup>17</sup> Felix Ackermann, ‘Der Majdan von Vilnius’, *Zeit Online*, 13 January 2016, available at <http://www.zeit.de/kultur/2016-01/blutsonntag-vilnius-litauen-unabhaengigkeit> (last visited 24 April 2019).

tence. Sensitivity to the importance of this autonomy stems from historical experience, transferred long ago from the communicative memory of individual families into the cultural memory of Lithuanian society.<sup>18</sup>

### Euromaidan from a Lithuanian Perspective

The Ukrainian president's refusal to sign the Association Agreement meant that the Vilnius summit and the concurrent Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum ended without success.<sup>19</sup> However, Lithuania's efforts during its presidency of the EU to make the Association Agreement for Ukraine a concern for the whole of Europe did have some effect. Even before the escalation of violence in February 2014, the Maidan was present everywhere in everyday life in Lithuania. For several hours every morning, a panel of experts would discuss the current situation in Ukraine on the Žinių Radijas radio station. Many Lithuanians watched the Maidan streamed on Espresso TV in the background at work. From everyday public and private discussions, it was clear that the Euromaidan in Kyïv was felt to be about Lithuania too. The live coverage of the Euromaidan became the new backdrop to daily life in many public institutions and private homes.<sup>20</sup>

The Euromaidan was a live revolution, given a running commentary by Lithuanian politicians, philosophers, and historians, and the subject of heated debate online. In March 2014, Leonidas Donskis, then a Member of the European Parliament, publicly called for Viktor Yanukovych to be brought before the UN Tribunal in The Hague in the event that Russia were to begin an open war in Ukraine.<sup>21</sup> The vigilance of networked

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<sup>18</sup> Ekaterina Makhotina, 'Die Unsrigen: Die Holocaustdebatte in Litauen', *Erinnerungskulturen. Erinnerung und Geschichtspolitik im östlichen und südöstlichen Europa*, 26 February 2016, <https://erinnerung.hypotheses.org/671> (last visited 24 April 2019).

<sup>19</sup> 'EaP Civil Society Forum at the Civil Society Conference in Vilnius: Political Challenges and Future agenda of the Eastern Partnership', 10 December 2013, available at <http://archive.eap-csf.eu/en/news-events/news/eap-civil-society-forum-at-the-civil-society-conference-in-vilnius-political-challenges-and-future/> (last visited 24 August 2020).

<sup>20</sup> The live stream of the Euromaidan was integrated into other media and thus was present on several media channels: 'Šturmuotas Maidanas atsilaiškė, yra žuvusiųjų (tiesioginė transliacija, video)', *Alkas*, 18 February 2014, available at <http://alkas.lt/2014/02/18/sturmuojamas-maidanas-yra-zuvusiuju-tiesiogine-transliacija/> (last visited 24 April 2019).

<sup>21</sup> Nemira Pumprickaitė, 'Leonidas Donskis: "Viktoro Janukovyčiaus byla Hagoje jau pradedama"', *Penkiolika minučių*, 3 March 2014, available at <http://www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/interviu/leonidas-donskis-viktoro-janukovyčiaus-byla-hagoje-jau-pradedama-599-409316> (last visited 24 April 2019).



Lithuanian society online brought about this moment not from a postcolonial projection of the past of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, but from the political awareness that the future of their society was also being negotiated at the Euromaidan.

The escalation of violence and the shooting of over 100 people after 18 February stirred up Lithuania's political and societal memory of January 1991, when 14 people were killed defending strategically important buildings in Vilnius against Soviet troops and secret service agents during the struggle for independence. There was an immediate visual symbolic response in the city: the Lithuanian flags in front of the Presidential Palace were replaced by a Lithuanian, an EU, and a NATO flag. In the centre of Vilnius, the Soviet statues on Green Bridge were covered with symbols of the Lithuanian state and NATO flags. In Lukiškės Square, which had been Lenin Square until 1991, a big red flag flew, bearing the symbol of the Lithuanian state, the medieval knight Vytis. Even those who were not following events in Kyïv live online could tell from these signs in public spaces that a fundamental shift had occurred.

### Lithuanian Reactions to the War in Eastern Ukraine

The escalation of the Euromaidan in February 2014 was followed closely by other sections of Lithuanian society. When the first killings occurred in Kyïv, the state flag was flown at half-mast on many public and private buildings in Vilnius – even before the official declaration of national mourning. On the radio, the situation in Ukraine was always discussed in terms of the military and logistical position of Lithuania.<sup>22</sup> The number of tanks, fighter jets, and other weaponry in the areas of Kaliningrad, Belarus, and the three Baltic states were documented to prove the existence of a real threat that went beyond the symbolic limitation of the rights to autonomy of the individual and the sovereignty of society as a whole. The Ministry of Defence sent out a handbook for use in the event of a crisis.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> It was particularly present on the radio station Žinių radijas, see 'Karas Ukrainoje: žudomos šeimos, dvasininkai, politikai', *Penkiolika minučių*, 14 May 2014, available at <https://www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/pasaulis/karas-ukrainoje-zudomos-seimos-dvasininkai-politikai-57-426629> (last visited 24 April 2019).

<sup>23</sup> Jürgen Steihammer and Thomas Vieregge, 'Die Angst der Balten vor dem großen „Bruder“ Russland', *Die Presse*, 26 February 2015, available at <http://diepresse.com/home/politik/aussenpolitik/4672875/Die-Angst-der-Balten-vor-dem-grossen-Bruder-Russland> (last visited 24 April 2019).

These were all reactions to Russia's war of intervention in eastern Ukraine. Consequently, the Russian war in the 'People's Republics' of Donetsk and Luhansk was seen much more as a hot war in Lithuania than it was in Western Europe. In the West it was considered a 'hybrid war', and broad sections of the public saw it as the start of a new Cold War. In Lithuania, attention was more focussed on the conventional dimension of the war, waged with heavy weaponry by volunteers and soldiers on the ground. For this reason, the Lithuanian President made greater efforts than other heads of state to ensure regular supplies of weapons to Ukraine. From December 2014 to February 2016, the Minister for Economic Development and Trade in Kyiv was the Lithuanian Aivaras Abromavičius, an investment banker. The Lithuanian special envoy Gvidas Kerušauskas was deployed as an external advisor to the government in Kyiv. Many Lithuanians considered the war in eastern Ukraine an existential matter. Specific historical perceptions turned out to be significant.<sup>24</sup> In Lithuania, media reporting of fighting in Ukraine triggered many people's private memories of the repercussions of 1940 and 1944, when Soviet rule was established in Lithuania.<sup>25</sup>

### Changing Public Debates and the Transformation of Memory Politics

Although fundamental parts of the conditions attached to the Minsk Protocol were not implemented, the actual war slipped increasingly into the background. However, the impact of the ongoing armed conflict permeated public debate – not only political debate but also in particular historical debate. Very different discussions were overshadowed by the annexation of Crimea and the conflict in eastern Ukraine. It was a double-sided sword. It was the self-protective response of Lithuanian society to close discursive ranks when faced by a symbolic and real threat and to reject criticism even more vehemently, whether from within or without.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Herfried Münkler, *Kriegssplitter: Die Evolution der Gewalt im 20. und 21. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Rowohlt, 2015), 264ff.

<sup>25</sup> 'Lietuviai užsienyje minės Baltijos kelio ir Molotovo-Ribentropo pakto metines', *Alkas*, 22 August 2015, available at <http://alkas.lt/2015/08/22/lietuviai-uzsienyje-mines-baltijos-kelio-ir-molotovo-ribentropo-pakto-metines/>; 'Šalies vadovai sveikina Baltijos kelio metinių progą', *Vakarų ekspresas*, 23 August 2015, available at <http://www.ve.lt/naujienos/lietuva/lietuvos-naujienos/salies-vadovai-sveikina-baltijos-kelio-metiniu-proga-1391031/> (both last visited 24 April 2019).

<sup>26</sup> Christophe, *Staat versus Identität* (see note 3).

However, as a result of Russia's ongoing campaigns of disinformation accompanying the war there is no longer any public debate in Lithuania which does not make reference to Russian intervention.

'Conspiracy theory' thinking, prevalent both in Russian and Ukrainian society, also flourishes in those countries which are directly targeted by Russian media outlets such as Russia Today (RT) and Sputnik, but also by less prominent newspapers and magazines supported directly or indirectly by the Russian state. Several public debates in Lithuania followed similar patterns to the German 'Lisa case', when members of the Russian-speaking community were mobilized against the German central government in order to spread fear – in that instance fear of immigrants.<sup>27</sup> The objective and techniques tested earlier in Ukraine turned out to be effective in Latvia or Estonia as well, where the proportion of Russian-speaking inhabitants is considerably larger than in Lithuania. The everyday use of cases such as 'Lisa' proved that in an environment of conspiracy theory thinking it is increasingly difficult to negotiate truths in public.

The aim of the media front in a hybrid war is to disseminate fictitious versions of an event in order to relativize other interpretations of it.<sup>28</sup> As a consequence, it has been more difficult for politicians and the public in Western Europe to recognize media mechanisms of hybrid war as carried out in the Baltics. Counter to this development, reference to indirect interference by Russia is used in Lithuania as an instrument of last resort in domestic political discussions.

Allusion to the invisible hand of the Kremlin was used in 2015 as an argument against perceived price increases after the introduction of the Euro, as if the 'Euro price rise debate' in the media was actually about a Russian conspiracy.<sup>29</sup> Even the Lithuanian Prime Minister Algirdas Butkevičius did not flinch from disseminating conspiracy theories, when during a teachers' strike in February 2016 he referred to alleged Russian

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<sup>27</sup> The temporary disappearance of a young woman was used to spread rumours about an allegedly migrant background of the perpetrator, see Alice Bota, 'Das missbrauchte Mädchen', *Zeit Online*, 21 January 2016, available at <https://www.zeit.de/politik/ausland/2016-01/russland-propaganda-entfuhrung-maedchen-berlin> (last visited 24 April 2019).

<sup>28</sup> Felix Ackermann, 'Konkurrenz der Leidensgeschichten', *FAZ*, 23 March 2016, 10.

<sup>29</sup> Like a distorting mirror the Russian language weekly newspaper *Litovskii Kur'er*, which is financially supported by the Russian and Belarusian embassies in Vil'nius, reports on price rises and Lithuanian conspiracy theories. Mikhail Kisel'ev, 'Raptory i kapusta', *Litovskii Kur'er*, 5 May 2016, 1106, 18 (2016): 5.

support for trade unions.<sup>30</sup> In turn, critics of Butkevičius' government argued that fear of Russia was being fomented to distract from social problems in Lithuania, as well as from controversial political decisions such as the liberalization of Lithuanian employment legislation.<sup>31</sup>

Another example of the war waged in the media is the metamorphosis of Lithuanian-Swedish filmmaker Jonas Ohman from public historian into paramilitary aid worker and national hero on the front in the Donbas. The director and activist, who has lived in Lithuania since the early 1990s, was initially involved in the Lithuanian environmental movement. This stoked his enthusiasm for the Lithuanian nation and familiarized him with nationalism as an emancipatory idea, which was still compelling at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>32</sup> In his documentary film *The Invisible Front*, Jonas Ohman projected this view onto a narrative about Lithuanian partisans who were still living and hiding in the forests of Lithuania and resisting the Sovietization of the country long after the end of the Second World War and even into the 1950s.<sup>33</sup> This film, which premiered in November 2014 during the war in eastern Ukraine, became a box-office hit in Lithuania.

Jonas Ohman took the film on tour to several Ukrainian cities to provide 'historical-political' support to the population. After the screenings in Ukrainian cinemas he began to organize aid transport in Lithuania for Ukrainian paramilitary troops.<sup>34</sup> He was not troubled by the involvement of right-wing extremist organizations like *Pravyi Sektor*, because he believed his work as a historian put him on the side of the good guys. Ohman collected donations in Lithuania to provide equipment for Ukrai-

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<sup>30</sup> 'A. Butkevičius mokytojų streike įžvelgia Rusijos paramą', *Alkas*, 23 February 2016, available at <http://alkas.lt/2016/02/23/a-butkevicius-mokytoju-streike-izvelgia-rusijos-parama/> (last visited 24 April 2019).

<sup>31</sup> Dmitrii Zacharov, 'Nastoiashchikh buŭnych malo...', *Obzor* 1008, 18 (2016): 1.

<sup>32</sup> Jonas Ohman, 'Lithuania's Historical Fate Could Have Been Different', *Lithuania Tribune*, 8 January 2014, available at [www.lithuaniatribune.com/60500/jonas-ohman-lithuanias-historical-fate-could-have-been-different-201460500/](http://www.lithuaniatribune.com/60500/jonas-ohman-lithuanias-historical-fate-could-have-been-different-201460500/) (last visited 24 April 2019, no longer available).

<sup>33</sup> *The Invisible Front*, directed by Jonas Ohman, 76 min. (Lithuania et al.: Aspectus Memoria, 2014), see full title information available at <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt2073679/> (last visited 24 April 2019).

<sup>34</sup> 'Filmo "Nematomas frontas" kūrėjas dabar pats yra nematomo fronto karys Ukrainoje', *LRT Televizija*, 10 March 2015, available at <https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/kultura/12/95353/filmo-nematomas-frontas-kurejas-dabar-pats-yra-nematomo-fronto-karys-ukrainoje> (last visited 24 April 2019).

nian volunteer groups in the conflict zone and transported them to the front or, after the Minsk Agreement, to the demarcation line. In Lithuania, this earned him the status of national hero.<sup>35</sup>

Having researched national, regional, and urban remembrance practices, from 2014 the historian Alvydas Nikžentaitis turned his academic attention to the symbolic creation of the entity of the former territory of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.<sup>36</sup> With funding from the Lithuanian and Polish governments he set up the Giedroyc Forum, which aims to improve relations between Lithuania and Poland. After the annexation of Crimea, Nikžentaitis broadened his focus to investigate the discursive creation of a phantom Grand Duchy which he calls the “ULB area”: Ukraine, Lithuania, and Belarus. In an interview with *Delfi* the historian argues:

“We can’t say that the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was a purely Lithuanian state. It was just as much a Belarusian and Ukrainian state. It’s our shared cultural heritage, which we can use as a powerful tool both in foreign policy and for integration within Lithuania itself.”<sup>37</sup>

One of the basic assumptions of the Giedroyc Forum is revealed by the journalist Vytautas Bruveris, who accompanied Nikžentaitis to Ukraine. When he returned to Vilnius he published a report in the newspaper *Lietuvos Rytas*:

“Ukrainians need Lithuanian and Polish support primarily in the areas of economics, politics, and the military. Ukrainians equally need collaborations with intellectuals and those involved in the cultural sector in the EU and Western civilization, because it is a question not only of an economic and material space, but also of a cultural and intellectual one.”<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Jonas Ohman, ‘By Helping Ukraine, Lithuania Helps Itself’, *Delfi*, 28 August 2014, available at [www.delfi.lt/video/laidos/zinios-anglu-kalba/jonas-ohman-by-helping-ukraine-lithuania-helps-itself.d?id=65694460](http://www.delfi.lt/video/laidos/zinios-anglu-kalba/jonas-ohman-by-helping-ukraine-lithuania-helps-itself.d?id=65694460) (last visited 24 April 2019).

<sup>36</sup> Alvydas Nikžentaitis and Michal Kopczynski, *Atminties kultūrų dialogai Ukrainos, Lietuvos, Baltarusijos (ULB) erdveje* (Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos institutas, 2015).

<sup>37</sup> ‘A. Nikžentaitis: ir vis dėlto mums LDK reikia’, *Delfi*, 18 May 2015, available at <http://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/a-nikzentaitis-ir-vis-delto-mums-ldk-reikia.d?id=67975538> (last visited 24 April 2019).

<sup>38</sup> Vytautas Bruveris, ‘Ukrainos bilietas – tik į Europą, bet kaina vis auga’, *Lrytas*, 21 December 2015, available at <http://pasaulis.lrytas.lt/rytai-vakarai/ukrainos-bilietas-tik-i-europa-bet-kaina-vis-auga-20151202120013.htm> (last visited 24 April 2019).

So the Forum contributes to a common understanding of their shared history. Bruveris believes that the discussion generated helps to counter Russia's hybrid war. Adam Michnik, the publisher of the Polish newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza*, who also participated in the Giedroyc Forum in Kyiv, summarized his viewpoint as follows: "Sooner or later Ukraine will move closer to Europe. At present Russia is doing all it can to halt the course of history, but Ukraine is the key to Russia. For Ukraine to be successful, it means the end of dictatorship in Russia."<sup>39</sup>

### Totalitarianism and the Ideology of the Double Genocide

The high level of attention focused on the conflict in eastern Ukraine and Russia's aggressive foreign policy boost totalitarianism theory in Lithuania and the idea of a double genocide as the basis of state ideology.<sup>40</sup> Many Lithuanians believe that the historical conflation of 'the Soviet' and 'the Russian' creates a continuity between the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union, and present-day Russia in the threat they feel. Consequently, the occupation of large parts of Central Europe in the aftermath of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and the Soviet deportations of 1941 are perceived by many Lithuanians even today as Russian rather than Soviet crimes. In state museums they are presented as an element of Soviet totalitarianism which is symbolically equated with the consequences of the Nazi occupation of Lithuania. Meanwhile the real war in Ukraine exacerbates the imbalance between the two dictatorships in Lithuanian debate. While the last remaining publicly exhibited Soviet sculptures from the Stalinist period were removed from Green Bridge in Vilnius, plaques commemorating those who collaborated with the German occupiers remain.

As a reaction to the escalation of the Euromaidan, in March 2014 the view of the Soviet statues in the centre of Vilnius was literally blocked with large NATO flags. The highest authority for the preservation of monuments then came under pressure. Those who had suffered persecu-

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<sup>39</sup> Vytutas Bruveris, 'Ukrainos bilietas – tik į Europą, bet kaina vis auga', *Lrytas*, 21 December 2015, available at <http://pasaulis.lrytas.lt/rytai-vakarai/ukrainos-bilietas-tik-i-europa-bet-kaina-vis-auga-20151202120013.htm> (last visited 24 April 2019).

<sup>40</sup> Joanna Beata Michlic, 'Bringing the Dark to Light: Memory and Holocaust in Post-communist Europe', in *Memory and Change in Europe: Eastern Perspectives*, eds. Małgorzata Pakier and Joanna Wawrzyniak (New York: Berghahn, 2015), 121.

tion in the Soviet Union and their families fought hard for the conservation status of these relics of Stalinism to be withdrawn so that they could be removed from public view. The monument conservationists (most of them rather conservative Lithuanian historians and art historians) argued that the statues were one of the last remaining public testaments to that period and that they should be kept as a cautionary reminder. In an internal battle over the legal status of the sculptures, they voted in June 2015 against the withdrawal of conservation status.<sup>41</sup> The minister responsible then disbanded the commission and reappointed its membership in 2015 after checking the loyalty of individual members over the phone.<sup>42</sup>

In summer 2015, the newly elected mayor of Vilnius, Remigijus Šimašius, tried to cool down the heated public debate by having the sculptures removed for restoration work. In the meantime, the new commission for the preservation of monuments withdrew the conservation status from the statues. The irony of the story is that these sculptures had been designed and made by Lithuanian architects and sculptors and depicted Lithuanian figures: farmers, builders, students, and soldiers who were meant to symbolize the new Soviet beginning in Vilnius and Lithuania.<sup>43</sup> In the shadow of the war in Ukraine, dominant figures in Lithuanian public debate had secured the removal of sculptures which testified to the close connection between the demographic Lithuanianization and the Sovietization of Vilnius.<sup>44</sup>

A parallel to this can be seen in the Lithuanian discussion of the 'Forest Brothers', depicted as heroes in the film *The Invisible Front* directed by

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<sup>41</sup> Liepa Želnienė, 'Seimas atleido ir vėl priėmė Gražiną Drėmaitę: gėles leido pasilikti', *Penkiolika minučių*, 30 June 2015, available at [www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/lietuva/seimas-atleido-ir-vel-prieme-grazina-dremaite-geles-leido-pasilikti-56-512930](http://www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/lietuva/seimas-atleido-ir-vel-prieme-grazina-dremaite-geles-leido-pasilikti-56-512930); 'Punkt Widzenia: Czy trzeba zachować sowieckie dziedzictwo Wilna?', *ZW*, 17 November 2015, available at <http://zw.lt/wilno-wilenszczyzna/punkt-widzenia-czy-trzeba-zachowac-sowieckie-dziedzictwo-wilna> (both last visited 24 April 2019).

<sup>42</sup> The longstanding head of Gražina Drėmaitė was replaced in December 2015 by Evelina Karalevičienė, see 'Seimas paskyrė E. Karalevičienę Valstybinės kultūros paveldo komisijos pirmininke', *Penkiolika minučių*, 23 December 2015, available at [www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/lietuva/seimas-paskyre-e-karaleviciene-valstybines-kulturos-paveldo-komisijos-pirmininke-56-559197](http://www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/lietuva/seimas-paskyre-e-karaleviciene-valstybines-kulturos-paveldo-komisijos-pirmininke-56-559197) (last visited 24 April 2019).

<sup>43</sup> Rasa Čepaitienė, 'Tarybinės sostinės konstravimas J. Stalino epochoje: Minsko ir Vilniaus atvejai', in *Nuo Basanavičiaus, Vytauto Didžiojo iki Molotovo ir Ribbentropo: atmintis ir atminimo kultūrų transformacijos XX–XXI a.*, ed. Alvydas Nikžentaitis (Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos instituto leidykla, 2011), 171–224.

<sup>44</sup> Theodore Weeks, 'Remembering and Forgetting: Creating a Soviet Lithuanian Capital. Vilnius 1944–49', *Journal of Baltic Studies* 39, 4 (2008): 517–33.

the new Lithuanian hero Jonas Ohman. In the period after 1944, they were depicted in the Lithuanian public sphere exclusively as heroes, although Lithuanian historians point out that their relations with villagers living near their forest hideouts were highly ambivalent. One specific problem with the representation of the 'Forest Brothers' as heroes concerns those cases where paramilitary fighters actively participated in the slaughter of Lithuanian Jews in the summer and autumn of 1941. There are several such cases where individuals are publicly considered 'Forest Brothers' even though they had actively participated in or helped prepare for the murders of former Lithuanian co-citizens – just because they were Jews.<sup>45</sup>

The most prominent example is Jonas Noreika, who is commemorated as a resistance fighter on a plaque on the wall of the Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences, not far from Green Bridge. In the summer of 1941, he co-organized the murder of the Jews of Žagarė. Under German rule, he actively participated in administrative preparations for the ghettoization of the Jewish community.<sup>46</sup> The historical fact that the murder of Lithuanian Jews was a German state crime organized by the SS and the Gestapo does not change the historical fact that not only Jonas Noreika but also other later 'Forest Brothers' helped the German occupying forces to carry out the murders. Lithuanian intellectuals like the poet Sergei Kanovič have called for a critical approach to Noreika and the removal of the commemorative plaque.<sup>47</sup> Numerous publications about Noreika and similar cases online have aroused heated debate. Essentially it centres on the question of whether Lithuanian society has a moral obligation to examine critically the short period of cooperation by their former elites with Nazi Germany in summer 1941, even in the shadow of the subsequent Soviet invasion of Lithuania in summer 1944.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Ellen Cassedy, *We are Here: Memories of the Lithuanian Holocaust* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012), 81ff.

<sup>46</sup> Boleslovas Baranauskas et al., eds., *Masinės žudynės Lietuvoje 1941–1944: Dokumentų rinkinys. 2 dalis*, vol. 1 (Vilnius: Leidykla "Mintis", 1973), 225–31.

<sup>47</sup> Geoffrey P. Megargee, ed., *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945*, vol. 1, *Early Camps, Youth Camps, and Concentration Camps and Subcamps under the SS-Business Administration Main Office (WVHA)* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 1154.

<sup>48</sup> As in Poland, these debates are often about the relationship of members of the titular nation to Jews in the interwar period and about radicalization prior to the outbreak of violence in the course of the Soviet and German occupations. In Lithuania, the collaboration of Jews with the Soviet authorities is still used to explain anti-Jewish violence, see



As in other cases, public discussion always follows the friend / enemy model, whereby calls for a reassessment of the 'Forest Brothers' are seen as enemy attacks.<sup>49</sup> In the eyes of many members of the current conservative Lithuanian elite, this legitimizes the possibility of letting the problem blow over and not publicly acknowledging these demands for reassessment. In this sense, what is specific to Lithuanian public debate is the presentation of controversial subjects, also regarding the collaboration of Lithuanian elites with occupying forces, but always involving a historical reference to foreign forces or a current threat to Lithuanian statehood. A specificity of the Lithuanian debate is that there is actually no strict taboo in the discussion: there is public debate over these problematic issues and various points of view reverberate in the public arena. But there are certain limitations, usually involving a reference to the ongoing hybrid war. For example, open criticism of the idea of a double Genocide as formulated by the Central Museum in Vilnius in its depiction of the atrocities of both the German and the Soviet regimes of occupation is presented as potentially part of a Russian conspiracy.

This approach has allowed the Academy of Sciences to retain the plaque to Jonas Noreika despite the public outcry and without any reference to his involvement in the genocide.<sup>50</sup> Indeed the double occupation of Lithuania could be located biographically in the life story of Noreika. After his initial collaboration with the Nazi authorities, in 1943 Noreika was taken to the concentration camp at Stutthof along with other activists.<sup>51</sup> When the camp was liberated by the Red Army, Noreika returned to Vilnius, where he worked from 1945 in the legal department of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences. In November 1946, the MGB secret service discovered the secret organization known as the Lithuanian Peo-

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Alfonsas Eidintas, 'Das Stereotyp des "jüdischen Kommunisten" in Litauen 1940–41', in *Holocaust in Litauen: Krieg, Judenmorde und Kollaboration im Jahre 1941*, eds. Vincas Bartusevičius, Joachim Tauber, and Wolfram Wette (Köln: Böhlau, 2003), 13–25.

<sup>49</sup> In some cases there appears to be a direct link between the theology of Carl Schmitt and the legitimization of the 'Forest Brothers' as in the case of the conservative historian Bernardas Gailius, see Bernardas Gailius, 'Partizanų diktatūra', *Politologija* 62, 2 (2011): 74–93; Laurynas Peluritis, 'Ilgai (ne)lauktas priešas?', *Knygų Aidai*, 1 (2015): 5–10; Linas Jokubaitis, 'Carl Schmitt and the Future of Europe', *Telescope*, 18 February 2014, available at <http://www.telospress.com/carl-schmitt-and-the-future-of-europe/> (last visited 24 April 2019).

<sup>50</sup> Ackermann, *Konkurrenz* (see note 28).

<sup>51</sup> *Pragaro vartai – Štuthofas* (Vilnius: Lietuvos gyventojų genocido ir rezistencijos tyrimo centras, 1998), 223.

ple's Council (*Lietuvos Tautinė Taryba*), of which Noreika was a founder. It had been established to unite various underground organizations. Noreika and other members of the People's Council were hanged in Vilnius in 1947.<sup>52</sup>

### Holocaust Debates as Part of Hybrid Warfare?

The Noreika case may well serve to illustrate why arguments about the interpretation of history became part of a larger environment of hybrid warfare. The case of the public commemoration of a perpetrator who had served under German rule before turning against both German and Soviet forces has been covered by Russian state media on several occasions.<sup>53</sup> It has been used within a broader discursive frame depicting all the paramilitary units active in the western borderlands during the period of post-war Sovietization as bandits and proto-fascist activists and collaborators. The discursive setting replicates the equation of Ukrainian claims for sovereignty in a direct continuum with the image of the so-called *Banderivtsi* promoted intensively by Russian media outlets in their coverage of the Euromaidan in 2014.

As with the coverage of issues in Ukraine there are hints in relation to Lithuania that the simplistic equation of paramilitary violence and collaboration with Nazi Germany is not just a distant echo of Soviet post-war propaganda but part of a larger information campaign targeted not only at Russian citizens, but far beyond the Russian Federation.<sup>54</sup> Military analysts have interpreted similar narrative structures and their diffusion into media outlets within the European Union as a direct threat to the defence capacity of NATO. The response prepared by the Lithuanian Ministry of Defence is no less simplistic than Russian propaganda. A text

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<sup>52</sup> 'Jonas Noreika', in *Visuotinė lietuvių enciklopedija*, vol. XVI, *Naha-Omuta*, eds. J. Tumelis et al., (Vilnius: Mokslo ir enciklopedijų leidybos institutas, 2009), 494. See also: 'Jonas Noreika', available at [https://lt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jonas\\_Noreika](https://lt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jonas_Noreika) (last visited 24 April 2019).

<sup>53</sup> 'V Litve pozhalovalis' na telekanal "Rossiia 24" iz-za "Lesnykh Brat'ev", *Sputnik International*, 15 January 2019, available at <https://lt.sputniknews.ru/politics/20190115/8078889/V-Lithuania-pozhalovalis-na-telekanal-Rossiia-24-iz-za-lesnykh-bratev.html> (last visited 24 April 2019).

<sup>54</sup> See various nuanced accounts in the first issue of the *Journal of Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society* and the introduction by Julie Fedor, 'Introduction: Russian Media and the War in Ukraine', in *Journal of Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society*, 1 (2015): 1–11.

published in October 2018 at *Delfi* explains allegedly why the Kremlin is interested in using the history of the ‘Forest Brothers’ as an instrument of propagandistic manipulation. The author Aukšė Ūsienė, senior specialist at the Strategic Communication Department of the Lithuanian armed forces, argues that a core aim of these Russian interpretations of history is to whitewash the history of the Soviet occupation of Lithuania itself. But in her response, she herself uses a simplistic and false notion of history arguing that

“in Lithuania, just as in other European countries, the Holocaust was planned and organized by the Nazi regime. Some Lithuanian residents assisted the Nazis in their effort to eradicate Jewish residents, but they were not partisans – these genocidal campaigns took place under Nazi occupation and not during the guerrilla war against Soviet occupying forces.”<sup>55</sup>

The argument is put in such a way as to create in itself a false picture of the past. Firstly, in Lithuania it was not just a few helpers who assisted the Nazis, but thousands.<sup>56</sup> Secondly, the argument that ‘Forest Brothers’ did not kill Jews in the aftermath of WWII is cynical because about 90% of all Lithuanian citizens of Jewish background had already been killed by the end of the period of German occupation. Thirdly, the formulation does not make clear that among the ‘Forest Brothers’ were those who collaborated at the beginning of the German attack on the Soviet Union with the Nazi German occupiers. Fourthly, the argument omits the information that among these Lithuanian helpers were representatives of the pre-war Lithuanian state including former policemen, soldiers, and bureaucrats.

This selective use of history by an institution of the Lithuanian state, in contradiction with recent historical research both in Lithuania and abroad, seems to be seen as legitimized by the ongoing hybrid war. But in fact it clearly forms part of the war because it follows the same criteria as Russian disinformation campaigns: selective use of sources, biased interpretation of historical events, and extreme simplification.

The emergence of media activity as part of wider conflicts does not mean that public debate is no longer possible. But the context of the ongoing war in Ukraine did change the way in which public debate was

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<sup>55</sup> Aukšė Ūsienė, ‘Lithuanian Freedom Fighters in Russian Propaganda: Why Does the Kremlin Care?’, *Delfi*, 25 October 2018, available at <https://en.delfi.lt/cyber-security/lithuanian-freedom-fighters-in-russian-propaganda-why-does-the-kremlin-care.d?id=79412987> (last visited 24 April 2019).

<sup>56</sup> Christoph Dieckmann, *Deutsche Besatzungspolitik in Litauen 1941–1944* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2011), 1528–153.

carried out. The best proof of a quite nuanced, lively, and at the same time very polarized discussion came in the form of public reaction to the book *Our People* by the Lithuanian journalist Rūta Vanagaitė. It had been published in Lithuania already in 2016 and was co-authored by the head of the Simon Wiesenthal Centre in Jerusalem, Efraim Zuroff.<sup>57</sup> Since the 1990s, there have been important debates about the involvement of Lithuanians in the genocide. Academics have researched and documented the subject widely.<sup>58</sup> Vanagaitė's book made the direct and indirect involvement of Lithuanians in the murder of almost 200,000 people the subject of bitter public debate once more.<sup>59</sup>

In detail and illustrated with the few remaining historical photos, the author describes how in summer 1941, after the end of Soviet occupation, hundreds of Lithuanian volunteers were prepared to round up, torture, and shoot Jews under German supervision. She describes how local inhabitants not only sold the clothes of the victims, but also took over their homes and furniture. In the book Rūta Vanagaitė and Efraim Zuroff describe their travels through 13 Lithuanian shtetls and explore the events of the first weeks after the German invasion of the Soviet Union. Vanagaitė interviews people who remember the events of summer 1941 when the first mass shootings of men and women, children and the elderly took place on the outskirts of these villages.

The book reveals in a non-academic manner that in many villages local knowledge still exists about who was involved and what happened to the possessions of the Jews who were shot. Unlike most historians and history educators before her, Vanagaitė presented the material in a way which aroused very emotional reactions from large sections of the Lithuanian public.<sup>60</sup> Her approach is revealed most clearly by her use of historical photos showing the corpses of Jewish victims. Vanagaitė uses the photos without considering the context in which they were taken, or

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<sup>57</sup> Rūta Vanagaitė, *Mūsų šikiai* (Vilnius: Alma Littera, 2016).

<sup>58</sup> Liudas Truska, 'Litauische Historiographie über den Holocaust in Litauen', in *Holocaust in Litauen* (see note 48), 262–76.

<sup>59</sup> Klaus Richter, 'Der Holocaust in der litauischen Historiographie nach 1991', *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung* 56, 3 (2008): 389–416; Dieckmann, *Besatzungspolitik* (see note 56).

<sup>60</sup> For a broader contextualization and analysis of the conflict, see Ekaterina Makhovina, 'We, They and Ours: On the Holocaust Debate in Lithuania', *Cultures of History Forum*, 27 September 2016, available at <http://www.cultures-of-history.uni-jena.de/debates/lithuania/we-they-and-ours-on-the-holocaust-debate-in-lithuania/> (last visited 24 April 2019).

whether they are a necessary addition to the textual content. Readers are not made aware that a picture was taken in a different location or cannot be precisely attributed. Critics argued that the use of photos and the book's graphic design revealed an author more interested in stirring up controversy to increase sales than in advancing public debate.<sup>61</sup>

Nevertheless, there is consensus that the book has brought more attention to the subject than any other in recent years. This is a result not only of professional public relations around its publication. The dynamic of Russia's current hybrid war is also relevant in explaining this particular case. One of the strongest arguments made by the book's opponents is that it was promoted indirectly by Russia. Those critiques claimed that Efraim Zuroff received money from Russia in order to carry out 'black PR'. They argued that by supporting his activities as Russia's principle Nazi-hunter, the aim was publicly to discredit opponents in East Central and Eastern Europe and to mark them out as "fascist perpetrators" – just as Russian state media had managed to stigmatize Ukrainians as "Bandera supporters" far beyond the borders of the former Soviet Union.<sup>62</sup>

This unsubstantiated allegation, part of a larger conspiracy theory complex, is typical of hybrid war. It shows that this war is not a one-sided battle over the meaning of history, but rather an interaction in which Lithuanian intellectuals also participate. The situation created by the annexation of Crimea and the ongoing armed conflict in Eastern Ukraine is specific because it leaves little room for manoeuvre – public statements such as those in Vanagaitė's book are perceived per se as statements *vis à vis* a perceived Russian threat. After the publication of the book, there soon appeared online the first Russian language articles reporting on Lithuania in a way which recalled the calculated shift in the depiction of Ukraine towards that of proto-fascist rule. Rūta Vanagaitė refused to give interviews to Russian journalists and declared publicly that she had written the book for Lithuanian society.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Arūnas Brazauskas, '“Mūsiškiai” ir trolė Rūta Vanagaitė', *Delfi*, 16 January 2016, available at [www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/musiskiai-ir-trole-ruta-vanagaite.d?id=70412692](http://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/musiskiai-ir-trole-ruta-vanagaite.d?id=70412692) (last visited 24 April 2019).

<sup>62</sup> Nerijus Šepetys: '“Buti žydu” Lietuvoje: Šoa atminimo stiprinimas, pilietinio sąmoningumo ugdymas, o gal... naudingų idiotų šou?', *Penkiolika minučių*, 30 May 2015, available at <https://www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/istorija/buti-zydu-lietuvoje-soa-atminimo-stiprinimas-pilietinio-samoningumo-ugdymas-o-gal-naudingu-idiotu-sou-582-506253> (last visited 24 April 2019).

<sup>63</sup> Valerij Mokrushin, 'Kto ubival evreev v stranach Baltii?', *Nakanune.ru*, 29 January 2016, available at <http://www.nakanune.ru/articles/111348/> (last visited 24 April 2019).

For the Russian translation she asked the Belarusian Nobel prize-winner Svetlana Aleksievich to write an introduction to make sure that she would not be accused of supporting Russian propaganda efforts.<sup>64</sup> Nevertheless she was publicly accused of being a Russian agent. She spoke of a rift in her own family and said that some family members felt personally under attack.

Despite these experiences, Rūta Vanagaitė was invited to give readings in different towns all over Lithuania. Even in the shadow of the war in Ukraine, public discussion thrives in Lithuania today. There are MA theses being written on the Soviet post-war trials against Lithuanians. Sergei Kanovič and Milda Jakulytė, the author of a Holocaust atlas published by the State Jewish Museum, are currently building a memorial for the former Jewish community of Šeduva.<sup>65</sup> The foundation stone for the project was laid by Prime Minister Algirdas Butkevičius in a public ceremony. Milda Jakulytė is also writing a PhD on Lithuanian Holocaust memories in Amsterdam. Her colleague Violeta Davoliūtė has recently carried out research as part of a project funded by the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences about the memories of Lithuanian Jewish victims of Soviet deportation in 1941, adding to the discussion another perspective on the non-Catholic Lithuanian victims of Soviet occupation and their survival under Soviet rule.<sup>66</sup>

It is striking that most of these initiatives emerge from the capital and from Kaunas and are taken from there into other regions. Similarly, initiatives in state institutions involving the revision of the difficult Jewish Lithuanian past are either carried out by the institutions themselves or by remembrance professionals, such as academics, museum staff, and history

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<sup>64</sup> Mindaugas Jackevičius, 'Po R. Vanagaitės knygos – puolimas iš Rusijos', *Delfi*, 28 January 2016, available at [www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/po-r-vanagaites-knygos-puolimas-is-rusijos.d?id=70244218](http://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/po-r-vanagaites-knygos-puolimas-is-rusijos.d?id=70244218); idem, 'Vanagaitė atveitila rossijskim SMI: Ja napisala etu knigu dlia Litvy', *Delfi*, 28 January 2016, available at <http://ru.delfi.lt/news/live/vanagajte-atvetila-rossijskim-smi-ya-napisala-etu-knigu-dlya-litvy.d?id=70245622> (both last visited 24 April 2019).

<sup>65</sup> *Holocaust Atlas of Lithuania*, available at <http://www.holocaustatlas.lt/EN/> (last visited 24 April 2019).

<sup>66</sup> The necessity of investigating this aspect was demonstrated by Davoliūtė and Balkelis in earlier work. See Violeta Davoliūtė and Tomas Balkelis, eds., *Maps of Memory: Trauma, Identity and Exile in Deportation Memoirs from the Baltic States* (Vilnius: Lietuvių literatūros ir tautosakos institutas, 2012); Violeta Davoliūtė, 'Deportee Memoirs and Lithuanian History: The Double Testimony of Dalia Grinkevičiūtė', *Journal of Baltic Studies* 36, 1 (2005): 51–68.

educators supported by public funds.<sup>67</sup> In Žagarė in northern Lithuania, there are signs of grassroots initiatives, independent of the initiatives coming from the centre. These examples show that it is wrong to claim that the book *Our People* has not significantly changed this process or that hybrid war has made public debate completely impossible. It has on the contrary greatly increased public interest in this subject and broadened the spectrum of people involved in the discussion. How this discussion influences future commemorative practices will become clear in due course.

In 2017, a new public debate involving Rūta Vanagaitė arose.<sup>68</sup> It followed a different line of argument after the author openly criticized the decision by the Lithuanian parliament to commemorate in 2018 the organizer of the post-war resistance movement, Adolfas Ramanauskas alias Vanagas.<sup>69</sup> Pointing to existing archival documents, but without carrying out either in-depth research or analysis, Vanagaitė pointed to a supposed collaboration between Vanagas and the KGB. This was a bold statement, as Vanagas after his capture in 1956 had been systematically tortured and ultimately killed in 1957. Vanagaitė's analysis of Soviet protocols did not take into account the violent character of the interrogation and suggested that Vanagas may have actually been a traitor and a collaborator. Most commentators agreed that Vanagaitė was using these public allegations to promote an upcoming book and criticized her for her lack of respect in relation to the Ramanauskas legacy. But as Vanagaitė's critique was perceived as more problematic than in the case of *Our People* the general reaction was even harsher.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> The homepage of the Tolerance Centre gives examples in its exhibition about deportations. Also, see several publications about the Holocaust in Lithuania, for example Arūnas Bubnys, *Vokiečių okupuota Lietuva, 1941–1944* (Vilnius: Lietuvos gyventojų, genocido ir rezistencijos tyrimo centras, 1998); Christoph Dieckmann and Saulius Sužiedėlis, *The Persecution and Mass Murder of Lithuanian Jews during Summer and Fall of 1941: Sources and Analysis* (Vilnius: Leidykla "Margi raštai", 2006).

<sup>68</sup> For a contextualizing overview see Violeta Davoliūtė, 'Between the Public and the Personal: A New Stage of Holocaust Memory in Lithuania', *Cultures of History Forum*, 19 December 2018, available at <http://www.cultures-of-history.uni-jena.de/debates/lithuania/between-the-public-and-the-personal-a-new-stage-of-holocaust-memory-in-lithuania/> (last visited 24 April 2019).

<sup>69</sup> Arvydas Anušauskas, *Aš esu Vanagas* (Vilnius: Dominicus Lituanos, 2018), available at [https://issuu.com/dominicuslimuanos/docs/as\\_esu\\_vanagas](https://issuu.com/dominicuslimuanos/docs/as_esu_vanagas) (last visited 27 July 2019).

<sup>70</sup> Ekaterina Makhotina, 'Eure Helden, unsere Täter: Die litauische Holocaust Debatte ist auf's Neue entflammt', *Erinnerungskulturen. Erinnerung und Geschichtspolitik im östli-*

After a very short period of fierce public criticism the publishing house Alma Littera withdraw all the books of this bestselling author, including *Our People*, from the market, effectively banning the sale of books by Vanagaitė in Lithuania and beyond. The author suggested that all printed copies of her books might even be publicly destroyed. Regardless of this fast and comprehensive reaction on the part of the publishing house, the public witch-hunt continued, fuelled by harsh and very personal criticism.

It was characteristic of the prevailing discursive climate that the former leader of *Sąjūdis* and first elected president, Vytautas Landsbergis, attacked Vanagaitė in an article for the largest internet resource, *Delfi*, suggesting that she “go to the forest and judge for herself”.<sup>71</sup> By referring to her as “Mrs Dušanskienė” he symbolically closed a discursive circle. Nacham Dušanskis had been an active member of the Soviet security service and had been personally involved in the post-war persecution of several members of the Lithuanian resistance movement.

On the one hand, Landsbergis had referred to the well-known fact that Dušanskis had personally interrogated Adolfas Ramanauskas, thereby implying a comparison between Vanagaitė’s allegations and Soviet crimes against Lithuania. On the other hand, the direct reference to Dušanskis is a link to a dominant discourse about Jewish–Bolshevik cooperation in the conquest of Lithuania.<sup>72</sup> Since the Jewish roots of Dušanskis–Dushanski are well-known, Landsbergis was effectively linking Vanagaitė’s critique of Ramanauskas with her book *Our People* and her collaboration with Zuroff.

As an elder statesman Landsbergis was consciously setting the public tone about how to treat those who behaved like Dušanskis in relation to the national Lithuanian cause. In doing so, he reinforced anti-Jewish sentiment in an area of public discourse where it had seemingly been formally eliminated years ago. As a result of this heated debate, Vanagaitė came under verbal attack in her everyday life in Vilnius. People started openly to call her *žydmergaitė* (Lithuanian for Jewish girl) in the street.

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*chen und südöstlichen Europa*, 24 August 2019, available at <https://erinnerung.hypotheses.org/1617> (last visited 24 March 2020).

<sup>71</sup> Vytautas Landsbergis, ‘Dušanskienė’, *Delfi*, 27 October 2017, available at <https://www.delfi.lt/news/ringas/politics/v-landsbergis-dusanskiene.d?id=76184081> (last visited 24 April 2019).

<sup>72</sup> Felix Ackermann, ‘Hätten Sie kollaboriert? Litauische Bestsellerautorin Vanagaite angegriffen’, *FAZ*, 21 November 2017, 14.



Feeling unsafe, Vanagaitė left for Israel.<sup>73</sup> Since Dušanskis had also left for Israel after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Landsbergis seemed by implication to have made a direct comparison between him and Vanagaitė, with the result that some Lithuanians now see her as a traitor.

In the ensuing public debate the US-based Lithuanian poet and public intellectual Tomas Venclova called for calm and pointed out similarities with the vindictiveness which characterized those earlier Soviet campaigns.<sup>74</sup> The German historian Christoph Dieckmann, the author of a two-volume history of the German occupation of Lithuania, called in an open letter via *Delfi* for the crucial difference between research and public memory to be upheld:

“Bans and demonization will not advance our position: only a civilized open discourse can achieve this for us.”<sup>75</sup>

The Vilnius-based historian Alvydas Nikžentaitis reacted, warning Dieckmann against publicly disputing a national myth without providing clear evidence. He also criticized the patronizing tone of Dieckmann’s letter and reminded Lithuanian readers that German public discourse was not always calm and concise, as in the debate surrounding Goldhagen’s book. In a later iteration of this critique, co-authored with Joachim Tauber, Nikžentaitis repeated that every nation needed a certain number of myths in order to function with sufficient stability.<sup>76</sup>

Even after a public apology, Vanagaitė’s books continued to be banned from public sale by her publishing house, preventing the author from making a living in Lithuania. Thus, the many who claim publicly that the author tends to use scandals to promote herself and her books turn out to

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<sup>73</sup> Interview with Rūta Vanagaitė via telephone, 14 November 2017.

<sup>74</sup> ‘Tomas Venclova: R. Vanagaitės pjudydas labai primena sovietinius laikus’, *Delfi*, 29 October 2017, available at <https://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/t-venclova-r-vanagaites-pjudymas-labai-primena-sovietinius-laikus.d?id=76193551> (last visited 24 April 2019).

<sup>75</sup> Mindaugas Jackevičius, ‘Christoph Dieckmann: Vokiečių istorikas įvertino R. Vanagaitės pareiškimus: yra tik vienas kelias pirmyn’, *Delfi*, 30 October 2017, available at <https://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/vokieciu-istorikas-ivertino-r-vanagaites-pareiskimus-yra-tik-vienas-kelias-pirmyn.d?id=76199271>; Alvydas Nikžentaitis, ‘Tautinis mitas tai ne paprasta istorija: atviras laiškas vokiečių istorikui’, *Delfi*, 31 October 2017, available at <https://www.delfi.lt/news/ringas/lit/a-nikzentaitis-tautinis-mitas-tai-ne-paprasta-istorija-atviras-laiskas-vokieciu-istorikui.d?id=76220619> (both last visited 24 April 2019).

<sup>76</sup> Alvydas Nikžentaitis and Joachim Tauber, ‘Aufruhr um einen Partisanen: Eine litauische Erinnerungsdebatte’, *Osteuropa* 68, 6 (2018): 83–90.

be wrong. At the same time, following a private allegation of slander, the state prosecutor did not open a case against her. After some months it became clear that the publishing house Alma Littera would hand over printed copies of her books and allow for their privately-organized sale.<sup>77</sup>

The tone in which Vanagaitė's most recent scandal was framed demonstrates that the memory of post-war paramilitary forces is seen as a source of the legitimacy of Lithuanian national statehood and as mobilizing force in Lithuanian defence strategy in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. The debate illustrates how history and the public interpretation of it began to be used as a weapon and a mobilizing resource in an ongoing hybrid war. It is the context of the ongoing armed conflict in Ukraine and a growing perception of Russian interference in Lithuanian public debate which explain both the extent and the significance of the Vanagaitė case and the relevance of the 'Forest Brothers' as specific 'projection screens' for both mythmaking and myth destruction.

In this particular case historical evidence is provided by, among others, Arūnas Bubnys, referring to the Lithuanian KGB archives which do indicate that Ramanauskas was not involved in the murder of Lithuanian Jews in the summer of 1941. His non-armed collaboration with German occupying forces is presented as preserving his reputation because it did not involve the use of weapons against civilians. At the same time, the fact that Ramanauskas was involved in securing a warehouse in Druskininkai in 1941 under German supervision is not problematized, although the settlement at the time was inhabited predominantly by Poles and Jews and had been part of the Second Polish Republic until September 1939. So Ramanauskas clearly took part in the process of the forced Lithuanianization of Druskininkai which is perceived by most spa tourists today as an eternally Lithuanian place.

Although we have a broad range of texts in Lithuanian, English, and German covering collaboration with the Nazi German occupiers on the part of Lithuanian members of local police units, we are still missing a history of the forced incorporation of the Lithuanian-Polish borderlands which had been under Polish rule until WWII. A historical analysis and narrative involving both the first Soviet occupation, the subsequent German occupation, and the Soviet recapture of Lithuania as a process of

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<sup>77</sup> Mindaugas Jackeivičius, 'R. Vanagaitė atgaus iš "Alma Littera" visas savo knygas', *LRT Televizija*, 6 April 2018, available at [www.lrt.lt/naujienos/lietuvoje/2/201846/r-vanagaite-atgaus-is-alma-littera-visas-savo-knygas](http://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/lietuvoje/2/201846/r-vanagaite-atgaus-is-alma-littera-visas-savo-knygas) (last visited 24 April 2019).

active Lithuanianization is missing on a macro- and a micro-scale.<sup>78</sup> It is for this reason that the argument that Ramanauskas was only guarding a warehouse in the late summer of 1941 in Druskininkai is accepted widely as evidence of non-harmful collaboration with the German occupiers.

### Conclusion: The Heightening and Relativization of Historical Arguments

The deliberate construction of a connection between Ukraine, Belarus, and Lithuania through the state-promoted remembrance of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was until 2013 purely symbolic. The Euromaidan, the Russian annexation of Crimea, and the war initiated by Russia in eastern Ukraine increasingly turned the notion of the shared interests of the societies living between the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea into concrete media, economic, and military support in Lithuania for Ukrainian society. The increased media perception of a Russian threat reawakened historical experiences stored in the communicative memory of Lithuanian society. But it also changed the field of public discourse, which from 2014 onwards made Lithuania part of the hybrid theatre of war.

Constant references to the Russian threat which has materialized in Ukraine now make it almost impossible to create a binding social truth in a clear public process in which argument and counter-argument relate to one another. Whether work was financed directly or indirectly by Russia is not relevant. The public suspicion of such funding is enough to shift the debate, as in the case of the book *Our People*, into the discursive field of war, under the shadow of the fact of the annexation of Crimea and the specific Lithuanian perception of it as an attack on the sovereignty of a post-Soviet state.

Even without direct media intervention by Russia, the discussion in Lithuanian society of its own 20<sup>th</sup> century past is deeply disturbed. Instead of promoting a critical exploration of the ruptures in its own history, the shifting of historical debates into the field of hybrid war intensifies the following trends: politicized thinking according to the friend-or-enemy model; and the attempt to tolerate controversies without resolving them. As demonstrated by the case of the removal of the Soviet statues on

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<sup>78</sup> Violeta Davoliūtė did formulate an argument mainly focusing on the post-war period, see Violeta Davoliūtė, *The Making and Breaking of Soviet Lithuania: Memory and Modernity in the Wake of War* (London, New York: Routledge, 2013).

Green Bridge, under these conditions it seems easier to remove a bone of contention from the public space than to engage in a public discussion about Lithuanian involvement in the Sovietization of the capital. The case of the still-debated commemorative plaque to Jonas Noreika shows that controversial perspectives on the 20<sup>th</sup> century can be represented publicly only if they appear to serve the notion of national statehood.

The war in eastern Ukraine and the strong Lithuanian positioning against Russian aggression have contributed to marginalizing the voices which criticize the use of totalitarianism theory as an ideological foundation of Lithuanian statehood. The resulting contradiction is particularly clear in the case of the book by Rūta Vanagaitė. On the one hand, it generated a broad media discussion about Lithuanian involvement in the Holocaust. But the legitimacy of the debate was also called into question by the suggestion of Russian support for the book. Therefore, one result already of the hybrid war is that positions in public debate are simultaneously heightened and relativized. Interpretations of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and in particular of German and Soviet rule in Lithuania are not the starting-point, but simply the surface onto which contemporary political discussions are projected. Although these discussions are internal Lithuanian political debates, the various forms of hybrid warfare introduced by Putin's Russia into the region are highly present in this area of the public sphere.



URSULA WOOLLEY

## THE SECURITIZATION OF ENTANGLED HISTORICAL IDENTITY?

### LOCAL AND NATIONAL HISTORY DISCOURSES IN DNIPRO DURING THE POROSHENKO PRESIDENCY

#### Introduction

This paper considers the construction of local and national historical narratives associated with the identity of the city of Dnipro from 2014 to 2019. The historical tropes, narratives, and approaches in the primary sources, it is argued, indicate the ‘securitization’ of a complex, historicized ‘Dnipro identity’, responding to the *Russkii Mir* securitization of identity constructed by the Russian government and influencing wider perceptions of the war in the Donbas nearby. The paper examines the different historical identity discourses recurring in interacting primary sources. It analyses recurring tropes in recent popular history and academic history on Dnipro, alongside historical tropes used in the discourse and demonstrated in the public history initiatives of influential local actors and institutions, and historical narratives of Dnipro supplied externally by the national content providers *Istorychna Pravda* and the Ukrainian Institute for National Memory (UINM).

The paper initiates an investigation of what is achieved by the use of historical tropes in discourse, in public history, and in commemorative practices in terms of identity securitization and the consolidation of new institutions of society and state on the basis of a civic, rather than an ethno-nationalist, political vision. It focuses on the period following the Revolution of Dignity which led to a re-evaluation of different identity-markers in Ukraine and the increasing salience of historical memory as a marker of identity and as an instrument in the imposition of identity, because of the practices of information war on the part of the Russian

government<sup>1</sup> which were then beginning to be revealed more widely.<sup>2</sup> The highly-politicized recurrent use of historical tropes in what was now interpreted by the Ukrainian government and its allies as information war required the drawing of new distinctions between shared, separate, or conflicting narratives of events in the past and their often imperceptible impact on the political or social allegiances to which they might superficially bear no immediate relation.<sup>3</sup> It has been argued elsewhere that there is a connection between adherence to a particular set of historical narratives, from either a Ukrainian or a Russian perspective, and allegiance to one side or the other in the war in the Donbas.<sup>4</sup>

This study of the construction of historical identity in and of Dnipro during 2014–19 forms part of a broader piece of research aiming to discover how the discursive construction of historical identity in conditions of war impacted on and was impacted by a spectrum of post-Soviet Ukrainian aspirations for self-determination and a separate but closely-intertwined spectrum of aspirations to understand the collective past. It is argued that the aspirations to research and write history freed from the hitherto constraining prevailing ideology of Soviet communism and to commemorate events, the public memory of which had been entirely suppressed, were central ambitions of post-communist experience. Iaroslav Hrytsak has maintained, synthesizing these points, that shared historical memory is more important for Ukrainian state-building than borders or institutional reform.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> It is argued that much of the impact of Russian government ‘information war’ derived from the much longer-term history of the dominance, locally and internationally, of Russian discourse over Ukrainian discourse in narratives of Ukraine.

<sup>2</sup> Tetyana Matychak, ‘Octopus Tentacles: The Structure of the Kremlin’s Propaganda Influence on Ukrainian Information Space’, in *Words and Wars: Ukraine Facing Kremlin Propaganda*, ed. A. Kulakov (Kyiv: KIS, 2017), 40.

<sup>3</sup> Tetiana Orlova, ‘Fakторы vplyvu na formuvannia istorichnoi pam’iati: kazus suchasnoi Rosii’, in ‘Transformatsii Istorychnoi Pam’iati’, ed. N. Temirova et al., *Istorychni i Politolohychni Doslidzhennia*, special edition (2018): 23–7, available at <http://jhpr.donnu.edu.ua/article/view/5108> (last visited 28 July 2020).

<sup>4</sup> Olena Stiazhkina, ‘Dyskurs okupatsii iak mekhanizm osmyslennia rosiis’koï ahresii proty Ukraïny’, in *Novi storinky istorii Donbasu – Zbirnyk statei* (Vinnytsia, 2016), 71; Serhii Plokhyy, ‘Goodbye Lenin: A Memory Shift in Revolutionary Ukraine’, *MAPA Digital Atlas of Ukraine* (Harvard University Ukrainian Research Institute, 2018), available at <http://gis.huri.harvard.edu/goodbye-lenin.html> (last visited 1 November 2019), map 5.

<sup>5</sup> Iaroslav Hrytsak, ‘Istoriia v osobakh: do formuvannia istorychoi pam’iati v Ukraïni, 1991–2011’ in *Kul’tura istorychnoi pam’iati: ievropeïsk’kyi ta ukraïns’kyi dosvid*, ed. Iurii

Hrytsak's perception about the relationship between shared historical memory and successful state-building introduces in other disciplinary terms ideas concerning the use of history in the securitization of identity. Maria Mälksoo in a recent paper has introduced the concept of "mnemonical security" as a way of linking ideas about the societal role of public history with ideas about the security implications of the political capacity to influence perceptions of identity.<sup>6</sup> She implicitly combines a perception of Russian government instrumentalization of identity with an extension of ideas about the societal operation of memory politics proposed by Etkind and Blacker and also with an extension of the concept of securitization of identity proposed by Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde.<sup>7</sup>

Iurii Opal'ko, in a 2008 policy paper for the Ukrainian National Institute for Strategic Studies, explored what was in effect a practical policy version of these ideas in relation to the development of the work of the UINM.<sup>8</sup> The Ukrainian Decommunization legislation was, it is argued, a response to Russian government securitization of contested historical narratives and constituted in itself the partial securitization of key parts of the Ukrainian ethno-national historical narrative. In this respect the concepts of securitization and de-securitization of societal and national identity help to conceptualize recent historical policy and historical politics in Ukraine.

This paper divides into the following parts: First, it reviews the discursive contributions of different influential actors (mostly institutional, some individual) and high-profile physical public history initiatives to current historical identity in Dnipro. Secondly, it investigates the inter-subjectivity between local and national discourses during the period in question and partly arising from the implementation of the Decommunization legislation. Thirdly, it reviews a number of key tropes in the historical narrative of Dnipro to investigate the modified values which have been attached to them, partly as a consequence of the work of the

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Shapoval (Kyiv: Instytut politychnykh i etnonatsional'nykh doslidzhen' im. I. F. Kurasa NAN Ukraïny, 2013), 231.

<sup>6</sup> Maria Mälksoo, ' "Memory Must Be Defended": Beyond the Politics of Mnemonical Security', *Security Dialogue* 46, 3 (2015): 221–37.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 222; Uilleam Blacker and Alexander Etkind, eds., *Memory and Theory in Eastern Europe* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Barry Buzan, Ole Waever, and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1998).

<sup>8</sup> Iu. Opal'ko, 'Vzaïmodiia Ukraïns'koho Instytutu Natsional'noi Pam'iaty z Hromads'kymy Orhanizatsiiamy u Rozvytku Svidomosti Suspil'stva', *Stratehichni Priorytety*, 4 (2008): 55–61.



initiatives and the actors in the first two sections, and considers the consequences of these discursive modifications.

### Local Actors and Public History Initiatives

The contribution of local political actors to the moulding of emphases in the local historical narrative has often been by their physical association with, or distancing from, the historical initiatives of others. During the decade preceding 2014, local and regional administrations in the city had been in the hands of Yanukovych's Party of Regions (and, latterly, the OpoBlok grouping which superseded it) and local politicians selectively dissociated themselves from commemorative initiatives instigated from Kyiv. They were conspicuous by their absence from the public events for Holodomor Remembrance Day, for example, in the year of Yanukovych's election to the presidency.<sup>9</sup> Also conspicuous has been their willingness to associate publicly with the Moscow Patriarchate wing of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.<sup>10</sup>

With the growing emphasis in Russian government propaganda on a particular state narrative of WWII as a Soviet victory over (Western European) fascists, overlaid on the direct local experience of Nazi occupation, competing emphases in interpretations and commemorations of the war have often dominated the local historical script, with the Ukrop Party and the Party of Regions vying for overlapping voting demographics by deploying modulated versions of the local war narrative.<sup>11</sup> The weight of the big local factories and associated professional organizations and per-

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<sup>9</sup> 'Dnipropetrovs'ka vlada proihnoruvala Den' pam'iaty', *Istorychna Pravda*, 27 November 2010, available at <https://www.istpravda.com.ua/short/2010/11/27/6572/> (last visited 26 May 2019).

<sup>10</sup> Maksym Bezpalov, *Likhiie dev'ianosti: Kuznia kadriv Dnipropetrovs'k* (Kyiv: Tempora, 2016), 30; Ivan Murakha, 'Mer Dnipropetrovs'ka stav "velykomuchenikom"', *Dniprograd.org*, 29 January 2013, available at [https://dniprograd.org/2013/01/29/mer-dnipropetrovska-stav-velikomuchenikom\\_22632](https://dniprograd.org/2013/01/29/mer-dnipropetrovska-stav-velikomuchenikom_22632); idem, 'Dnipropetrovs'ka ieparkhiia ne ahituvatyme za Vilkula - ofitsiino', *Dniprograd.org*, 19 October 2015, available at [https://dniprograd.org/2015/10/19/dnipropetrovska-eparkhiya-ne-agituvatime-za-vilkula-ofitsiyno\\_33403](https://dniprograd.org/2015/10/19/dnipropetrovska-eparkhiya-ne-agituvatime-za-vilkula-ofitsiyno_33403) (both last visited 1 November 2019).

<sup>11</sup> 'Prezentatsiia predvybornoï programmy Viktora Marchenko', *Gorod.dp.ua*, 21 October 2015, available at <https://www.gorod.dp.ua/news/109906> (last visited 1 November 2019); 'Vilkul: 9 maia v Dnepre tysiachi gorozhan speli pesniu den' pobedy vozle Monumenta Slavy', personal website of Oleksandr Vilkul, 9 May 2017, available at <http://www.vilkul.ua/news/vilkul-9-maya-v-dnepre-tysyachi-gorozhan-speli-pesnyu-den-pobedy> (last visited 1 November 2019).

sonal networks, especially Interpipe, DMZ (the Dnipro Metallurgical Factory), KBP (the Pivdenmash Design Bureau), and Pivdenmash (a major state-owned aerospace manufacturer) itself, is also significant in giving public emphasis to particular local historical narratives, with the high-profile celebrations of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Pivdenmash and KBP in 2014 a case in point.<sup>12</sup>

The notable contribution of the Dnipro Historical Museum is in its open-access library of local historical sources, from texts of key works by Iavornyts'kyi to work influencing local political narratives today.<sup>13</sup> The Tkuma Institute, the Ukrainian Institute for the Study of the Holocaust, provides the research capacity informing the content of the Museum of Jewish Memory at the Menorah Centre discussed below and is the largest and most significant contributor to scholarship, publication, and public engagement on Jewish history in Ukraine, advocating for and raising the profile of pluralistic, especially Ukrainian and Jewish, historicization.<sup>14</sup>

The Institute of Dnipro History, existing at the time as a department of the Dnipro Development Agency, advocates for the historicization of urban regeneration projects: it raises the profile of elements of local history generally more associated with a Ukrainian ethnonational historical narrative and at the same time seeks to improve public awareness of the political motivations behind public history projects.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Oleksandra Haïdaï et al., *Polityka i Pam'iat': Dnipro – Zaporizhzhia – Odesa – Kharkiv: Vid 1990-ko do s'obodni* (L'viv: FOP Shumylovych, 2018), 48–9; Irma Bohuts'ka, 'Lehendarne KB "Pivdenne" sviatkuie iuvilei', *Dniprograd.org*, 10 April 2014, available at [https://dniprograd.org/2014/04/10/legendarne-kb-pivdenne-svyatkue-yuviley\\_26465](https://dniprograd.org/2014/04/10/legendarne-kb-pivdenne-svyatkue-yuviley_26465); 'Na sviatkuvannia iuvileiu Pivdenmashu pryïkhav holova sluzhby zovnishnoi rozvidky Ukraïny z 2005 po 2010 roky Mykola Malomuzh', *Novyny Dnipra*, 11 April 2014, available at <http://uanews.dp.ua/society/2014/04/11/41883.html>; 'Mitropolit Irineiï pozdravil kolektiv Iuzhmasha s 70-letnim iubileem sozdaniia predpriatiia', website of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchat), diocese Dnipropetrovs'k, 26 May 2014, available at <http://eparhia.dp.ua/novosti/mitropolit-irineiï-pozdravil-kolektiv-yuzhmasha-s-70-letnim-yubileem-sozdaniia-predpriatiia/> (all last visited 1 November 2019).

<sup>13</sup> See Dnipropetrovs'k National History Museum (*Dnipropetrovs'kyi natsional'nyi istorychnyi muzei im. D. I. Iavornyts'koho*), available at <http://www.museum.dp.ua/library.html> (last visited 1 November 2019).

<sup>14</sup> See Tkuma Ukrainian Institute for the Study of the Holocaust, available at <http://tkuma.dp.ua/index.php/ua/>; 'U Dnipri prezentuvaly knyhy pro Holokost', *Ukrinform*, 30 September 2018, available at <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-culture/2548654-u-dnipri-prezentuvali-knigi-pro-golokost.html> (both last visited 1 November 2019).

<sup>15</sup> See Dnipro Development Agency, available <http://dda.dp.ua/>; Instytut istoriï Dnipra, available at <https://www.facebook.com/iid.dp.ua/>; 'Ahenstvo rozvytku Dnipra podilylosia dosvidom provedennia prosvitnyts'kykh zakhodiv z predstavnykamy orhaniv

The earlier contrasting and complementary cultural constructions of the historian-ethnographer and museum director Dmytro Iavornyts'kyi, the novelist Oles' Honchar, and the academic Mykola Koval's'kyi figure significantly in the pre-existing historical identity landscape. It is argued that the value of historicization they each represent has been influential in enabling the articulation by local political and cultural actors during the period in question of a local historical identity which defied divisive political instrumentalization. Emblematising iterations of retellings of local history by local cultural actors, Honchar popularized the image of Iavornyts'kyi as a historian-leader for the sixties generation; while two influential expatriate historians, Andrii Portnov and Serhii Plokhyy, raised the profile of Koval's'kyi (and, in Portnov's case, Iavornyts'kyi also) for the current generation.<sup>16</sup>

The figure of Iavornyts'kyi unites an emphasis on pride in Ukrainian heritage and Cossack past with a commitment to local scholarship and public history which is also important to the self-image of the city.<sup>17</sup> He wrote a widely-read local history of the Cossacks (*Istoriia Zaporoz'kykh Kozakiv*), taught history at the first Katerynoslav commercial college, and established, with the backing of the funding and the collections of the local industrialist Oleksandr Pol', a museum to preserve local Cossack heritage.<sup>18</sup> His promotion of Ukrainian Cossack identity was important to the Ukrainian national movement at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> century

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mistsevoi vldy Dnipropetrovshchyny', official website of the Dnipro City Council (*Dniprovs'ka mis'ka rada*), 28 September 2017, available at [<sup>16</sup> Oles' Honchar, \*Sobor\* \(L'viv: Apriori, 2018\) \(republished from idem, \*Tvory u dvokh tomakh\* \(Kyiv: Naukova Dumka, 1993\) \), 187–202; Serhii Plokhyy, 'Zhyttieva misiia Mykoly Koval's'koho', \*Dzerkalo tyzhnia\*, 10 November 2006, available at \[https://dt.ua/SOCIETY/zhitteva\\\_misiya\\\_mikoli\\\_kovalskogo.html\]\(https://dt.ua/SOCIETY/zhitteva\_misiya\_mikoli\_kovalskogo.html\) \(last visited 1 November 2019\); Andrii Portnov, 'Buty naukovtsem u totalitarnii derzhavi: dnipropetrovs'ki istoryky ta radians'ka vlada \(1918–1939\), in \*Istoriï istorykiv: Oblychchia i obrazy ukrainskoï istoriografii XX stolittia\* \(Kyiv: Krytyka, 2011\), 15–38.](https://dniprorada.gov.ua/uk/articles/item/21887/agentstvo-rozvitku-dnipra-podililosya-dosvidom-provedennya-prosvitnickih-zahodiv-z-predstavnikami-organiv-miscevoi-vladi-dnipropetrovshchiny; Sviatoslav Chyruk, 'Skam'ianile oblychchia zastoiu. Skil'ky rokiv dekomunizovanym pam'iatnykam Dnipra?', Instytut suspil'nykh doslidzhen', 22 December 2017, available at https://uatterra.in.ua/2017/12/22/skamyani-oblychchia-zastoyu-skilky-ro/ (all last visited 1 November 2019).</a></p>
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<sup>17</sup> Portnov, 'Buty naukovtsem' (see note 16), 18; Bezpalov, *Kuznia kadriv* (see note 10), 16; Ia. Tymoshenko, 'Dmytro Iavornyts'kyi. "Kozats'kyi Bat'ko" z Sicheslava-Dnipra', *Istorychna Pravda*, 24 December 2018, available at <https://www.istpravda.com.ua/articles/2018/12/24/153459/> (last visited 1 November 2019).

<sup>18</sup> Portnov, 'Buty naukovtsem' (see note 16), 16.

and until his death in 1940 and he still looms large as a guiding spirit of the city's Ukrainian identity today.<sup>19</sup>

Two stories about him represent a popularized version of the similar stories of political fine judgement told about Koval's'kyi by his pupils (see below). When the last Tsar visited the new Katerynoslav historical museum, Iavornyts'kyi gave him a tour entirely in Ukrainian, which the Tsar, uncomprehending but undeterred, duly complimented him on in the visitors' book.<sup>20</sup> In the second story, during the civil war of 1917–21, Makhno's anarchists entered the city twice and on one occasion proclaimed it the capital of their own republic.<sup>21</sup> Their marauding also took them to the museum, but Iavornyts'kyi so inspired them with his story of the Cossack heritage it preserved that he persuaded them not to harm it as a result.<sup>22</sup>

So he represents a responsibility towards the local past as part of preserving its centrality to local identity, but also an association with icons of Russian imperial culture (he was proud of being the model for the scribe in Repin's famous painting, *Zaporizhian Cossacks Writing a Letter to the Turkish Sultan*, 1880–91) and an accommodation with the new Soviet regime: although his pro-Ukrainian approach was criticized at the height of Stalin's terror he was not arrested and was incorporated into the public Soviet representation of Ukrainian history after WWII.<sup>23</sup>

Oles' Honchar's dramatization of the relationship between Makhno and Iavornyts'kyi in his influential novel *Sobor* extended the reach of this image of Iavornyts'kyi as the conduit of Ukrainian culture and wisdom.<sup>24</sup> With its central message of historical memory as the foundation of decency in human relationships, it was significant in the formation of a shared Ukrainian historical and cultural narrative about and projection of the Dnipropetrovsk region both for Honchar's local contemporaries in the confident but isolated closed "Rocket City" and elsewhere in the

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 18; Bezpalov, *Kuznia kadriv* (see note 10), 15–17.

<sup>20</sup> Bezpalov, *Kuznia kadriv* (see note 10), 16.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>23</sup> Portnov, 'Buty naukovtsem' (see note 16), 26–7.

<sup>24</sup> M. Zhulyns'kyi, 'Svitlo viry Olesia Honchara: Rozdumy z nahody 100-richchia vid dnia narodzhennia', *day.kyiv.ua*, 2 April 2018, available at <https://day.kyiv.ua/uk/article/cuspilstvo-osobystist/svitlo-viry-olesya-gonchara> (last visited 1 November 2019).

country.<sup>25</sup> Some years after the publication and subsequent banning of *Sobor*, the history department of the local university came to be led by Mykola Koval's'kyi, another figure central to the creation of the local narrative and to the approach to the local narrative of influential historians today.<sup>26</sup>

The status of the department was a result largely of his work, highlighted in recent years by alumni of the department assessing his contribution to history in Ukraine.<sup>27</sup> They narrate his protection and development of Ukrainian scholarship and publication on Ukrainian subjects, and the academic and personal compromises he made and risks he took in order to do this, as crucial to preserving the possibility of deriving elements of positivity from an examination of the Soviet period, and reflecting the more general local sense of the post-Soviet need both to cherish self-esteem and to properly confront the past at the same time.<sup>28</sup>

Because of its closed status, the city at the time was allowed to bypass Communist Party political structures in Kyiv and deal directly with Moscow, and this direct line appeared to hold good, as maintained by Koval's'kyi, in matters of academic research as well as in matters relating to the defence industry.<sup>29</sup> Whereas the Ukrainian political apparatus in Kyiv was more attuned to the nuances of Ukrainian patriotic discourse in Ukrainian scholarship and also more aware of their responsibility for keeping it under control, academic leadership in Moscow was less attuned, less interested, and more distant, with beneficial consequences for the research quality and independent institutional development of the history department.<sup>30</sup> The story mirrors local narratives of the power over and freedom from Moscow wielded by the structures and networks of

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<sup>25</sup> Honchar, *Sobor* (see note 16), 193; Bezpalov, *Kuznia kadriv* (see note 10), 16; Serhii Zhuk, *Rock and Roll in the Rocket City: The West, Identity, and Ideology in Soviet Dnipropetrovsk, 1960–1985* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 53–8.

<sup>26</sup> Andrii Portnov and Tetiana Portnova, 'Soviet-Ukrainian Historiography in Brezhnev's Closed City: Mykola / Nikolai Kovalsky and his "School" at the Dnipropetrovsk University', *Ab Imperio*, 4, (2017): 270.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 266; Plokhyy, 'Zhyttieva misiia' (see note 16).

<sup>28</sup> Portnov / Portnova, 'Historiography' (see note 26), 284–5; Plokhyy, 'Zhyttieva misiia' (see note 16); Serhii Plokhyy, *The Gates of Europe: A History of Ukraine* (London: Allen Lane, 2015), 302; Bezpalov, *Kuznia kadriv* (see note 10), 199.

<sup>29</sup> Plokhyy, 'Zhyttieva misiia' (see note 16).

<sup>30</sup> Portnov / Portnova, 'Historiography' (see note 26), 279–80.

Pivdenmash at the same time and both define the putative political and cultural confidence of the city.<sup>31</sup>

#### Four Major Public History Initiatives

One intention underlying the 2015 Decommunization legislation was to change the physical commemorative landscape in Ukraine as part of a strategic redirection away from the Moscow-led focus on the role of the Soviet Union in WWII as a unifying historical memory for the 'Russian World'.<sup>32</sup> The stories and profiles of four broadly contemporaneous local museum initiatives show how local historical identity priorities supported or modified that intention.

The Menorah Centre, the "biggest Jewish community centre in Europe, or even the world" was founded in 2012, and the Museum of Jewish Memory and of the Holocaust in Ukraine as an integral part of the centre was opened at the same time.<sup>33</sup> The size and location of the Menorah Centre symbolize the significance of Judaism today and historically to the city (fig. 1). The upper floor of the museum, in presenting the Jewish experience of the genocidal anti-semitism of the Holocaust as central to the representation of the local experience of WWII, provides an alternative deideologizing narrative to the current Russian government propaganda narrative of the Great Patriotic War, prevalent in Russian language discourse on the subject.<sup>34</sup> The lower (pre-WWII) floor, in representing contextualized narratives of imperial government anti-semitism, Jewish and Ukrainian pre-revolutionary political collaboration, and Jewish

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<sup>31</sup> Bezpalov, *Kuznia kadriv* (see note 10), 69; Serhii Zhuk, *Rocket City* (see note 25), 24–6.

<sup>32</sup> Serhii Stukanov, 'Zavdannia UINP: Stvorennia lehitymnykh instrumentiv dlia podolannia totalitarnoi spadshchyny', *Galinfo*, 1 November 2015, available at [https://galinfo.com.ua/articles/nashe\\_zavdannya\\_stvoryty\\_legitymni\\_instrumenty\\_dlya\\_deko\\_munizatsii\\_volodymyr\\_vyatrovych\\_210377.html](https://galinfo.com.ua/articles/nashe_zavdannya_stvoryty_legitymni_instrumenty_dlya_deko_munizatsii_volodymyr_vyatrovych_210377.html) (last visited 1 November 2019).

<sup>33</sup> Misha Friedman, 'The Ukrainian City That's Become a Haven for Jews Fleeing Another European War', *Quartz*, 21 February 2015, available at <https://qz.com/347948/the-ukrainian-city-thats-become-a-haven-for-jews-fleeing-another-european-war/>; 'Jewish Ukraine: Five Facts About the Jews of Dnepr', *JewishNews.com.ua*, 31 December 2015, available at <https://jewishnews.com.ua/en/en-community/jewish-ukraine-5-facts-about-the-jews-of-dnepr> (both last visited 1 November 2019).

<sup>34</sup> Tatiana Zhurzhenko, 'A Divided Nation? Reconsidering the Role of Identity Politics in the Ukraine Crisis', *Die Friedens-Warte* 89, 1/2 (2014): 264.

suffering during collectivization and the Holodomor, contrasts in a different way with the ‘anti-West – anti-fascist’ tropes deployed by the Russian government.<sup>35</sup>



Fig. 1: Dnipro Cityscape with Towers of the Menorah Centre. 15 June 2019. © Ursula Woolley

Plans for the Rocket Park, using the academic and curatorial expertise of the city’s museums and higher education institutions to display the historic technical prowess of Pivdenmash, were announced in 2013.<sup>36</sup> It

<sup>35</sup> Of the lower floor panels and displays in the Museum of Jewish Memory and the Holocaust in Ukraine, of particular interest to us here are a panel describing the infamously anti-semitic ‘Beilis Case’ of 1913, citing the liberal critical responses of individual members of the Russian intelligentsia and the extreme and explicit anti-semitism of members of the Russian imperial government; a display showing Jewish and Ukrainian candidates standing for the same political parties in the 1917 Constituent Assembly elections of the Ukrainian National Republic; and a display of photographs of Jewish victims of Soviet ‘dekulakization’ (*dekurkulizatsiia*) during the forced collectivization of agriculture which led to the Holodomor.

<sup>36</sup> ‘U Dnipropetrovs’ku pokazhut’ rakety dlia pol’otu na Mars’, *Istorychna Pravda*, 25 January 2013, available at <https://www.istpravda.com.ua/short/2013/01/25/109998/> (last visited 1 November 2019).



would project, physically and publicly, a reputational pedigree intellectually superior to that of the Donets'k network of Yanukovych in power at the time.<sup>37</sup> It would simultaneously celebrate publicly the city's recent Soviet industrial and defence heritage in contrast to the commemoration of Cossackdom at Khortytsia in neighbouring Zaporizhzhia promoted by President Yushchenko.<sup>38</sup>

The striking presence of the Rocket Park display (fig. 2) within a stone's throw of the late-Soviet offices of the regional administration has since been eclipsed spatially and in terms of size by the memorials to local lives lost during the Revolution of Dignity and the war in the Donbas in the immediate precincts of the administration building. The recurring themes of pride in local industrial heritage and local investment in public history, notwithstanding and partly because of associations with Soviet Russia, have in this arena been superseded by the narratives of local courage and sacrifice in the conduct of a new war.

The plan for a new out-of-town heritage centre on the site of the local Cossack settlement at Stara Samar' was intended to put a physical manifestation of the roots of the city back in public view and answer the implicitly more Russian-leaning identity politics of those who continued to insist that the city only began with the arrival of the Russian Empire.<sup>39</sup> But it has to date remained on paper.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> 'U Dnipropetrovs'ku khochut' stvoryty Park Raket', *Istorychna Pravda*, 17 January 2013, available at <https://www.istpravda.com.ua/short/2013/01/17/108561/> (last visited 1 November 2019).

<sup>38</sup> Oleksandr Hrytsenko, *Prezydenty i pam'iat': Polityka pam'iaty prezidentiv Ukraïny (1994–2014)*. *Pidbruntia, poslannia, realizatsiia, rezul'taty* (Kyïv: K.I.S., 2017), 530–1.

<sup>39</sup> 'Dnipro 4.0: Rebrendinh ta mis'ki "mify"', *Instytut suspil'nykh doslidzhen'*, 15 August 2016, available at <https://uaterra.in.ua/2016/08/15/%D0%B4%D0%BD%D1%96%D0%B%D1%80%D0%B%D0%BE-4-0-%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%B1%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%BD%D0%B4%D1%96%D0%BD%D0%B3%D1%82%D0%B0-%D0%BC%D1%96%D1%81%D1%8C%D0%BA%D1%96%D0%BC%D1%96%D1%84%D0%B8/>; Volodymyr Panchenko, 'Stara Samar': problemy ta perspektyvy stvorennia istoryko-kul'turnoho kompleksu', *Instytut suspil'nykh doslidzhen'*, 28 July 2017, available at <https://uaterra.in.ua/2017/07/28/%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B0%D1%80%D0%B0%D1%81%D0%B0%D0%BC%D0%B0%D1%80%D1%8C-%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%B1%D0%BB%D0%B5%D0%BC%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B0%D0%BF%D0%B5%D1%80%D1%81%D0%BF%D0%B5%D0%BA%D1%82%D0%B8%D0%B2%D0%B8/> (both last visited 1 November 2019).

<sup>40</sup> 'Fakhivtsi rozpovily pro novyi istoryko-kul'turnyi kompleks Stara Samar' u Dnipri', official website of the Dnipro City Council, 22 February 2018, available at <https://dniprorada.gov.ua/uk/articles/item/23855/fahivci-rozpovili-pro-novij-istoriko-kulturnij-kompleks-stara-samar-u-dnipri> (last visited 1 November 2019).





Fig. 2: Rocket Park Installations in Central Dnipro. 15 June 2019. © Ursula Woolley

When President Yushchenko had prioritized the restoration of Khortytsia there was nothing on a comparable scale in Dnipro, which at the time was in the hands of his political opponents.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Hrytsenko, *Prezidynty* (see note 38), 530–1; Andrii Portnov, ‘“The Heart of Ukraine?” Dnipropetrovsk and the Ukrainian Revolution’, in *What Does Ukraine Think*, ed. Andrew Wilson (London: European Council on Foreign Relations, 2015), 67, online

The reconstructed cottages of Kodak and Saryi Kodak had been part of the cityscape of Dnipro for some time and had been woven successfully into the Soviet narrative of Cossacks as fighters on behalf of the peasantry.<sup>42</sup> The media coverage given to the plans for the commemoration and commercialization of the Cossack history of the city through the redevelopment of the Stara Samar' site gave new opportunities for the recommunication of the significance of this history to local Ukrainian identity with each iteration of the local political and planning process. In the heightened circumstances of 'information war' this opportunity for the articulation of this particular narrative perhaps compensated somewhat for the significance of delays to the actual execution of the project.<sup>43</sup>

The ATO (Anti-Terrorist Operation) Museum, opened in 2016, presenting the ongoing war in the Donbas, is co-located with the local WWII Diorama of the Battle of the Dnipro River.<sup>44</sup> The surround video screens recreating the Donbas war experience of members of a Ukrainian volunteer battalion (with voiceover narrating their experience and resisting identity securitization as part of the narrative) and the battlefield memorabilia outside (bullet-marked signposts, munitions, banners, bombed-out vehicles) arranged as walk-through art installations (fig. 3), sit like a study in presentational contrasts with the archetypal late-Soviet hemispherical diorama of the WWII Battle of the Dnipro River on the first floor upstairs.<sup>45</sup>

The display on the ground floor frames, or is the point of entry to, the display commemorating WWII on the upper floor, which was refurbished in time for the 8 May celebrations in 2018.<sup>46</sup> The walk-through installa-

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publication available at [https://www.ecfr.eu/publications/summary/what\\_does\\_ukraine\\_think3026](https://www.ecfr.eu/publications/summary/what_does_ukraine_think3026) (last visited 1 November 2019).

<sup>42</sup> Andrii Portnov and Tetiana Portnova, 'The "Imperial" and the "Cossack" in the Semiotics of Ekaterinoslav-Dnipropetrovsk: the Controversies of the Foundation Myth', in *Urban Semiotics: The City as a Cultural-Historical Phenomenon*, ed. Igor Pilshchikov (Tallinn: TLU Press, 2015), 225.

<sup>43</sup> 'Fakhivtsi rozpovily' (see note 40).

<sup>44</sup> See Ukraines First ATO Museum / Pershyi Muzei ATO Dnipro, available at <https://www.facebook.com/UkrainesFirstATOMuseum/?rf=1635789670075000> (last visited 1 November 2019).

<sup>45</sup> 'Zavershyly restavratsiiu naibil'shoi v Ukraïni dioramy "Bytva za Dnipro"', *Ukrinform*, 4 May 2018, available at <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-culture/2453621-zaversili-restavraciu-najbilsoi-v-ukraini-diorami-bitva-za-dnipro.html>; see <http://www.museum.dp.ua/dioramaevents.html> (both last visited 1 November 2019).

<sup>46</sup> 'Zavershyly restavratsiiu' (see note 45).



Fig. 3: Part of the Outside Display at the ATO Museum in Central Dnipro. 15 June 2019. © Ursula Woolley

tion in the space outside takes the incoming visitor off the main road on a journey past road signs commemorating recent battles in the war in the Donbas and arranged west to east; the diorama in the hall upstairs, on the chronological journey of historical memory back into the past, faces in the opposite direction: here the city is defending itself against invasion from the west and this opposition is underscored by the physical positioning of the two contrasting displays. In the ground floor hall, between the installations outdoors and the diorama upstairs, video-walls explore visually the experience of war, rather than any single verbal narrative of it, and through these floor-to-ceiling surround film projections it is hard to tell directionally where the threat may come from next.

So a re-emphasis on, and an investment in the communication of, the significant Jewish history of the city, is one factor which characterizes and influences local emphases in public history over the period in question. The political imperative of articulating a unifying civic, rather than ethno-national, response to the nearby war in the Donbas is another. The continuing presence of discourse emanating from Moscow on the central shared experience of WWII re-enacted for the next generation in the Donbas is another, amplified by the discourse of significant numbers of more Russia-leaning local politicians. The emphasis on an inheritance of

industrial, scientific, economic, and political power is another. In practice, the large quantities but different balances of financial and social impetus behind the projects which came to fruition (the Museum of Jewish Memory, the Rocket Park and the ATO Museum) meant that, in terms of physical manifestation, local Cossack history remains relatively invisible; the Rocket Park and the ATO Museum are centre stage and although the scale of the Menorah Centre gives it physical prominence, the scholarly, liberal, carefully multi-ethnic approach of the Museum of Jewish Memory is public, but hidden from immediate view.

### A Common Historical Narrative: National-Local Intersubjectivity

A number of less widely-known tropes about Dnipro in public and academic discourse were used and developed by national content providers, in particular *Istorychna Pravda*, in the domain of historical politics over the period in question, to build certain elements of the story of Dnipro, and the messages associated with them, more overtly into the public national narrative.

The Dnipro region as the centre of activity of the anarchist leader Makhno during 1917–21 was the first of the tropes which had not figured largely in widely-shared historical narratives, with the important exception of the (fictionalized) image in Honchar's *Sobor* of Makhno's band of anarchists being brought to a consciousness of their Ukrainian Cossack inheritance and prevented from looting by Dmytro Iavornyts'kyi in the abandoned wooden Cossack cathedral.<sup>47</sup> Developing this theme, and to counteract the prevailing Soviet emphases in depictions of Makhno's anarchists as perpetrators of random destruction and anti-semitic violence, *Istorychna Pravda* promoted a perspective showing them as organized and egalitarian fighters for the rights and livelihoods of ordinary people.<sup>48</sup>

For the WWII period, coverage of the 'Ukrainian Katyn' list', involving mass-shootings in 1940 by the Soviet state of Polish prisoners of war, including ethnic Ukrainians and Jews as well as Poles, in various Ukrainian regional centres including Dnipropetrovsk, contributed to the

<sup>47</sup> Honchar, *Sobor* (see note 16), 191.

<sup>48</sup> Mykola Borovyk, 'Sekretar maknovs'koï rady Petro Rybin: Portret anarhista', *Istorychna Pravda*, 26 November 2013, available at <https://www.istpravda.com.ua/research/2013/10/26/138561/> (last visited 1 November 2019).

subversion of the central Russian trope of unalloyed heroism.<sup>49</sup> During the war, Dnipropetrovsk was also the centre of the activities of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) for central and eastern Ukraine. *Istorychna Pravda* communicated this narrative, emphasizing the historical antecedents for Dnipro as the 'Heart of Ukraine': contacts between OUN activists and Dnipro-based anti-Nazi partisans; the OUN hero Vasyl' Kuk marrying a Dnipro girl; the network hub in Dnipro allowing OUN activists to extend their reach and their message over the whole region.<sup>50</sup>

Following WWII, high-profile political narratives pertaining to Dnipro related to the establishment and growth of Pivdenmash and Pivdenne Konstruktors'ke Biuro, the ascent of Leonid Brezhnev, and the associated relative prosperity and status enjoyed as a result.<sup>51</sup> *Istorychna Pravda* emphasized contrasting stories, of new research on the notorious Dnipropetrovsk Soviet psychiatric 'hospital' for political dissidents;<sup>52</sup> on the time in the GULag of a local member of the Ukrainian Helsinki Group, Vitaliï Kalynychenko;<sup>53</sup> and on Dnipro as the home in adulthood of Vasyl' Makukh, the *Smoloskyp* (human firebrand) whose public suicide by self-immolation in Kyïv in 1968 was carried out to demonstrate Ukrainian solidarity with the victims of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> 'Dnipropetrovsk, Nizhyn ta Odesa – novi mistia Katyns'koho rozstrilu?', *Istorychna Pravda*, 14 February 2013, available at <https://www.istpravda.com.ua/short/2013/02/14/112456/>; 'In Memoriam. Pomer chlen UHH Vitaliï Kalynychenko', *Istorychna Pravda*, 1 May 2017, available at <https://www.istpravda.com.ua/short/2017/05/1/149753/> (both last visited 1 November 2019).

<sup>50</sup> Pavlo Solod'ko, 'Vasyl' Kuk: "U mene nemaie ordeniv". Ostannie interv"iu z komandyrom UPA', *Istorychna Pravda*, 13 January 2013, available at <https://www.istpravda.com.ua/articles/2013/01/11/107682/>; Ihor Bihun, 'Ukrains'kyi rukh na Donechchyni 1917–1958. Lektsiia Oleksandra Dobrovol's'koho', *Istorychna Pravda*, 28 December 2015, available at <https://www.istpravda.com.ua/articles/2015/12/28/148842/> (both last visited 1 November 2019).

<sup>51</sup> Serhii Svitlenko and Oleh Repan, 'Vstupne slovo: Istorychna pam"iat' Dnipropetrovshchyny v natsional'nomu ta rehional'nomu vymirakh', in *Istorychna pam"iat' Dnipropetrovshchyny: Kolektyvna monohrafia*, by Serhii Svitlenko et al. (Dnipropetrovsk: Monolit, 2012), 6.

<sup>52</sup> 'Dokumenty dysyidentiv z psykhlkarni Dnipra peredadut' v INP – Suprun', *Istorychna Pravda*, 31 August 2017, available at <https://www.istpravda.com.ua/short/2017/08/31/150189/> (last visited 1 November 2019).

<sup>53</sup> 'In Memoriam' (see note 49).

<sup>54</sup> Iryna Iezers'ka, 'Smoloskypy svobody. Samospalennia iak forma protestu', *Istorychna Pravda*, 22 March 2013, available at <https://www.istpravda.com.ua/articles/2013/03/22/117970/> (last visited 1 November 2019).

More prosaically during the period in question, the City Council reported rigorously on its effectiveness and cooperativeness in respect of Decommunization and *Istorychna Pravda* relayed this as an exhortatory demonstration of the alignment with Kyiv of the big, eastern frontline city with a national reputation built on Soviet political and industrial power.<sup>55</sup> Correspondingly, the impact of the opening of the Museum of Jewish Memory and the Holocaust in Ukraine in Dnipro meant that the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory (UINM) was able to communicate its support for Holocaust Remembrance Day and publicly associate itself with some of the commemorative activities of the Menorah Centre to answer the criticism, stoked by Russian government narratives, of Ukraine as a place of abiding anti-semitism.<sup>56</sup>

After the Revolution of Dignity it was important for national media to talk about Dnipro confidence, that trope which is traced locally back both to its nineteenth century industrial heyday and its Soviet power, as belonging more universally to Ukraine and to draw on the 'Dnipro talent pool' trope to reinforce the idea of Dnipro's capacity for political leadership.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Dniprovs'ka mis'ka rada, 'Rozporiadzhennia pro pereimenuvannia toponimiv m. Dnipropetrovs'ka', official website of the Dnipro City Council, 24 November 2015, available at <https://dniprorada.gov.ua/upload/editor/882-%D1%80.pdf>; 'U Dnipri u zv'iazku z dekomunizatsieiu demontuvaly 46 ob'iektiv', official website of the Dnipro City Council, 30 August 2017, available at <https://dniprorada.gov.ua/uk/articles/item/21474/u-dnipri-u-zvyazku-z-dekomunizaciyu-demontuvali-46-obektiv>; 'V Dnepropetrovske pridumali, kak bez zatrat pereimenovat' gorod', *Gorod.dp.ua*, 17 December 2014, available at <https://gorod.dp.ua/news/98435>; 'Dnepropetrovshchina izbavilas' ot bolee chem poloviny simvolov totalitarnogo rezhima', *Gorod.dp.ua*, 11 February 2016, available at <https://www.gorod.dp.ua/news/113923>; 'U Dnipropetrovs'ku "dekomunizували" 57 toponimiv – vulytsi, ostriv i metro', *Istorychna Pravda*, 24 November 2015, available at <https://www.istpravda.com.ua/short/2015/11/24/148799/> (all last visited 1 November 2019).

<sup>56</sup> Ukrainian Institute of National Memory (UINM), 'Prohrama zakhodiv do 75-kh rokovyn trahedii Babynoho Iaru', 23 September 2016, available at <http://www.memory.gov.ua/news/prohrama-zakhodiv-do-75-kh-rokovyn-trahedii-babinogo-yaru>; idem, 'V Dnipri vidbuvsia vseukraïns'kyi seminar, prysviachenyi mizhnarodnomu dniu pam'iaty zhertv Holokostu', 2 February 2018, available at <http://www.memory.gov.ua/news/v-dnipri-vidbuvsia-vseukraïns'kii-seminar-prisvyachenii-mizhnarodnomu-dnyu-pamyati-zhertv-goloko>; 'Anons: Vystavka "Kontstabil Aushvits. Ukraïns'kyi vymir"', *Istorychna Pravda*, 22 January 2015, available at <https://www.istpravda.com.ua/short/2015/01/22/146949/> (all last visited 1 November 2019).

<sup>57</sup> Portnov, 'Ukrainian Revolution' (see note 41), 64, 70.

## Historical Politics: Focuses of Dispute

The three most high-profile debates which were a focus for displays of disagreement and tests of strength over political power during the period in question were on the public commemoration of Leonid Brezhnev; on the city's 'official' foundation date; and on the renaming of the city and the region.

The attachment in Dnipro to Leonid Brezhnev was given additional public legitimacy, from a certain perspective, by polling from the Levada Centre in Moscow in 2011, which found that he was considered by the public in the Russian Federation to have been "the most successful Russian leader of all time", more so even than Stalin.<sup>58</sup> Plans for a memorial museum in his birthplace, the town of Dniprodzerzhyns'k (now Kam'ians'ke), were publicized under Yanukovych and the political reign in Dnipro of his Party of Regions.<sup>59</sup> Brezhnev's likeness had already been included in a new late-Soviet-style display of granite-mounted bronze bas-reliefs of local dignitaries and historical figures, alongside Shcherbyts'kyi and Kuchma, opened outside the regional administration buildings in central Dnipro in 2012.<sup>60</sup> While this last Brezhnev likeness was removed from its mount during the legislated Decommunization implementation period in 2015–16, the bronze bas-relief head at the door of a house he had lived in elsewhere in central Dnipro remains, though out of the news, in place at the time of writing.<sup>61</sup> Supporters of the memorial museum in Kam'ians'ke suggested that the new Brezhnev bust erected by them in the nearby park was actually an outpost of the museum itself and therefore (legally) constituted cultural heritage, rather than a contravention of the Decommunization legislation: the monument was then mysteriously vandalized: the local council, in the face of vociferous public criticism

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<sup>58</sup> 'Rosiiany vvazhaiut' Ukraïntsia naïkrashchym pravyytem XX storichchia', *Istorychna Pravda*, 22 May 2013, available at <https://www.istpravda.com.ua/short/2013/05/22/124476/> (last visited 1 November 2019).

<sup>59</sup> 'U Dniprodzerzhyns'ku vidkryiut' muzeï Brezhnieva', *Istorychna Pravda*, 19 February 2013, available at <https://www.istpravda.com.ua/short/2013/02/19/112707/> (last visited 1 November 2019).

<sup>60</sup> 'U Dnipropetrovs'ku Shcherbyts'koho, Brezhnieva i Kuchmu uvichniuiut' u bronzi, opozytsiia oburiuiet'sia', *Radio Svoboda*, 9 September 2012, available at <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/24702729.html> (last visited 1 November 2019).

<sup>61</sup> 'Pamiatnik Brezhnevu v Kamenskom dolzhen byt' snesen – Viatrovich', *Gorod.dp.ua*, 28 October 2016, available at <https://www.gorod.dp.ua/news/124367> (last visited 1 November 2019).



from the UINM, voted to apportion part of the local budget to restoring it.<sup>62</sup> The public commemoration of local historical memory, beyond the most egregious high-profile instances in the city itself, remained sometimes, in contravention of the spirit of the national legislation, within the purview of more local centres of power.

The public dispute over the foundation date of the city had been sporadically a local focus of historical politics since soon after independence and has regained profile more recently as one strand of the post-colonial / post-imperial identity debates defining difference between the Ukrainian national historical narrative and the Russian and Soviet imperial and neo-imperial versions.<sup>63</sup> The rationalization for the city foundation date in use at the end of the Soviet period was connected with the initiative of the Communist authorities to commemorate the foundation of the city as a way of expanding and consolidating the celebration of a significant Brezhnev birthday.<sup>64</sup>

The Russian imperial centenary anniversary of the founding of Katerynoslav in 1887 had been chosen following a similar rationale in support of an overarching political narrative to mark the centenary of Catherine II's first visit.<sup>65</sup> The local historian Maksym Kavun, who wrote his *kandydat* dissertation on the early years of the imperial development of Katerynoslav, has argued consistently that the city was predominantly an imperial creation as a way of resisting all recent public attempts to change the official foundation date.

During Perestroika and later, Ukrainian historians, led by Iurii Mytsyk, sought to highlight the earlier origins of the city in order to associate it with the pre-imperial Cossack trading posts which had existed on the site before Russian imperial expansion.<sup>66</sup> In the spring of 2019, with presidential elections imminent and the fortunes of the Kyiv government waning, Kavun returned to the subject in an interview with *Depo.ua*, taking issue once again with Volodymyr V''iatrovych and the

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<sup>62</sup> 'V Ukrainskom institute natsional'noi pamiati vozmushcheny tem, shto nedekomunizovanyi pamiatnik Brezhnevu v Kamenskom otreмонтiruiut za schet biudzheta', *Gorod.dp.ua*, 27 February 2017, <https://www.gorod.dp.ua/news/128688> (last visited 1 November 2019).

<sup>63</sup> Portnov / Portnova, 'The "Imperial" and the "Cossack" ' (see note 42), 238.

<sup>64</sup> Haïdaï, *Polityka i Pam'iat* (see note 12), 54.

<sup>65</sup> Portnov / Portnova, 'The "Imperial" and the "Cossack" ' (see note 42), 223.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 238; Iurii Mytsyk, *Kozats'kyi kraï : narysy z istorii Dnipropetrovshchyny XV–XVIII stolit'* (Dnipropetrovsk: Promin', 1997), 128–53.



UINM for attempting to set the foundation date of the city on the basis of Cossack, rather than imperial, beginnings.<sup>67</sup>

The debate over renaming the city in its latest iteration had started some years before the Decommunization laws were passed in 2015. Calls to rename it Sicheslav (English: city of glory of the Cossack settlements, called *Sich*) and the surrounding region Sicheslavs'kyi had been voiced publicly some years earlier, when national legislation passed in 2007 under President Yushchenko required the removal from the local toponymy of the names of individuals associated with repressions under Stalin, although in Dnipro this requirement had been voted down by the city council.<sup>68</sup> The city had been called Sicheslav briefly during the period of the Skoropads'kyi Hetmanate almost a century earlier, as proposed by Dmytro Iavornyts'kyi and decreed by the National Rada: locals noted that whereas Katerynoslav had been a name imposed during the period of Russian control of the city, Sicheslav had been used while it was, via Hetman Skoropads'kyi, "under the control of the Austrians".<sup>69</sup> Petrovs'kyi (for whom the city was named Dnipropetrovs'k in 1926) had been part of the local Bolshevik apparatus which had gradually wrested control of Ukrainian territory for Moscow during the Civil War and the first years of Soviet rule; had subsequently become leader of the Ukrainian SSR through the structure known at the time as the All-Ukrainian Central Executive Committee; had advocated during Ukrainianization in the 1920s for Ukrainian language legislation; and been instrumental locally in coordinating the grain expropriations and dekulakization (*dekurkulizatsiia*) which led to the Holodomor.<sup>70</sup>

When in 2015 the UINM on behalf of the government in Kyiv had insisted that the name of the city be changed, the city council had at first

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<sup>67</sup> 'U Dnipri istoriik vidpoviv V'iatrovychu shchodo zminy daty zasnuvannia mista', *Depo.ua*, 18 March 2019, available at <https://dnipro.depo.ua/ukr/dnipro/u-dnipri-istoriik-vidpoviv-vyatrovychu-shchodo-zmini-dati-zasnuvannya-mista-20190318932577> (last visited 1 November 2019).

<sup>68</sup> Olha Guliaeva and Pavlo Dinets', 'Grigorii Petrovskii prevratilsia v... Petra Pervogo', *KP v Ukraine*, 20 January 2009, available at <https://kp.ua/dp/69697-hryhoryi-petrovskiyi-prevratytsia-v-petra-pervoho> (last visited 1 November 2019).

<sup>69</sup> Bezpalov, *Kuznia kadriv* (see note 10), 15; 'Chy stane Dnipropetrovs'ka oblast' Sicheslavs'koiu?', *Ukrinform*, 1 March 2018, available at <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-society/2412580-ci-stane-dnipropetrovska-oblast-siceslavskou.html> (last visited 1 November 2019).

<sup>70</sup> Mikhail Shatrov, *Gorod na trekh kholmakh* (Dnipropetrovs'k: Promin', 1969), 74; Guliaeva/Dinets', 'Grigorii Petrovskii' (see note 68).

responded by saying that the city would keep the name but change the relevant documentation to explain that it was now named on behalf of St. Peter.<sup>71</sup>

For those who argued that ‘petrovs’k’ no longer retained an association with Petrovs’kyi himself, it was suggested, factually incorrectly but perhaps plausibly, that it would imply a connection with Peter the Great of Russia, who was associated by some Ukrainians with the death and suffering of Ukrainian serfs during the building of St. Petersburg. Or ‘petrovs’k’ would suggest an excessive readiness on the part of the Dnipropetrovs’k authorities to resort to saints’ names as uncontentious, when in different quarters what they represented was the strength of the relationship between the Moscow Patriarchate branch of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Dnipropetrovs’k and the local OpoBlok politicians who made up the majority on the city council.<sup>72</sup>

A public vote on various options under consideration for a new name for the city was held in 2015, with retention of the existing name the clear favourite, the short form of Dnipro, widely used informally in any case, coming a strong but distant second, Sicheslav polling less than ten per cent, and the arguably more historically accurate original names of Kodak and Novyi Kodak polling one per cent and under one per cent respectively.<sup>73</sup> Activists and local backers of the Sicheslav option, undeterred when their preferred option was not approved for the city itself, were still campaigning for the region to be renamed Sicheslavs’kyi in 2018.<sup>74</sup> Although the Verkhovna Rada (Ukrainian parliament) approved the name change on 3 April 2019 the regional government website to date retains

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<sup>71</sup> ‘Filatov: Iedynyi variant pereimenuvannia Dnipropetrovs’ka – ‘Dnipro’’, *Istorychna Pravda*, 3 December 2015, available at <https://www.istpravda.com.ua/short/2015/12/3/148776/> (last visited 1 November 2019).

<sup>72</sup> ‘Filatov vvazhaie, shcho “Dnipropetrovs’k ne asotsiiuiet’sia z Petrovs’kym”’, 3 December 2015, *Depo.ua*, available at <https://dnipro.depo.ua/ukr/dnipro/filatov-vvazhaie-shcho-dnipropetrovsk-na-asotsiyuetsya-z-petrovskim-03122015094500> (last visited 1 November 2019).

<sup>73</sup> ‘Na saiti mis’koï rady vidnovleno holosuvannia za pereimenuvannia Dnipropetrovs’ka’, *Gorod.dp.ua*, 28 July 2015, available at <https://www.gorod.dp.ua/news/106610> (last visited 1 November 2019).

<sup>74</sup> ‘U Dnipro obhovoryly pereimenuvannia oblasti na Sicheslavs’ku’, *Ukrains’ka Pravda*, 11 February 2018, available at <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2018/02/11/7171241/>; ‘Na saiti prezidenta zaregistrirovali petitsiu o pereimenovanii Dnepropetrovskoï oblasti’, *Gorod.dp.ua*, 26 January 2018, available at <https://www.gorod.dp.ua/news/141388> (both last visited 1 November 2019).

the previous name, and the possibility of revisiting the legislation was voiced after the election of the new president.<sup>75</sup>

The current Mayor of Dnipro, Borys Filatov, in speaking about his response to the 2015 Decommunization legislation and the naming debates discussed above, has consistently articulated, and more or less simultaneously, local misgivings about Kyiv's initially oblique and then increasingly overt decolonization strategy and a readiness nonetheless to comply with the national government for the sake of national unity.<sup>76</sup> Over the course of the period under investigation he started cautiously expressing, on behalf of the apparently OpoBlok-leaning population, mild misgivings about changing the city's name.<sup>77</sup> During the first years of fighting in the Donbas and of the implementation of the Decommunization legislation he was conspicuously 'on-message' for the Poroshenko government on matters of public history.<sup>78</sup> By the last months of the Poroshenko presidency, as polling showed increasingly clearly against it, he had reverted to a more even-handed position, coming out firmly, at the time of the debate in the Rada, against the proposal to change the name of the oblast' to Sicheslavs'ka and not stinting his criticism of Iuliia Tymoshenko for equivocating on the same subject.<sup>79</sup>

### Competing Modifications of Key Historical Tropes

This section reviews a number of important tropes in the Dnipro historical narrative and how they were modified by the different actors and

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<sup>75</sup> 'KSU opryliudnyv rishennia shchodo pereimenuvannia Dnipropetrovs'koï oblasti na Sicheslavs'ku', *Radio Svoboda*, 3 April 2019, available at <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news-ksu-pereimenuvannya-dnipropetrovskoyi-oblasti/29858435.html>; see official website of the Dnipropetrovs'k Regional Council, available at <https://oblrada.dp.gov.ua/>; 'Razumkov: Pytannia dekomunizatsii maiut' vyrishuvatysia na mistsevykh referendumakh', *Ukrain'ska Pravda*, 14 July 2019, <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2019/07/14/7220894/> (all last visited 1 November 2019).

<sup>76</sup> 'Borys Filatov rozpoviv pro pliusy i minusy pereimenuvannia u Dnipropetrovs'ku', *Gorod.dp.ua*, 3 December 2015, available at <https://www.gorod.dp.ua/news/111535> (last visited 1 November 2019).

<sup>77</sup> 'Filatov vvazhaie' (see note 72).

<sup>78</sup> '57 toponimiv' (see note 55).

<sup>79</sup> Zoriana Kvitka, 'Filatov "naihav" na Tymoshenko cherez pereimenuvannia Dnipropetrovs'koï oblasti', *UAportal*, 7 February 2019, available at <https://www.uaportal.com/ukr/news/filatov-naihav-na-tymoshenko-cherez-pereimenuvannya-dnipropetrovskoi-oblasti.htm> (last visited 1 November 2019).

processes discussed above. During the period under consideration, local actors drew in particular on the following six broad historical tropes as emblematic of the local identity narrative, though with different degrees of political profile: the ‘Cossack heritage’ trope; the ‘southern capital of the (Russian) Empire’; the ‘Manchester of Ukraine’; ‘victors of WWII’; ‘Rocket City’; and the ‘talent pool’.

The Dnipro Cossack heritage trope, underpinned by the idea that there had been more Cossack siches on the territory of what is now the wider Dnipro region even than in neighbouring Zaporizhzhia, was initially given profile in local historiography by Dmytro Iavornyts’kyi in his history of the *Cossack Siches (Istoriia i topohrafiia vos’mu Zaporiz’kykh sichei)* and it underlaid the campaign for the Sicheslav name discussed above.<sup>80</sup> The post-1991 re-emphasis on the pre-imperial history of the trading centre at Stara Samar’ highlights the “entrepreneurial success” strand in the Cossack story.<sup>81</sup> This trope remains more a favourite of pro-Ukrainian voices, with the city council during the period under consideration adroitly giving it ‘air-time’, but generally attributing it to others (civic organizations or less pro-Russian historians), rather than choosing to own it.<sup>82</sup>

The imperial policy trope of the city which was to be a southern capital of the Russian Empire was associated in the case of Dnipro during the period in question with the idea of the city as a southern centre of the Russian Orthodox faith, partly because of a perception of the Russian Church as an institution of state and instrument of government.<sup>83</sup> Over recent years, the idea of Dnipro as a centre of Orthodoxy had been revived, with saints’ names and names from the church calendar figuring

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<sup>80</sup> Dmytro Iavornyts’kyi, *Istoriia Zaporoz’kykh Kozakiv* (Kyiv: Naukova Dumka, 1990) (first edition 1892); Denys Shatalov, *Uivlennia pro Kozatstvo: Ukrain’ske kozatstvo u suspil’niï dumtsi druhoï polovyny XVIII – pershoï polovyny XIX st.* (Dnipro: Dominanta Print, 2017), 217–18.

<sup>81</sup> Panchenko, ‘Stara Samar’ (see note 39).

<sup>82</sup> ‘U merii Dnipra ukhvalyly prohramu Ukrainizatsii mista’, official website of the Dnipro City Council, 15 November 2017, available at <https://dniprorada.gov.ua/uk/articles/item/22535/u-merii-dnipra-uhvalili-programu-ukrainizacii-mista> (last visited 1 November 2019); ‘Fakhivtsi rozpovily’ (see note 40).

<sup>83</sup> Bezpalov, *Kuznia kadriv* (see note 10), 30; Orest Sukhodol’s’kyi, ‘Filiia RPT na Dnipropetrovshchyni: ternystyi shliakh do “Rus’koho myru”’, *Dniprograd.org*, 19 November 2018, available at [https://dniprograd.org/2018/11/19/filiya-rpts-na-dnipropetrovshchyni-ternisty-shlyakh-do-ruskogo-miru\\_73318](https://dniprograd.org/2018/11/19/filiya-rpts-na-dnipropetrovshchyni-ternisty-shlyakh-do-ruskogo-miru_73318) (last visited 1 November 2019).

largely in the lists of revised street names adopted under the Decommunization legislation, and saints' days and church rededications providing an opportunity for local OpoBlok politicians to signal simultaneously and with helpful ambiguity an implied Orthodox faith and an implied allegiance to the *Russkii Mir* Russian Orthodoxy project.<sup>84</sup>

The ideas of faith in opposition to Communism and Cossack orthodoxy in opposition to Russian imperial orthodoxy as one of the themes of Honchar's *Sobor* discussed above exemplifies in literary form this contestation over the interpretation and designation of focuses of identity.<sup>85</sup> Expressions of adherence to Orthodoxy during the period in question were a nicely ambiguous means of implying allegiance simultaneously both to the popular post-Soviet enthusiasm for religious ritual; and to the twentieth-century Ukrainian pattern of adherence to faith in defiance of Soviet atheism; and to the *Russkii Mir* promotion of the Russian Orthodox Church as a means of keeping Ukraine closer to Moscow.<sup>86</sup> This ambiguity and the potentially contradictory allegiances it concealed was one reason that the dispute over the renaming of the city, discussed in the previous section above, was so heated.<sup>87</sup>

Local historians now trace a narrative thread between the commercial hub of the first local Cossack trading-posts, the nineteenth-century entrepreneurship of Oleksandr Pol'<sup>88</sup> depending likewise on the city as a commercial centre in different circumstances, and its status as the defence industry capital of the Soviet Union a hundred years later.<sup>89</sup> Stories of Pol' combine tropes of local initiative with impressive commercial results,

<sup>84</sup> Sukhodol's'kyi, 'Filiia RPT' (see note 83); Bezpalov, *Kuznia kadriv* (see note 10), 30; Haïdaï, *Polityka i Pam'iat'* (see note 11), 46–47; Dniprov's'ka mis'ka rada, 'Rozporiadzhennia' (see note 55).

<sup>85</sup> Honchar, *Sobor* (see note 15), 194, 293.

<sup>86</sup> Kostiantyn Kohtiants, 'UPT MP khoche vsydyty mizh dvokh siltsiv', *Dniprograd.org*, 26 December 2014, available at <https://dniprograd.org/blogs/247> (last visited 1 November 2019); Bobo Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 2015), 34.

<sup>87</sup> Haïdaï, *Polityka i Pam'iat'* (see note 12), 46–7.

<sup>88</sup> Oleksandr Pol' was the local nobleman who discovered iron ore deposits at Kryvyi Rih in the mid-nineteenth century and obtained the licences from the imperial government in St. Petersburg to link the mines he developed there by railway with the city, then Katerynoslav, and with the coal mines of Donets'k, then Iuzivka (Bezpalov, *Kuznia kadriv* (see note 10)).

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 13; Maksym Kavun, 'Dnepropetrovsk – Znamenitye Liudi Goroda i Kraia', undated, available at <http://www.mkavun.narod.ru/persons.html> (last visited 1 November 2019).

skilful handling of Russian centres of power and commitment to local cultural causes strengthening local identity, though by tradition it was Iavornyts'kyi who proposed the 'Manchester of Ukraine' trope.<sup>90</sup> The idea of the possibility of vast wealth-creation in Dnipro symbolized by Pol' is also used by Filatov to historicize municipal entrepreneurship initiatives.<sup>91</sup> This trope of recurrent periods of formidable economic power has mutated to encompass the putative trading success of the Cossack palankas and the post-Soviet economic renaissance symbolized by PrivatBank, uniting political actors, civic activists, and academic voices across a broad spectrum of attitudes to Russia.<sup>92</sup>

The attributed suffering and heroism, and experience of violence and loss, involved under occupation in WWII in Dnipro was drawn on extensively by local OpoBlok politicians during the period in question.<sup>93</sup> It remained central to the discourse imposed by the Moscow-orchestrated administrations in Donets'k and Luhans'k throughout the period under investigation and, initially at least, that meant it was also widely broadcast in neighbouring Dnipro.<sup>94</sup> For this reason the broadly synchronous reinvestment in and focus on the communication of the city's important Jewish heritage and in particular the experience in Ukraine of the Holocaust as part of WWII was a skilful counterweight, as discussed above.<sup>95</sup>

<sup>90</sup> Bezpalov, *Kuznia kadriv* (see note 10), 13–14.

<sup>91</sup> Oksana Bohdanova, 'Mër Dnepra Boris Filatov: "Ja ne 100-grivennaia kupiura, chtoby vsem nraivsia" ', *KP v Ukraine*, 8 September 2016, available at <https://kp.ua/politics/550272-mer-dnepra-borys-fylatov-ya-ne-100-hryvennaia-kupuir-a-htoby-vsem-nraytsia> (last visited 1 November 2019).

<sup>92</sup> Bezpalov, *Kuznia kadriv* (see note 10), 22–3.

<sup>93</sup> 'Vilkul: 9 maia v Dnepre tysiachi gorozhan speli pesniu den' pobedy voze Monumenta Slavy', personal website of Oleksandr Vilkul, 9 May 2017, available at <http://www.vilkul.ua/news/vilkul-9-maya-v-dnepre-tysyachi-gorozhan-speli-pesnyu-den-pobedy> (last visited 1 November 2019); Zhurzhenko, 'Divided Nation' (as in note 34), 264.

<sup>94</sup> Stiazhkina, 'Dyskurs okupatsii' (see note 4), 74.

<sup>95</sup> 'Novyi muzei Holokostu ne unykayme skladnykh pytan' ', *Deutsche Welle*, 16 October 2012, available at <http://menorah-center.com/ua/about/siritual-life/jewish-memory-holocaust-ukraine/> (both last visited 1 November 2019).

The science and engineering universities created to support and develop the city's industrial and, subsequently, defence industrial capacity reinforce the 'Rocket City' trope of industrial success in their active promotion of the history of the city and their role in it.<sup>96</sup> For the spring and summer of 2014, the 'Rocket City' trope combined a sense of international military power with cutting-edge scientific and intellectual capacity and, critically in the circumstances of intensifying Russian military and information aggression pertaining at the time, the combined notional access to Moscow, understanding of Moscow, and power to force Moscow to back down which was so narratively powerful in the circumstances of the war in the Donbas.<sup>97</sup> A return, after the implementation of De-communization, to the 'Rocket City' trope which had been boosted during the Yanukovych presidency seemed like a rebalancing towards a different electoral demographic, with the 'Cosmos tours' of the city in 2017 contrasting with the push for the regeneration of Cossack heritage sites under way at the same time.<sup>98</sup>

The 'talent pool' trope, a weak translation of the more visual and more apposite 'blacksmith's forge' of (Communist Party) political leadership cadres in Ukrainian and Russian (*kuznia kadriv / kuznitsa kadrov*), is used widely.<sup>99</sup> It was coined during the Soviet period to refer to the ascent of Brezhnev and his contemporaries, 'forged' in the literal and figurative smelters of Dnipro and then promoted, to Moscow and to Kyïv. But it was a felicitous image for local identity and self-image and was applied retrospectively to the imperial period by Maksym Kavun, who noted, perhaps stretching a point, that a number of senior appointees to the last pre-revolutionary governments in St. Petersburg had also started life in Katerynoslav, thereby uniting narratively the imperial and the Soviet periods with a trope of Dnipro political confidence and success.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Haidai, *Polityka i Pam'iat'* (see note 12), 48–9; 'U Dnipropetrovs'ku rozpochaly buduvaty raketnyy muzey', *Istorychna Pravda*, 18 June 2013, available at <https://www.istpravda.com.ua/short/2013/06/18/126382/>; 'U Dnipropetrovs'ku – vystavka pro stalevariv', *Istorychna Pravda*, 25 July 2014, available at (both last visited 24 May 2019).

<sup>97</sup> Portnov, 'Ukrainian Revolution' (see note 41), 63–5; Plokyh, 'Zhyttieva misiia' (see note 16).

<sup>98</sup> 'Turystychnyi marshrut "Dnipro kosmichnyi" nabuvaie populiarnosti', *Ukrinform*, 2 November 2017, available at <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-tourism/2336541-turisticnij-marsrut-dnipro-kosmicnij-nabuvae-popularnosti.html> (last visited 1 November 2019); Panchenko, 'Stara Samar' (see note 39).

<sup>99</sup> Bezpalov, *Kuznia kadriv* (see note 10).

<sup>100</sup> Ibid, 23–4; Kavun, 'Dnepropetrovsk' (see note 89).

The same ‘talent pool’ term was used, with different doses of irony from different perspectives, to refer to the variously powerful, high-profile and notorious local protégés and associates of Leonid Kuchma.<sup>101</sup> The term brought with it a set of ideological connotations more pro-imperial, whether Russian or Soviet, than the tropes of individual entrepreneurship and independent self-government associated with others in the city’s repertoire of available historical narratives. Superficially a term only suggesting superior local ability, it also carries connotations of the talent to work within the type of political institution often perceived in Ukraine as imposed from elsewhere and without the best interests of Ukraine at its heart.

### Conclusion

So in terms of the securitization of a Ukrainian civic national identity, among these locally popular tropes, the ‘location of more Cossack riches even than neighbouring Zaporizhzhia’ remained an unambiguous signifier and notably, perhaps because of the lack of ambiguity it offered, it was apparently avoided by the Mayor. The ‘Manchester of Ukraine’ trope partly disaggregated the late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century economic success of the region from the Russia-led imperial narrative of the same period.

The underlying historical idea of Katerynoslav as a future southern capital of the Russian empire enjoyed more success during the period in question as a foundation for the local promotion of the Russian Orthodox Church, and a post-colonial lens would frame this success as evidence of an incomplete journey towards decolonization.

The more generalized Katerynoslav imperial narrative was also partly disaggregated during the period in question, with Filatov at the beginning of 2019 in a speech about “built heritage” referring both to the refurbishment of an imperial period Church (not mentioning particular claims on it either by the post-Tomos Orthodox Church of Ukraine or by the lingering Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate)) and to the former imperial-period local Duma chamber, which was to be refurbished for the current City Rada and stand as a “symbol of local self-govern-

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<sup>101</sup> Bezpalov, *Kuznia kadriv* (see note 10), 23; Portnov, ‘Ukrainian Revolution’ (see note 41), 64.



ment”, another trope which had emerged over the period as a popular Filatov theme, underpinned by local historians.<sup>102</sup>

‘Rocket City’ and the ‘talent pool’, originally part of the narrative of the role of Dnipro-petrovs’k in implicitly pro-Moscow Soviet success, were also partially disaggregated from this storyline by being more locally historicized. The narrative of suffering and valour in the ‘Great Patriotic War’ remained axiomatic to the securitization of pro-Russian identity.

All the tropes discussed above, despite the different interpretations and associated political narratives adhering to them, have sustained their importance in local historical memory over the long term. The phrase ‘entangled history’ has been used to describe more precisely and arguably less politically than ‘transnational history’ the irreducible mesh of interwoven historical narratives and identity narratives of which history, and archetypally the history of Ukraine, is comprised.<sup>103</sup>

The physical public history projects of Dnipro over the period under investigation are a manifestation of different perspectives on the history of the city, relating to different identities and different time periods in contiguous physical spaces, although physical proximity does not necessarily fully embody or incorporate the qualities of multivectoral intersubjectivity which entanglement implies.

Borys Filatov began his campaigning for public office in Dnipro with the launch of a local history “full of the tales of ordinary people” and gave free voice to advocates of plans for Cossack heritage regeneration but it was the creative commemoration and communication of the ongoing war, contextualized by the last in the form of the WWII diorama, which was

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<sup>102</sup> Rostyk Petrovs’kyi, ‘Povernennia istorychnykh budivel’ ta pytannia domovlasnykiv: Borys Filatov rozpoviv pro osnovni rishennia pershoi u novomu rotsi sesii mis’krady Dnipra’, *Nashe misto*, 23 January 2019, available at <https://nashemisto.dp.ua/2019/01/23/povernennja-istorichnih-budivel-ta-pitannja-domovlasnykiv-boris-filatov-rozpoviv-pro-osnovni-rishennja-pershoi-u-novomu-roci-sesii-miskradi-dnipra/> (last visited 1 November 2019); L. Markova, ‘Istoriia mistsevoho samovriaduvannia v personaliiakh (holovy Dnipropetrovs’koï mis’krady 1920–1930 rokiv)’, official website of Dnipropetrovs’k National History Museum, 2009, available at <http://www.museum.dp.ua/article0201.html> (last visited 1 November 2019).

<sup>103</sup> Andrii Portnov, ‘Post-Maidan Europe and the New Ukrainian Studies’, *Slavic Review* 74, 4 (2015): 731; Andreas Kappeler, ‘From an Ethnonational to a Multiethnic to a Transnational Ukrainian History’, in *A Laboratory of Transnational History: Ukraine and Recent Ukrainian Historiography*, eds. Georgiy Kasianov and Philipp Ther (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2009), 66.

elevated in importance at the end of the period under investigation.<sup>104</sup> Where Poroshenko and the UINM had become more explicit in their decolonizing intentions towards the end of the presidential term, the city deflected them, preferring to emphasize its own, carefully historicized, capacity for self-government instead.<sup>105</sup>

It was the interpretation of the multi-ethnic history of the city from a Jewish perspective in the displays at the Museum of Jewish Memory, highlighting interactions, whether collaborative, productive, destructive, or violent, over time, which embodied ‘entangled history’ most clearly in the form of its narration. In fact both the Museum of Jewish Memory and the ATO Museum constitute, in the mode of representation they have chosen, a situationally pro-Ukrainian response without involving the securitization of a Ukrainian ethno-national identity.

Haïdaï et al. described the current approach to public history in Dnipro as “a way of rethinking local culture rather than as an investigation into the past for its own sake”, whereas the research discussed in this paper suggests this is perhaps to oversimplify the intersubjectivity between historiography, commemoration, and historical politics it has involved.<sup>106</sup> Mälksoo in her article on “mnemonical security” points to the “security dilemmas” created by the securitization of history and memory and explores the difficulties in addressing these dilemmas caused by opposing and sometimes apparently irreconcilable policy approaches to the political instrumentalization of identity.<sup>107</sup> Discursive contributors to historical politics in and on the subject of Dnipro have deployed a form of instrumentalization of local historical narratives which has sustained a complex, evolving equilibrium, rather than achieving a securitization of local or national identity according to any narrow definition of the term.

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<sup>104</sup> ‘Istoriia Dnipropetrovs’ka – tse istoriia ioho zhyteliv’, *Ukrop Party*, 2 November 2015, available at <https://ukrop.party/uk/news/regional/1066-istoriya-dnipropetrovska-tse-istoriya-yogo-zhyteliv-boris-filatov-prezentuvav-unikalnu-knigu-pro-ridne-misto> (last visited 1 November 2019); ‘Siuzhet dioramy “Bytva za Dnipro”’, official website of Dnipropetrovs’k National History Museum, undated, available at <http://www.museum.dp.ua/dioramaevents.html> (last visited 1 November 2019).

<sup>105</sup> ‘Zavershyly restavratsiiu naibil’shoï v Ukraïni dioramy “Bytva za Dnipro”’, *Ukrinform*, 4 May 2018, available at <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-culture/2453621-zaversili-restavraciuv-najbilsoi-v-ukraini-diorami-bitva-za-dnipro.html> (last visited 5 August 2020); Markova, ‘Istoriia samovriaduvannia’ (see note 102).

<sup>106</sup> Haïdaï, *Polityka i Pam’iat’* (see note 12), 35.

<sup>107</sup> Mälksoo, ‘Mnemonical Security’ (see note 6), 222, 232.



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