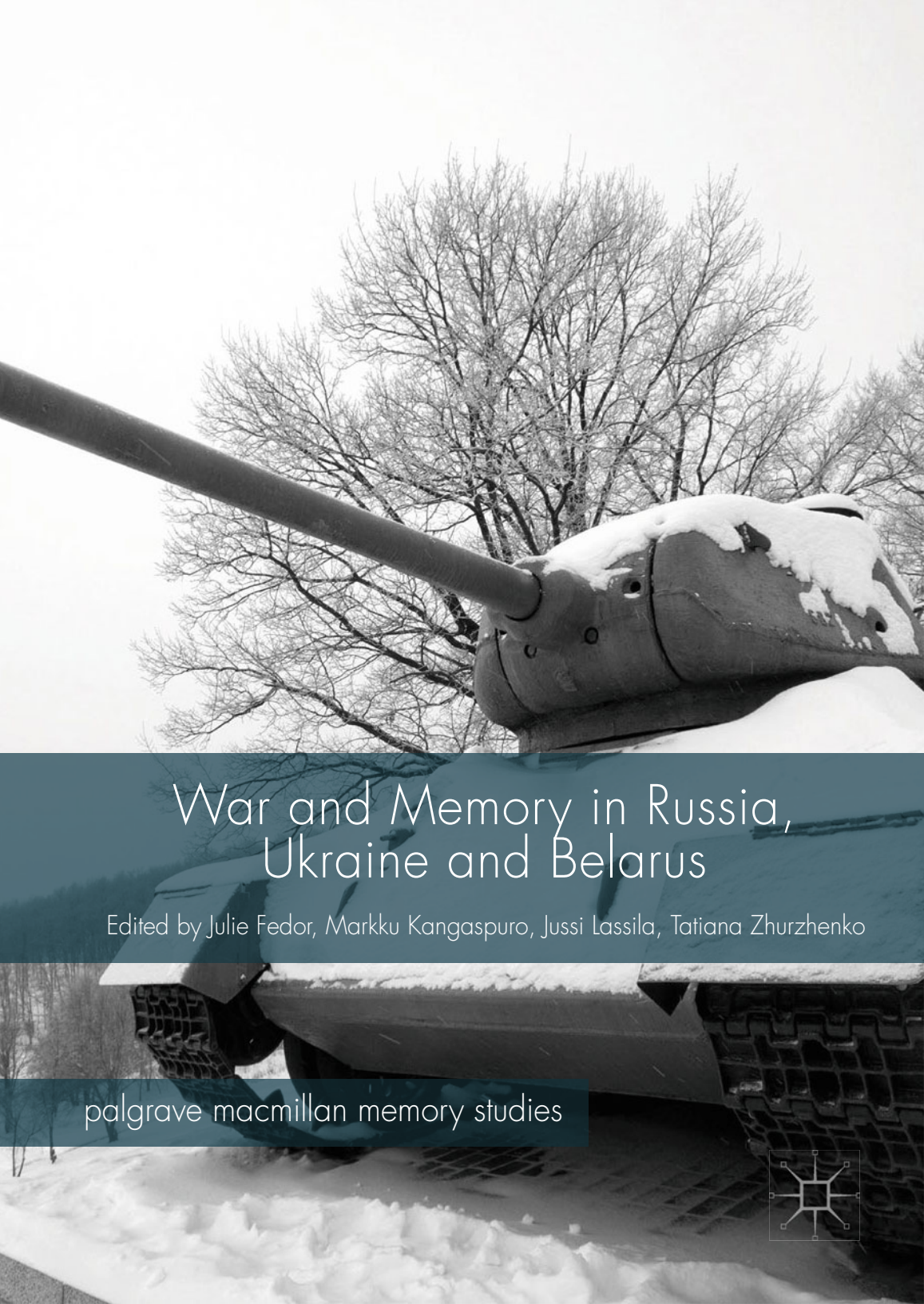


War and Memory in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus

Edited by Julie Fedor, Markku Kangaspuro, Jussi Lassila, Tatiana Zhurzhenko

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Palgrave Macmillan Memory Studies

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Foreword

"Never again" is written on the poppy flower that has become the Ukrainian symbol of national remembrance. Adopted in 2015, this common symbol of mourning poses a major historical problem. "Never again" sounds like a global slogan for the twenty-first century, but what exactly should be prevented from happening?

The absolute evil that is found in the past should be abandoned there forever. Different parts of the European continent give different interpretations to this powerful idea. Shocked by the carnage of two world wars, Western Europe shaped a radically new kind of political union whose purpose was to prevent such a war happening ever again, at least among the members of this union. An alliance with a transatlantic superpower guaranteed this peace and prosperity, but the founding nations of the European Union have all had reasons to believe that this negative affirmation—never again!—has been their choice, the core of a new political identity. In Eastern Europe, the post-war era unfolded in a very different way. In many ways more devastated by two world wars, this part of the continent was occupied by a Eurasian superpower that imposed its peculiar ideology, legal norms, and institutional templates onto its new dominions. This superpower saw the colonized nations of Eastern Europe as both reward for the victory and compensation for the losses in World War II. Military power and political expansion promised the Soviet Union that a world war would never happen again. Soviet oppression was a continuation of the past war for many of the colonized nations of Eastern Europe. Though the situation differed from country

to country and from decade to decade, Soviet power in Ukraine, Belarus, and the Baltic republics, as well as in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Yugoslavia, largely relied on military force and police surveillance. To borrow from a post-colonial theorist, this was another "dominance without hegemony"—a successful reign of brutal force with no triumph over the hearts, minds, and political sympathies of the oppressed.[1]

While World War II was definitely over in Western Europe, in Eastern Europe the conflict continued, with uneven and always changing pace, until 1989 or 1991. When the Soviet system withdrew from its borderlands and collapsed in its capital, these nations said "never again" to its long oppression throughout the twentieth century. From the West European perspective, the collapse of the hostile Nazi power was defined by its military defeat, a terribly painful but historically certain event. From the East European perspective, the breakdown of the hostile Soviet regime happened, slowly and painfully, in some indefinite past that still threatens to continue in the present. Has the Soviet regime truly collapsed in Russia, and if so, when? Is Putin's Moscow trying to revive it, or it has always been alive, even though hidden in the clandestine? Has it been salvaged in Belarus? Has it entirely collapsed, despite its multiple revolutions, in Ukraine? Mixing up the basic categories of historical rationality—past and present, war and peace, facts and lies, the state and civil society—East European memory wars make a highly visible, supercharged part of national politics and international relations in the region.

If in the western parts of Europe, "never again" referred to World War II crimes that were often reduced to the Holocaust, in its eastern parts, "never again" has meant the foreign oppression imagined mostly as the Soviet regime. With the European Union's enlargement to the East, these two deceptively similar ideas of "never again" met and clashed. Focused on the present but expanding well into the long twentieth century, this volume documents a process in which these diverging interpretations of the past are seeking to resolve their old differences, and revealing new ones on the way.

Historical memory is the area of continuous myth making, which acquires an amazing intensity at times of national crisis. When did this crisis "truly" start? Was it caused by enemies, or friends, or enemies

[1] R. Guha, *Dominance without Hegemony: History and Power in Colonial India* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).

pretending to be friends? What kind of mysterious, usually non-historical or sometimes even non-human processes—foreign charms, internal sabotage, genetic memory, cultural degeneration, negative selection—caused the crisis or prevented its resolution? In this situation, myths and truths combine in an explosive mix that simultaneously begs for and eludes analysis. Has the abandoned past "truly" ceded to the present? Does it still radiate its forgotten energies? Was it wise to leave it at all? What is "true" and what is "imagined" in these tortured memories?

When historians look at the intricate processes of memory they are mostly interested in the issue of truthfulness. How accurate is a certain representation of the past? (Only historians, of course, have the professional competence to resolve such questions.) Later, a mixed group of sociologists, literary scholars, and cultural historians who created the field of Memory Studies discovered a multidimensional character to the problem. There are memory formations that have no historical validity but are still very meaningful; and there are cultural texts about the past that are perfectly valid though not relevant. The problem is that while we know pretty well what it means to be "valid," we do not really understand what does it mean to be "relevant." While "truthfulness" is usually defined in universal terms—what is "true" for one community should potentially be "true" for another if only they communicate enough—nobody hopes that "relevance" would comply with this criterion. Indeed, "relevance" relates to identity and "identity" relates to agency; we cannot understand "relevance" if we do not define the agent—the actual group of historical subjects who act, imagine, and remember. A memory formation is relevant for the group to the extent that it changes—shapes, modifies, proves or disproves—the identity of this group. One of the essays in this volume discusses the current debates about renaming a major city in European Russia. The arguments for and against this proposal originate from the meaningful memories of their authors, and many of these arguments are relevant for their expected audiences. There is no such thing as the "correct" name for a city, especially if this city has already been renamed once or twice; but the act or project of renaming the city—Leningrad into St Petersburg, Stalingrad into Volgograd, Volgograd into Stalingrad—exerts a massive, sometimes surprising impact.

Cultural memory is all about details, even if it results in a painful acknowledgment of the inability to preserve them. When Ukraine adopted the British-style poppy flower, it rejected the competing symbolism of the St George's ribbon that Russia had adopted a few years

earlier. Both symbols are arbitrary, of course; there is nothing "British" in the poppy flower, just as there is nothing "Russian" in the two colors of the ribbon. In the same act of memory, Ukraine changed the date of the national celebration of the victory in World War II from the 9th of May, as defined by the Soviet tradition, to the 8th of May, when it is celebrated globally. Both dates are equally "true" because they are equally arbitrary; the most important act of the German surrender was signed on the 7th of May, but hostilities continued for weeks. Ukraine changed the date of its Victory Day not because the new date seemed to be more valid; the date was changed so that it would be different from Russia's Victory Day.

Remembrances of past triumphs, huge losses, and the overwhelming suffering that underpinned both, haunt the post-socialist domains from Berlin to Beijing. These memory formations differ internationally; but they are also vastly diverse within each of these countries. Historians, public intellectuals, institutions of civil society, protest movements and, finally, governments and political parties all generate their own, vastly different narratives of the chosen past. The more "relevant" the chosen past, the more incompatible the public memories that depict it from different political perspectives. In Eastern Europe it is a rule rather than an exception that the narratives of memory clash within a country as much as they differ across the countries. Memory-specific groups transcend national borders, and they divide body politics within a particular country into unequal parts, from the domineering or even hegemonic to the oppressed, sometimes even clandestine. The unresolved story of post-socialist transformation is reflected in the internal diversity of national remembrances, which split in a way that resembles, and sometimes coincides with, international conflict. Due to their cultural proximity, their hysterical passions, and the internal complexity of their societies, the conflict between Russia and Ukraine is exemplary in this respect.

In 2010, equal numbers of Ukrainians respected Stalin and Bandera as national heroes. In Russia and Belarus, of course, the numbers were different, and they have been moving in various directions. However, there is still a significant number of Russians who believe that Stalin was a bloody tyrant, and there are also some Russians who respect Bandera as a leader of anti-Soviet resistance. Demonizing one of the polar figures and glorifying another, such groups can be differentiated only on the base of their memory-based identities. Many aspects of their political and cultural behavior correlate with, or even, logically follow from, their attitudes towards the figures, events, and symbols of the past. In

fact, such memory-specific formations give a richer access to group identities than many other dimensions of difference that sociologists use in their research; for many practical purposes, it could be more significant than generation, profession, or even citizenship. A Russian Stalinist would feel at ease with a Ukrainian Stalinist, and self-proclaimed Russian and Ukrainian Banderites would likewise enjoy one another's company. Quite meaningfully, after the political protests of 2012, the Russian government applied the historical term borrowed from the Spanish Civil War, "fifth column," to those Russians whose political and historical ideas allegedly came from Ukraine and "the West," as the Russian government perceived it. But this fifth column, a product of political imagination, is notoriously difficult to identify. Though their quantitative proportions might be significantly different, the supporters and the enemies of Putinism include both the young and the old, the rich and the poor, those who work in creative industries and those who serve in law-enforcement agencies. In fact, the fifth column has never been defined in terms of the persons who comprise it; it is rather the narratives in which these people believe, or might believe, that define the fifth column. Here we have a curious example of social construction that is not a group of persons but a group of narratives, and most if not all of these narratives are stories about the past rather than about the present. To be sure, some of these "fifth column narratives" address current themes such as corruption, and living people such as Putin; but a very thick layer of these narratives tackle the historical past with its themes of terror, war, and genocide, or personalities such as Stalin and Bandera. People die under the symbols of the past; but they live under these symbols as well.

Memory wars do not have clear-cut fronts. For all practical purposes, governments run these wars within national borders just as much or even more than across them. Cultural memory belongs to individuals as well as social groups, generations, ethnicities, and institutions; their variegated versions of the past combine into a great panoply of historical evil. History knows cases of true reconciliation, and they always involve elements of oblivion. In Eastern Europe, we discern neither reconciliation nor oblivion. But in this unquiet part of the world we also see some developing situations in which "never again," tragically, does not work. In Russia but not only there, the political evil, as it is unfolding in the present, is increasingly comparable to the historical past that has been left in the past. There are psychic and cultural processes in which an obsession with the past prevents the subject from discerning the present. We

historians always hope to find that memory reveals and enlightens; but in some cases, depicted in detail in this book, we see the opposite: memory disguises, confuses, and obscures.

Memory of World War II was a part of the post-war landscape, along with many other aspects of the post-war period—economic, social, political, and others. In the Soviet Union, the post-war period was generally called the "reconstruction," but the outcome was very different from the desired restoration of the pre-war status. Over several years, the dictator who won the war imitated the ideological and ethno-cultural agenda of his defeated enemy. Then this dictator died, and his death launched a complex, open-ended process of restructuring the core institutions and beliefs of the nation. These uneven, mostly radical but never-completed transformations lasted for years and decades, and eventuated in a regime change. Arguably, they still continue. The irony of the War and its aftermath was that the Soviet regime found its most powerful support in the West during the most tyrannical period of its history. With the military victory and the subsequent peace that led to the humanization of the regime, this support disappeared. World War turned into Cold War, and then came the memory wars, which are richly documented in this book. Global as well as local, inter- as well as intra-national, these memory wars colored the whole period from the Thaw of the 1960s to the Détente of the 1970s and late 1980s, to the regime change of the 1990s and through to the revivalism of the 2010s. Selecting various parts of the common and diverging past, challenging their meanings in highly relevant, identity-changing ways, these memory wars have never been described in their complexity. Identifying the local agents of these memory wars, revisiting their symbolic battlefields and conversing with their mourners and deniers, this volume fills hugely important gaps in our understanding of global and European history.

Cambridge, UK — Alexander Etkind

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: War and Memory in Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus

Julie Fedor, Simon Lewis and Tatiana Zhurzhenko

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At the beginning of the war in the Donbas, in early June 2014, long before Russia had filled the region with weapons, pro-Russian separatists in the small town of Konstantynivka in the Donetsk region told journalists

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that the tank they were using against the Ukrainian army had been taken down from the plinth of a World War II memorial in a local park, repaired, refueled, and "brought back to life" (*Segodnia* 2014). Regardless of whether the story is true, the metaphor is powerful—it suggests that the ghosts of a war that ended seventy years ago are easily evoked.

This edited collection contributes to the current vivid multidisciplinary debate on memory politics in Eastern Europe, focusing on the re-narration and political instrumentalization of World War II memories in the post-Soviet context. At the same time, our book has a distinctive geographic focus: we concentrate on the three Slavic countries of post-Soviet Eastern Europe—Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus. Together they comprise the epicenter of Soviet war suffering, and the heartland of the Soviet war myth. In all three countries, memories of the war have been central in post-Soviet identity making; yet they demonstrate very different trajectories of nation-building and memory regimes. Contributions to our volume give insight into the persistence of the Soviet commemorative culture of World War II and the myth of the Great Patriotic War in the post-Soviet space. Yet the volume also demonstrates that due to various geopolitical, cultural, and historical reasons the political uses of World War II in post-Soviet Ukraine, Russia, and Belarus differ significantly, with important ramifications for future developments in the region and beyond.

The enduring prominence of World War II as a key theme in the national narratives of our target countries is unsurprising given the special intensity and scale of war suffering in this part of Europe. The war experience was especially traumatic here, where the population experienced unprecedented human losses, the destruction of the basic infrastructure, repressions under two occupational regimes, mass murder, deportations and ethnic cleansings. In this part of Europe, which (together with Poland) Timothy Snyder (2010) called the "Bloodlands," the brutalities of the war itself can hardly be separated from the mass crimes of Hitler's and Stalin's regimes. Although the scale of suffering was highest in Ukraine and Belarus, where the entire territory was occupied and devastated, in the Western optic these two countries tend to be subsumed under the sign of "Russia" and disappear from view. In this volume, we set out to offer a corrective to this view by broadening the lens beyond the Russian perspective.

The contributors to this book document the explosion of new memory practices, agents, symbols, and narratives that is currently underway

in the Russia–Ukraine–Belarus triangle. At one level, these should be read in the context of an important event that we are presently witnessing: the passing of the last living World War II veterans. Stephen M. Norris has described how the 2010 Victory Day was framed by some Russian media as "The Last Parade" of the veterans and the end of the "living memory" of the war (Norris 2011). With the passing of this generation, the war memory is making the transition from the realm of communicative memory to that of cultural memory, to use Jan Assmann's influential terms (2008). Assmann distinguished between communicative memory, based on an exchange of direct, biographical experience, and cultural memory, which is "a kind of institution. It is exteriorized, objectified, and stored away in symbolic forms that, unlike the sounds of words or the sight of gestures, are stable and situation-transcendent" (116–117). It is precisely this moment of transition that is reflected throughout the contributions to the book, documenting as they do the compulsive search for new forms of remembering, manifested in the war theme's renewed prominence in mass culture, and in both public and private life, and in the production of new and reconstituted myths. At this moment of anxiety, as the direct bearers of World War II memory pass away, the memory of the war becomes if anything even more ever-present, and in many ways more unstable, in Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine.

The proliferation of new war monuments, and of public calls to keep the memory of war "alive," hide a widespread anxiety related to the current moment of generational change and to entering a new world without the "war generation" whose moral authority was almost univocally accepted in fragmented and politically polarized post-Soviet societies. Many of the new practices explored in the book can be seen as part of what Elena Rozhdestvenskaya has called the "hyper-exploitation of the past Victory" which "leads to the constant making-present of the war experience, to the unending search for new methods of commemoration, so as to further extend the life of this event" (Rozhdestvenskaya 2015).[1] David R. Marples (2014: ix) has asked: what consequences will the passing of the last veterans have for the ongoing viability of state reliance on the war myth? These consequences are still unfolding, but the contributors to this book go some way towards answering this question.

The book is a late fruit of the international research project *Memory at War: Cultural Dynamics in Poland*, Russia, and Ukraine, led by Alexander Etkind and based at the University of Cambridge in

2010–2013, and draws on the international symposium "Narratives of Suffering in Post-Cold War Europe: The Second World War in Transnational Contexts," organized by the Helsinki team of the project at the Aleksanteri Institute, University of Helsinki in September 2012.[2] The production of this volume coincided with (and was delayed by) dramatic events in our region, as discursive memory wars merged with and fueled a real war in Ukraine, following the events of the Euromaidan (2013–2014). These events reconfigured lives, societies, identities, and politics in our region, first of all in Ukraine and Russia. These changes have also reconfigured the field of our research. The book does not focus on these recent changes, although most chapters do address them (and we discuss them in a dedicated section of this introduction).

Instead, the book offers a deeper and broader contextualization of the politics of war memory within the Russia–Ukraine–Belarus triangle. We present here a collection of empirically rich case studies exploring political, social and cultural dimensions, and on multiple scales, from the local—Sevastopol, Narva, Karelia; to the national; and through to the transnational, since the cultures of remembrance analyzed here are not limited by state borders.[3] Several of the chapters trace back the evolution of these memory cultures and narratives since the early 1990s, and some go back further still. In this way we set out to add historical depth to our understanding of the present situation in the region, and also to offer a more differentiated view on history and memory politics in the different countries under discussion.

In this introductory essay, we begin by discussing World War II memory in our region in light of the war in Ukraine that is ongoing at the time of writing (2017). We outline the main contours of the interplay between "memory wars" and real war, and the important "post-Crimean" qualitative shift that we see in local memory cultures in this connection. Next, we sketch out a brief overview of the specifics of the war memory landscapes of the region, and then of each of the three individual countries, before moving on to introduce the book's key organizing themes and findings.

From Memory Wars to Real Wars

The post-Soviet "memory wars"—the ongoing struggle to define and narrate the past as a foundation for present and future identities—and the real war currently underway in the Donbas, are deeply

interconnected on multiple levels. Memory politics have shaped and driven the current violence in Ukraine in important and complex ways. The ideological justification for Russian aggression against the fledgling Ukrainian state has been based heavily on claims about the memory of the past, and the current war in Ukraine is routinely imagined, narrated, and justified as a continuation of World War II. Pro-democratic forces in Ukraine have been systematically demonized in the Russian media as "neo-Nazis," intent on erasing the historical memory of the Soviet Victory and perpetrating genocide against Russian and Jewish minorities. The "fascist" label is routinely applied not just to Ukrainians, but to a diverse range of objects at home and abroad, from Russian schoolchildren researching their family histories (Pavlova 2016),[4] to Western human rights activists (Obukhov 2016).[5]

At one level, this is nothing new. For decades now, the past has been a key battleground in the struggle for the present and future in our region. Memory activism played a prominent driving role in protest movements in the twilight days of the Soviet bloc, and ever since, symbolic politics surrounding the past have been a crucial site of contestation, reflecting and shaping post-Soviet evolution in important ways (Miller and Lipman 2012; Tismaneanu et al. 2010; Stan 2008). In particular, debates over how to commemorate victims of state violence in the past have been closely intertwined with debates over human rights in the present, as they have elsewhere in the world. (On the linkage between human rights and remembrance, see Huyssen 2003; Winter 2013.)

But with the beginning of the war in Ukraine, we can talk about a new quality of post-Soviet memory politics, or perhaps even a new phenomenon that goes beyond the usual ways of instrumentalizing the past. In the current Russian–Ukrainian conflict, we are witnessing the emergence and in some cases the cultivation of what amounts to a new temporality in which elements of past and present are fused together, and linear historical time collapses.

Some of the most striking manifestations of this dissolving of the boundaries between past and present have involved the public performance of memory. Consider the following example. In Donetsk, on Ukrainian Independence Day on 24 August 2014, Ukrainian prisoners were forced to take part in a "parade of shame," paraded in front of angry crowds of civilians who were encouraged to pelt them with rotten food and spit on them, while a street-sweeping machine followed behind the parade to cleanse the road in their wake. Importantly, this parade

was staged and framed as a re-run of Stalin's famous 1944 "Parade of the Defeated," when German prisoners of war were marched through Moscow, followed by street-sweepers symbolically cleaning the road. It was precisely this parallel that steered the collective emotions at work here. Here, then, seven decades after the Great Patriotic War ended, a sacralized narrative of the history of that war was used by proto-fascist Russian organizations to legitimize a ritualized act of violence and humiliation staged around the public performance of memory.

The prominent role played by historical re-enactors in the current war in Ukraine offers another example of the radical blurring, even dissolving, of the boundaries between past and present, and fantasy and reality, enacted through the performance of memory. Certainly, historical re-enactments have become a global phenomenon, one of the many new forms through which contemporary societies are engaging with their past. And yet, in our region we see something new. What is elsewhere usually an innocuous hobby for amateur historians, nostalgists, and medieval enthusiasts, has gained a more sinister hue. Amateur battle reconstruction enthusiasts provided many recruits and indeed leaders for the pro-Russian separatist movement in Ukraine (see Zhurzhenko 2015a; Mitrokhin 2015: 228–229). In this way, as Alexander Etkind put it, historical reconstruction began to "swallow up the present" (cited in Zemtsov 2014), as historical play and reality became confused and interchangeable, with destructive consequences.[6]

Moreover, historical reconstruction has become an instrument for manipulating public memories and mass emotions, merging popular entertainment and state-sponsored political spectacle. Re-enactments of battles have been a visible feature of the lavishly funded shows staged annually in the Crimean city of Sevastopol by the Night Wolves patriotic bikers' club—a new high-profile memory actor that regularly stages flamboyant performances of memory, skillfully courting global media attention, and enjoying the patronage of the Russian president. The Night Wolves' annual shows offer abundant compelling examples of the performance and narration of memory. Their 2014 show, entitled "The Return" in honor of the Crimean annexation, featured a procession of thousands of motorbikes, organized into columns, culminating at the local World War II memorial complex, as well as the use of military hardware provided by the Black Sea Fleet (Savchenko 2014). The 2015 show, "Forge of Victory," took World War II as its theme, and in the finale, the audience re-lived the war memory, which

was performed by present-day soldiers using genuine World War II weapons:

> At midnight exactly, the lights went out, and then a German Messerschmitt appeared and bombardment commenced. And then: the Victory battles … Real military hardware from World War II took part in the show. The tanks and "Katiushas" had shot at German soldiers 70 years earlier. Military men with combat weaponry served as extras. (Khanin 2015)

These spectacular historical re-enactments are reminiscent in some respects of the mass street theater re-enactments of the October Revolution staged to mark revolutionary anniversaries during the early Soviet period. It is often claimed that more people died during the 1927 re-enactment of the storming of the Winter Palace than during the original 1917 events; in any event, in both cases we see clearly that the re-enactment exceeds the original event, and reinvents the past for the purposes of the present. Indeed, for Russian neo-imperialist ideologue Aleksandr Prokhanov, whose "Fifth Empire" concept provided the theme for the Night Wolves show in August 2016, this show was "bringing a new reality into being" (cited *Meduza* 2016).[7]

These are just a few examples of the extraordinary ways in which recent performances of memory in connection with the war in Ukraine have aimed at endowing the past and present with meaning. Jay Winter writes that: "Memory performed is at the heart of collective memory" (Winter 2010: 11), and several of the contributors to this book explore the ways in which various commemorative rituals serve to delineate the boundaries of post-Soviet identities, and often to identify and construct "enemies." We examine the phenomenon of historical re-enactment (in Chaps. 3, 7, 8, and 14), and other new performative practices that redefine the relationship between the living, the war dead, and the unborn, such as the Immortal Regiment processions in which people march through public spaces bearing photographs of their ancestors who fought in the war (Chap. 11), or the popular fertility rituals performed by newly weds at tanks and other World War II monuments (Chaps. 8 and 15). Apart from being important contributions to memory research, these chapters advance our understanding of the mechanisms of collective mobilization in times of political crisis. More specifically, they help to find answers to one of the central questions of the Ukrainian–Russian conflict: how is it that historical myths and visions of the past projected

onto the present can make people see the current war as an unfinished battle of World War II, even motivating some of them to take up arms?

A Region of Memory? Beyond National Memories in Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine

The emerging subdiscipline of East European Memory Studies often deals with the Western/Eastern Europe divide, with Russia bracketed out to one side as something of an exceptional case. Our focus on Russia–Ukraine–Belarus is aimed at presenting a more differentiated picture of (this part of) Eastern Europe. The current Ukraine–Russia conflict obscures the fact that there are still many continuities with the Soviet era, when these three Republics constituted the Slavic core of the Soviet Union and the memory of the Great Patriotic War shaped the essence of the late-Soviet identity. It was of course Ukraine (with the exception of its western regions), Belarus, and the western regions of Russia where the collective experience of World War II corresponded most closely with the official Soviet narrative of the Great Patriotic War; this helped to foster its acceptance by the local populations and its successful usage by the post-Soviet elites. At the same time we are now at the point where emerging national myths of World War II are dramatically diverging.

The post-war Soviet Union drew its legitimacy from the victory over Nazi Germany, and the official representations of the war were based on a triumphalist and heroic narrative of the "Great Patriotic War" that was elaborated in the Brezhnev era (Weiner 2001; Dubin 2005). This policy helped to suppress the traumatic memories not just of the war itself, but also of the unacknowledged Stalinist repressions (Etkind 2013). It also contributed to consolidating the collective identity and to shaping the supranational community of the "Soviet people" (on which see Brunstedt 2011).

The myth of the Great Patriotic War was the cultural foundation not only of the "new historical community of Soviet people" more broadly, but also more specifically of the subset of the three Slavic republics which comprised the ethnic and cultural core of the USSR. The myth of the "common victory" played a special role in relations between Moscow, Kyiv and Minsk; it corresponded to the basic historical paradigm of East Slavic unity and "brotherhood" (Yekelchyk 2004). In Ukraine, it helped to silence the counter-memory of the anti-Soviet nationalist resistance

and its collaboration with the Nazis (cf. Grinevich 2005). In Belarus, the mythologized self-image as the "Partisan Republic" that had played a key role in defending the Soviet Union and enabling the Victory became the defining feature of the post-war polity.

While Ukraine, Russia, and Belarus shared the basic symbols and narratives associated with the Soviet myth of the Great Patriotic War, the post-Soviet histories of that myth have diverged in important ways across the three countries. While in Russia the myth of the Great Patriotic War has been integrated into the new official narratives of Russian identity, state patriotism and military glory, in Ukraine a "divided culture of memory" prevented the national elites from a consensual view on World War II. In Belarus, where the Soviet war myth has been even more important than in Russia, the traditional Soviet narrative preserved by the Lukashenka regime has been increasingly challenged by oppositional intellectuals who are practically not represented in the state-controlled public space. Meanwhile, recent years have seen ongoing struggles for "ownership" of the Victory. Most notoriously, in 2010 Putin stated that Russia would have won the war "even without Ukraine."[8] Both in Ukraine and Belarus the narrative of "common victory" and "common sacrifice" has been appropriated by the pro-Russian political forces. In post-Maidan Ukraine, a new consensus has emerged on World War II as a tragic rather than a heroic event in the nation's history, and the Great Patriotic War formula has disappeared from museums and textbooks. At the same time, references to the Great Patriotic War are not rare in the public speeches of Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko in the context of the Russian aggression in the Donbas.

With the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Brezhnev's memory empire did not collapse at once; its fragments were instrumentalized by the political elites in the new independent states. Scholars of East European memory have tended to focus on the processes of the nationalization of memory after the end of the Cold War (see for example Müller 2002), but the instrumentalization of memory in our region does not necessarily serve the purposes of creating new national independence narratives. One example is the Prokhorovka war memorial (1995) near Belgorod which was integrated into a new narrative of Slavic unity and became a mandatory site to be jointly visited by Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian leaders (Zhurzhenko 2015b). An Orthodox chapel with a "Bell of Unity" was erected for the meeting of Putin, Lukashenka, and Kuchma in Prokhorovka in May 2000; it is decorated with the

icons of three saints—the patrons of the three Slavic countries. Patriarch Aleksii II, who had inaugurated the meeting of the three presidents in Prokhorovka on the occasion of the 55th anniversary of the victory over Nazi Germany, stressed the issue of Slavic unity in his speech:

> Sons of the Russian, the Ukrainian and the Belarusian nations fought here heroically against the common enemy, protecting their common Motherhood. Many of them gave their lives for our peaceful and free future. Nobody can separate their graves. In fight, in sacrifice, in Victory they were together. They share military glory and we share the memory of their deeds … Our best gift to their memory will be a strong union of the Ukrainians, the Russians and the Belarusians. ("Patriarch" 2000)

By the mid-2000s Prokhorovka became a symbol of the "East Slavic reunification," understood as the political, economic and cultural reintegration of the three former Soviet republics. Political elites interested in this project have sought to reinscribe the "Great Victory" into a new discourse of pan-Slavism and Orthodox unity, adapting Soviet symbols, narratives, and rituals to this end.

Thus, the self-defined (or, arguably, Russia-defined) East Slavic core of the former Soviet space is a paradigmatic region of memory, that is, a "discursive arena above the level of the nation-state but not fully universal" (Olick 2015: x). This memory region is both institutional and experiential: it is observable both in the mnemonic interactions of state and non-state organizations and in the shared history of wartime suffering and post-war Soviet politics. The case of Prokhorovka shows that political elites in Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine have built legal, bureaucratic, and symbolic structures to attempt to unify the narrative of the war and promote claims of shared identity. Another example is the commemoration of the "International Day of the Liberation of Nazi Concentration Camp Inmates" on 11 April, a calendar holiday unknown outside the post-Soviet states (Bekus 2016). More recently, in the aftermath of Russia's invasion of Eastern Ukraine and Crimea, such top-level commemorative cooperation has declined. For example, in 2015 Belarus enacted a symbolic rejection of Russian memory models when it introduced an alternative to the St George's Ribbon, the Flower of Victory, an apple flower on a red and green ribbon now worn by veterans and spectators during the Victory Day celebrations of 9 May.[9] Nonetheless, it remains clear that memory symbols and narratives are closely intertwined

in this region: the sharing of tropes has increasingly given way to memory conflict, but the connectivities of memory remain strong.

This regional perspective is a fruitful prism for studying the memory cultures of Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine because it recognizes that the specific Soviet myth of the Great Patriotic War was hugely formative for these three countries, whilst also allowing for the dynamic study of how memory regimes have evolved and influenced each other across national borders. Thus, our decision to focus on the Russia–Ukraine–Belarus triangle should not be read as indicating a tacit acceptance of the ideological construct of primordial East Slavic unity and brotherhood.[10] The essays in this volume overwhelmingly show that memory is contested both within and between states.

The trajectories of memory in these former Soviet countries also provide an instructive counter-example to the popular argument that the Holocaust has become a global symbol of twentieth-century suffering (Levy and Sznaider 2002). Somewhat paradoxically, in the very lands where the mass killing of Europe's Jewish population was unleashed on an industrial scale (alongside Poland, Hungary, the Baltic States, and other East European states), the metanarrative of the Holocaust's centrality to global memory culture is debunked. The Holocaust is certainly not forgotten here, despite the fact that the official Soviet narrative allowed no concessions to the specific suffering of Jews, instead generalizing about the deaths of "peaceful Soviet citizens" (see Al'tman 2005). However, the Holocaust is decidedly not a principal pillar of memory in the region; rather, it competes for supremacy with other foundation myths, including the cult of Victory and national martyrologies (see Chap. 12).

Meanwhile, the memory of the Holocaust can be seen as a site of negotiation between the local and global. Political elites, regardless of their views, cannot avoid references to the Holocaust as a universal symbol of twentieth-century history. The global discourses of Holocaust remembrance and human rights have been appropriated and adapted in various ways by the Putin regime as a self-legitimizing move (see Fedor 2015: 2), while Ukraine's pro-Western government addresses the issue of Holocaust in order to demonstrate its commitment to European values. At the same time, the unprecedented public commemoration of the 75th anniversary of Babiy Yar in Kyiv in September 2016 and new memorials created by the efforts of civil society (such as the Space of Synagogues in Lviv) testify to a new trend towards integrating the Holocaust into the national historical narrative.

Overall, all three memory cultures remain fundamentally structured by the Soviet Great Patriotic War myth. This applies even when and indeed especially when their positions on that myth are starkly opposed to one another. As Michael Rothberg has argued, the virulence of conflicts over memory is in part a result of "the rhetorical and cultural *intimacy* of seemingly opposed traditions of remembrance" (Rothberg 2009: 7; original emphasis). Rothberg's observation that our relationship to the past always has "unexpected or even unwanted consequences that bind us to those whom we consider other" (Ibid.: 5) is particularly apt here, where seemingly radical attempts to reject the Soviet paradigm so often only serve to entrench it further (see Portnov 2016). Bitter debates on the role of Stalin in Russian history, and in particular, his role in the victory over Nazi Germany, which paradoxically unite liberals and nationalists in one discursive realm, prove this point (cf. Chap. 2). As Yuliya Yurchuk shows in Chap. 4, attempts to create an anti-Soviet nationalist narrative glorifying the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) as national heroes often copy the traditional Soviet narrative and borrow from its stylistic repertoire. The same can be said of some nationalist narratives in Belarus (see Chap. 13), where, at the same time, the ruling regime is increasingly borrowing from the opposition's depository of symbols and narratives (cf. Chap. 3).

Mark D. Steinberg suggests another perspective on Eastern Europe that is useful for framing our approach here. He writes:

> if we hold to the definition of *region* as a space constituted by social relationships rather than by commonalities of culture, eastern Europe is very much such a relational space, with its distinctive legacies of enormous diversity and often sudden change, and especially of forceful modern attempts to unify and stabilize relationships by absorbing difference into empires and multinational states or attempting to eradicate difference. (Steinberg 2014: 75–76)

In the case of our three countries, it is relevant to mention that their relations have often been imagined and structured by kinship narratives and metaphors linked to kinship, rather than, say, to "neighborly" relations or "partnerships." Recognition of this is crucial for understanding the emotional dimension to the memory wars. It is frequently asserted in the Russian press, for example, that what makes the post-Soviet

memory wars "especially hurtful and bitter," as one journalist put it, is the fact that "kindred [*rodstvennye*] Slavic peoples are included in the circle of main enemies" (cited in Maevskaia 2009). The old metaphors of Slavic brotherhood and Slavic blood ties thus continue to exert symbolic power, but now often carry a negative charge. Whilst insisting on shared collective kinship among the peoples of the USSR, Soviet propaganda also denounced Ukrainian nationalists during World War II as "betrayers of the Motherland" (cf. Chap. 4), and this accusation echoes in the recent memory wars in post-Soviet space. A new monument to the "victims of the OUN and UPA" erected in Simferopol in Crimea in 2007 under the title "Shot in the Back" represents a wounded Soviet soldier embraced and supported by a woman. The history of this metaphor goes back to the imperial period of Ukrainian–Russian relations (Kappeler 1997). This fact helps to explain the emotional power of the notion of "treachery" in the context of the current Ukrainian–Russian conflict as pro-Western Ukraine is presented as a Trojan horse of US imperialism. Thus, the dominant trope of "fraternity" has now effectively been turned inside out, and transformed into the new key organizing metaphor of "betrayal". The persistence of this underlying idea serves to radically limit the available role categories to a stark choice: brother or traitor.

In post-Soviet space, successful instrumentalization of war memory has been enabled by the fact that, at the level of popular attitudes, the myth of the Great Patriotic War has remained even more important than at the level of elite politics. Frederick Corney has observed that: "Successful foundation narratives are commissioned in a complex relationship between rulers and the ruled", and that their viability "depends on their ability to draw individuals into the process of meaning-making" (Corney 2004: 2–3). Victory Day (9 May) marking the end of the war is the most important commemorative date on the Russian official calendar; it also happens to be the only post-Soviet holiday that is genuinely popular in Russia (Levinson 2015) and beyond its borders (Gabowitsch et al. 2016). As Nina Tumarkin puts it, during the late-Soviet period, Victory Day "was *both* the tool of propagandists touting its triumphs and a memorial day for millions of relatives and friends of the war dead" (1994: 37; original emphasis). The powerful emotional connections between the levels of individual/family and collective memories of the war mean that the Great Patriotic War myth continues to fulfill the criteria set out by Stephen Kotkin in his study of Soviet ideology and

propaganda. Kotkin points out that it is not possible simply to impose propaganda from above. In order to be effective, Kotkin writes, propaganda "must offer a story that people are prepared at some level to accept; one that retains the capacity to capture their imagination, and one that they can learn to express in their own words" (1995: 358). The war myth continues to succeed in doing all these things. Seen retrospectively, after Crimea, it still represents the strongest identity marker of the "Russian world," broadly understood as the East Slavic, or Orthodox civilization. As the "Russian spring" of 2014 demonstrated, even a quarter of a century after the collapse of the Soviet Union, cultural and ideological attachment to the myth of the Great Patriotic War overshadows political loyalties to the new nation-states.

Russia

It has become commonplace to point out that the Soviet Victory is now the single most important historical event capable of acting as a foundation stone for a post-Soviet-Russian national identity (see for example Gudkov 2005; Wolfe 2006). In important ways, the Victory has come to displace or stand in for other candidates for the role of a symbol of national unity through shared suffering and victimhood, such as the Gulag. The Russian Federation's position as semi-successor state to the USSR rules out the possibility of externalizing the history of Soviet state violence. Instead, as Serguei Oushakine has argued, the war memory seems to function as a kind of placeholder, a "black hole" into which all of Russia's unacknowledged twentieth-century traumas can be absorbed (cited in Kosterina 2015).

Despite the breaking of various taboos around the Soviet role in the war in recent decades (on which see Carleton 2016), the Soviet myth of the Great Patriotic War, now reconstituted and integrated into a new narrative of Russian history, largely retains its status as sacred and untouchable. Successive governments have put significant resources into fostering the use of the Victory cult as an instrument of national consolidation and patriotic education. The Victory myth has been deemed so crucial to the nation-building project that it requires direct government intervention: for example, denial of the Red Army's Victory has been made a criminal offence.

The Soviet role in defeating fascism is also an important element underpinning Russian geopolitical claims to great power status (see

further Zhurzhenko 2015a). The current Russian government has also made wide use of the symbolic capital derived from this in its relations with the former Soviet countries by labeling any moves to depart from the Soviet narrative of the war (or by extension from the Russian sphere of influence) as "fascist." Since 2014, tropes and images from the Soviet myth of the war have also been "weaponized" to incite pro-Russian insurgency in Ukraine. For example, the tragic events in Odessa on 2 May 2014, when clashes between the Euromaidan and the Anti-Maidan ended with a catastrophic fire in the Trade Union house which took the lives of dozens of pro-Russian protesters, was widely labeled "a new 'Khatyn'," that is, a repeat of the massacre of civilians that took place in the Belarusian village of Khatyn' in 1943 and which later became an emblematic "fascist" crime in the Soviet war narrative. The victims of the 2014 Odessan fire were in turn claimed as martyrs to the cause of building "Novorossiia" in Ukraine (see for example Darenskii 2015). The victims were said to have died to enable the beginning of the "Russian Spring," on the one hand, and in the name of past Russian military victories, on the other, and these two dimensions were often closely intertwined. One Orthodox priest commenting on these events, for example, described the Odessan fire as "A BURNT OFFERING … an auspicious sacrifice … and an eternal cursing of the Nazis!" [original emphasis—eds.] (cited in Chistiakov 2014: 3). This is only one example of how the memories of World War II have been mobilized to incite the anti-Ukrainian insurgency by equating Ukrainian nationalism with German Nazism as the embodiment of absolute evil.

Thus, seventy years after the victory over Nazi Germany, Russia claims to be facing the same challenge—the threat of fascism. "Anti-fascism" has thus become a central element of the new national idea and the motor of mass nationalist mobilization in today's Russia.[11] This new politics of memory is pervasive: it stretches from official discourse and diplomatic rhetoric to mass media, cultural production (films, plays, even operas) and academic history writing.

The Ukrainian events coincided with a wave of memory wars within Russia itself. In the first half of 2014, Putin signed into law the criminalization of "the dissemination of knowingly false information about the actions of the USSR during World War II" (*Sova* 2014); a former state security official was appointed head of Moscow State University's Contemporary History Department (Aptekar' 2014); and the historian Andrei Zubov was sacked (albeit temporarily) from his university post

over an article in which he compared current policies on ethnic Russians in the near abroad to the Nazi handling of the Sudeten Germans issue (Antonova 2014)—to give just a few examples. As this book's manuscript was finalized, in August 2016, we saw the first case of a criminal conviction being brought down (and upheld by the Supreme Court) under the abovementioned 2014 addition to the Russian Criminal Code, article 354.1, on the "Rehabilitation of Nazism."[12]

Commentary on Russian memory politics often focuses on the issue of continuity between the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation, the prospect of a Russian-led attempt to recreate the Soviet Union, and the advent of a "new Cold War." We view such notions as something of a red herring, and one that is moreover convenient in various ways for the current Russian regime, whose leaders frequently present themselves as the only alternative to a full regression back into Stalinist habits and practices and ancient tendencies arising inevitably out of the Russian national character. It is in the Putin regime's interests to use politics around the past in order to distract people away from political choices in the present. Again, this has less in common with the Soviet use of the war myth than it might seem. In contrast to the old Soviet ideology, which represented a coherent and stable system, Putinist ideology is heterogeneous and eclectic, selecting and combining elements of both the Soviet and imperial narratives with the aim of demonstrating Russia's "greatness."

It is important to bear in mind that, far from representing an inevitable resurgence of old grievances and "ancient hatreds," the memory politics currently being conducted are very much a matter of active and deliberate myth making on the part of contemporary elites. Duncan S.A. Bell highlights the fact that myths "do not simply evolve unguided, without active agency … Myths are constructed, they are shaped, whether by deliberate manipulation and intentional action, or perhaps through the particular resonance of works of literature and art" (Bell 2003: 75). We might view what is happening in Russia not as a climax of cultural and political conservatism but rather as the invention of a new nation, as the Russian oppositional journalist Oleg Kashin suggested in a polemical column on contemporary Russian memory politics on the occasion of Victory Day 2016. In his article, entitled "A New Holiday for a New People," Kashin noted that while Russians were used to thinking of themselves as an old *narod* with a rich culture and history, it made sense in fact to think of Russians as:

> a new *narod*, a *narod* that is in the process of being created artificially right now at an accelerated tempo, like the Turks under Kemal. A *narod* like this needs precisely a myth like this—a myth of ancestors who smashed the threat from the West in a bloody war, who were loyal to their state and prepared to sacrifice themselves for the sake of its interests. (Kashin 2016)

In this sense, Russia is in fact not so different from Ukraine and Belarus, which are more often and more readily seen as "new" nations in urgent need of their own history and identity.

Ukraine

Unlike in Russia, in Ukraine conflicting views on the Soviet past and alternative interpretations of World War II have contributed to a profound political conflict which splits the society. In this respect Ukraine resembles a country that experienced civil war, such as Spain (Shevel 2011). The right to interpret the historical and geopolitical outcome of World War II has been openly claimed by competing political forces. The reinterpretation of World War II and its role in Ukrainian history is directly linked to the "post-colonial" search for national identity and the problem of geopolitical choice between Russia and the West. While during Leonid Kuchma's decade (1994–2005) officials referred to World War II as the "Great Patriotic War of the Ukrainian people," thereby endowing the Soviet narrative with national meaning, in the official discourse of the Yushchenko era (2005–2010) the Ukrainian nation figured as a victim of two totalitarian regimes. According to Sofia Grachova (2008: 4), "the new official historical narrative represented the war not so much as a glorious event, but rather as a terrible tragedy that struck the Ukrainian people in the absence of a national state." During the Yanukovych era, this approach was marginalized, and some of the old Soviet symbols (such as the Soviet flag in the form of the Banner of Victory) were officially reintroduced, provoking severe conflicts.

In Ukraine, unlike in Russia and much more so than in Belarus, a nationalist counter-narrative to the Great Patriotic War has existed since the late 1980s, referring to the OUN–UPA and its leaders, Stepan Bandera and Roman Shukhevych. This narrative, rather marginal during the first post-independence decade, was elevated to the level of national memory politics in the era of Viktor Yushchenko. His symbolic politics, which aimed at the glorification of Ukrainian nationalism and

at denouncing the Soviet regime as anti-Ukrainian, polarized the country. The Eastern Ukrainian regions being the stronghold of the Party of Regions became the main arena of memory wars during Yushchenko's presidency.

As some commentators have pointed out, these memory wars prepared the ground for the armed conflict in the Donbas: "the war in Eastern Ukraine (called an anti-terrorist operation) officially started in April 2014. The war in peoples' minds, which now seems to be an integral (and natural) part of the current military and civic conflict started much earlier—when the past became an important element of the present" (Kasianov 2014). Addressing the role of identity politics in the current Ukrainian crisis, Zhurzhenko (2014) has shown how Ukraine's divided political elite opened the Pandora's box of memory politics, using it as a tool for mass electoral mobilization, and how Russia has profited from the "war of identities" in its efforts to weaken Ukraine and prevent its reorientation to the West.

Andrii Portnov has offered one of the most balanced and measured accounts of the revival of the Bandera mythology in the course of the Euromaidan protests. He notes that in addition to the far-right adherents of the Bandera myth, there were also those who took up this myth in a gesture of reappropriation in response to the Kremlin's campaign to represent the Maidan as "fascist," and often in ignorance of Bandera's biography and views (2016). Others too have drawn attention to the ways in which Bandera as a symbol acquired new meanings in the course of the Maidan protests, at least partly becoming decoupled from Bandera's legacy of exclusivist ethno-nationalism (see Kulyk 2014; Yekelchyk 2015). Ultimately, as Portnov argues, "many people were trapped by the same propaganda narrative they wished to oppose" (2016).

Among the most divisive recent developments in the Ukrainian politics of war memory has been the renewed "decommunization" process currently underway. This process must be viewed in the context of the present war with Russia and Russia-backed separatists. This war has, understandably, strengthened the narrative of national liberation struggle officially propagated by the Institute for National Remembrance, led by the controversial historian Volodymyr Viatrovych. Viatrovych, who downplays crimes committed by the Ukrainian nationalists against Jews and Poles during World War II, has long been a target of domestic and international criticism (see letter of Western historians Marples 2015; Miller 2016). In 2015, four laws on new memory politics in Ukraine

drafted by the Institute were adopted by the Ukrainian Parliament on 9 April and later signed by President Poroshenko on 15 May, despite international and domestic criticism and pleas to bring them in line with European human rights legislation (Marples 2015).

Most of this criticism was directed against two of the four "decommunization" laws (cf. Chap. 4). The first of these is aimed at regulating representations of the controversial UPA and OUN. This law effectively creates an official canon of "national heroes," thus limiting critical public debate and complicating academic research on these issues. The second law officially condemns the Soviet regime alongside the Nazi regime, both of which are labeled totalitarian, and criminalizes the public use of communist and Soviet symbols. Both laws have been widely criticized as an assault on freedom of speech and as imposing a narrow view of the Soviet period of Ukrainian history as occupation.

The other two laws have attracted less attention but also represent important developments in Ukrainian memory politics. First, free access was granted to the former KGB archives. Second, a significant change was made to the Ukrainian official commemorative calendar: 8 May was now designated the Day of Memory and Reconciliation. This day now coexists alongside the old Soviet Victory Day public holiday on 9 May, which remains in place. In this way, the law partially broke with the (post-)Soviet tradition of Victory Day and with the still persisting narrative of the Great Patriotic War. Ukraine has distanced itself from the Russian symbols of the Great Patriotic War (such as the St George's Ribbon) which had been used rather as a neutral symbol in the post-Soviet countries prior to 2014 but became a symbol of pro-Russian separatism after the "Russian Spring." A new national symbol has been developed by the Institute for National Remembrance—a poppy flower combined with the slogan "Never Again" (*Nikoly znovu*) which clearly refers to the European tradition of war remembrance and its current post-heroic focus on mourning the victims of war. In the official political rhetoric and symbolic politics of the Ukrainian government, the Great Patriotic War does still play a role, however. For example, President Poroshenko makes frequent reference to the war, drawing parallels with the Russian aggression in the East, and official posters advertising service in the Ukrainian military stress continuity with the generation of Soviet veterans. One can argue that new victims, heroes, and martyrs of the war in the Donbas relativize the memory of World War II, although its highly politicized symbols such as the St George's Ribbon

still polarize society, and clashes between the pro-Russian opposition and Ukrainian radical nationalists have become typical for the 9 May public commemorations.

Alternative nation-building projects are underway in the so-called "Donetsk People's Republic" (DNR) and the "Luhansk People's Republic" (LNR) with their own collective mythologies, heroes, and martyrs, and even a new national mission, waged under the banner of "anti-fascism." The myth of the Great Patriotic War serves as glue holding together heterogeneous symbols, such as the Russian Cossackry, the figure of the heroic working-class miner, and the Orthodox Church. In the rhetoric of the self-proclaimed leaders of the DNR and LNR, the survival of the "young republics" is celebrated as "victory" reminiscent of the Great Victory of 1945.

Belarus

Belarus is similar to Ukraine in the polarization of memory between pro- and anti-Soviet models, but also very different in that the anti-Soviet mythology of the war is marginalized from public discourse and is unlikely to enter a position of power in the foreseeable future. The two-decade-old regime of Aliaksandr Lukashenka has from the outset gained its political legitimacy from recycling the Soviet myths of "fraternity" with Russia and collective heroism during World War II. National consciousness had been comparatively weak in Belarus when the Soviet project began, and in seventy years of communist rule, the Moscow-led authorities were rarely compelled to make concessions to Belarusian national aspirations. Thus, the central post-war myth of the "partisan republic" was largely successful in cultivating Soviet loyalty: in March 1991, 82.7 percent of Belarusians supported the preservation of the USSR (Marples 2003: 21). In summer 1994, Lukashenka, previously an unknown figure in Belarusian politics, tapped widespread social anxiety, economic uncertainty and Soviet nostalgia to gain a resounding electoral victory and become the country's first (and to this day [2017] only) president.

The memory politics of the so-called "last dictatorship in Europe" have involved a simultaneous narrowing and expansion of the cult of Victory: the semantic scope of the narrative has narrowed, but the symbolic arsenal of memory has been reinforced. If the Soviet myth of the "partisan republic" emphasized the Belarusian nation's contribution to

pan-Soviet glory, the version promoted by the Lukashenka regime has nationalized the myth in subtle but perceptible ways: the nation is now presented as the main actor and beneficiary of the heroic wartime resistance (Rudling 2008; Marples 2014). The Flower of Victory can be seen as the latest incarnation of this isolationist memorialization. Whilst in 2015 the Ukrainian authorities adopted the overtly Western symbol of the poppy and thereby sought to transplant the country from the Eurasian to the European civilizational model, Belarus chose an apple flower adorned with the colors of the national flag (Red and Green). The Lukashenka regime opted for a new, semantically empty symbol that both rejects the Russian memorial hegemony of the St George's Ribbon and maintains a distance from the Western European victim-centered narrative. The Belarusian case is therefore a curious patchwork of reworked Soviet tropes that simultaneously assert Eurasian civilizational identity—rejecting Western victim-centered narratives and claiming descent from the pan-Soviet Victory—and carve out a separate, non-Russian space of national memory.

To help promote this vision of Belarus's historical and mnemonic *Sonderweg*, the state has carried out costly refurbishments of Soviet-era monuments, such as the Khatyn Memorial Complex (opened 1969, renovated 2006; for further discussion see Rudling 2012 and Lewis 2015), and it has also added new sites of memory, such as the Stalin Line museum (opened 2005, discussed in Chap. 8; Marples 2012). July 2014 saw the grand reopening of the Museum of the Great Patriotic War in Minsk: this major Soviet-era institution was relocated to a new, purpose-built building and revamped with a significantly enlarged exhibition space, interactive expositions, and a highly charged social and political purpose. The opening ceremony was attended by both Lukashenka and Putin, a fact that bears witness to the museum's transnational political significance. This costly and widely publicized project allows visitors to imagine themselves in reconstructed war scenes, combining a sanitized narrative of Belarusian–Soviet military victory with enjoyable, 3D performative affect (see Bratachkin 2015; Lastovskii et al. 2014). As a museum that modernizes the (official) memory of the war for generations that have no lived experience of this history, it leaves no doubt as to the continued centrality of the Great Patriotic War to the identity project of the Belarusian authorities.

Yet at the same time, the Lukashenka regime has gradually diversified its approach to war memory. The myth of the partisan republic is

still paramount, but it is no longer a monolith. As both Ackermann and Rudling show in their chapters, complex forms of interaction between state and grassroots activists have led to the official sanctification of previously unheralded narratives, from the Soviet war in Afghanistan to the Battle of Orsha, fought between the armies of Poland–Lithuania and Muscovy in 1514. The Holocaust and Jewish heritage are also being incorporated into the accepted symbols of official commemoration, as demonstrated by Lukashenka's participation in a 2014 memorial ceremony at the site of Trastianets, a former Nazi killing field where more than 200,000 individuals, mostly Jews, were murdered during the war (Waligórska 2016). Needless to say, the increasing number of memory symbols does not correspond to a change in the dominant memory regime: the mode of remembrance remains resolutely triumphant, framed in terms of heroism and martyrdom rather than victimhood and mourning.

This heterogeneous instrumentalization of memory and the general popularity of the Victory myth make it difficult for the political opposition to dispute the state's central claims about the war. If in Ukraine, the wartime anti-Soviet (as well as anti-Polish and anti-Semitic) actions of the Bandera and Shukhevych militias are readily advanced as a counter-narrative to the Soviet interpretation of military victory, in Belarus the wartime nationalist–collaborationist movement does not easily lend itself to such lionization: it was comparatively weak and thoroughly discredited during the post-war decades. There have been attempts to raise historical figures such as Usevalad Rodz'ka, a potential Belarusian "equivalent" of Bandera, to the status of a national hero, but these have so far failed to gain traction (see Chaps. 3 and 13). Instead, the most prominent attempts to decouple Belarusian identity from Soviet metanarratives tend to focus on the crimes of Stalinism, considered independently of the war. The best known and politically "hottest" site of anti-Soviet memory is the Kurapaty Forest, a mass burial site for victims of NKVD executions during the Terror of the late 1930s (Marples 1994; Etkind et al. 2012). Nonetheless, as Chap. 13 discusses in more detail, the process of unmaking the myth of the partisan republic has unfolded in literature and culture, and continues to this day.

Given Belarus's self-imposed relative isolation from Eastern European memory wars and its uneasy neutrality in the ongoing Russia–Ukraine conflict, it is not surprising that the mnemonic dimension of the war in Eastern Ukraine has had comparatively few effects on war memory

in Belarus. There has been no need for the Kremlin to rebrand a section of Belarusians as "fascists," and official Minsk has not been moved to designate a new day on which to mark Victory Day in order to snub Moscow. Instead, Belarus has quietly distanced itself from the Russian memory frame, for example in Lukashenka's decision not to attend the 9 May celebrations in Moscow in 2015. Against the background of events in Ukraine, Lukashenka's snub and the Flower of Victory are minor changes that suggest an apprehensiveness against Russian influence, but hardly a desire to antagonize. Regional politics may yet have a profound effect on Belarusian war memory, but for now the memory war is mostly confined within the boundaries of the state.

Outline of the Book

The volume is divided into five parts, each comprising three chapters.

Part I: Memories of World War II and Nation Building begins at the national level with an introduction to each of our three national cases. With the dissolution of the USSR in 1991, Ukraine, Russia, and Belarus embarked on a difficult process of building new states and consolidating their populations as national communities. While the myth of the October Revolution and the Soviet ideology was relatively easy to give up, the so-called "Great Patriotic War" was deeply rooted in collective memory, mass culture, and public discourse. Post-Soviet political elites, which in all three countries largely originated from the Soviet nomenklatura, have been seeking a difficult balance. On the one hand, new national symbols and narratives referring to the pre-Soviet era were initially met with skepticism by significant parts of the population; on the other, the Soviet myth of the Great Patriotic War served as a familiar and comforting symbol of continuity in the uncertain times of transition. The state has traditionally played an especially prominent role in memory politics in all three post-Soviet countries, and so these chapters share a particular focus on official memory politics and the role of political actors and institutions such as president and parliament in shaping their agenda. This section addresses similarities and specificities of the three national cases, helping to set the scene for the remaining chapters.

Olga Malinova begins with a survey of post-Soviet-Russian memory politics on the war, tracing the evolution of official attempts to use the war memory for identity-building purposes through from the early

1990s to the present day. She tracks these changes through a detailed frame analysis of presidential speeches and commemorative ceremonies.

Next, Per Anders Rudling guides us through both the official and the oppositional use of historical myths and narratives. Like Malinova's chapter, Rudling's highlights the ways in which the state authorities have sought sources of legitimacy in the past, taking over and adapting Soviet and other narratives for nation-building purposes. Rudling also shows that alternative historical cultures are also present in Belarus, for example in the form of online videos and cartoons presenting nationalist narratives of Belarusian history in pop culture form. Both these first two chapters conclude that the Soviet cult of the war remains a key identity marker, in part because of the limited success that governments and elites have had in finding suitable alternatives.

Finally in Part I, Yuliya Yurchuk traces the history of successive attempts to challenge the Soviet master narrative of the Great Patriotic War in Ukraine from 1991 through to 2016. She focuses on the nationalist narrative of the OUN and UPA as fighters for Ukraine's independence during World War II, and demonstrates the impressive career of this narrative from a local "counter-memory" rooted in some regions of Western Ukraine to a new national myth legitimized by the Ukrainian state. Her account takes us through to the post-Euromaidan period, which has resulted in a bid to monopolize official memory by the Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance.

The essays comprising **Part II: In Stalin's Shadow** explore the figure of Joseph Stalin and the paradox of his growing popularity in the post-Soviet era. His role in World War II remains the single most divisive aspect of the Victory cult in Russia. More than any other historical personage or symbol, Stalin—the commander-in-chief who presided over the Red Army's Victory, and the architect of mass atrocities against his own and other peoples—embodies the inseparability of the triumphalist and traumatic elements of Soviet history, as well as the ambiguities and tensions at the core of (post-)Soviet war memory. Joseph Stalin is far more than just a Russian *lieu de mémoire*—for example, Stalin as a symbol of the Great Victory has been smuggled into the public sphere in Belarus where his figure contributes to legitimizing Lukashenka's authoritarian regime (cf. Chaps. 3 and 8). The three chapters in Part II deal with the post-Soviet afterlife of Stalin's cult in Russia and in Ukraine.

Markku Kangaspuro and Jussi Lassila begin with a study of the symbolic politics around the renaming of Stalingrad/Volgograd. They use this case to demonstrate the difficulties faced by various actors in Russian politics and society in handling the relationship between the closely interconnected triumphalist and traumatic associations linked to the figure of Stalin. They provide a detailed analysis of the Putin-era debates over whether the name "Stalingrad" should be reinstated. Their account highlights the limits of the Russian state's power to impose hegemonic control over narratives of the national past, and links this to the "hybrid" nature of state memory politics in Russia, combining both authoritarian and democratic features.

Serhii Plokhy's chapter examines the role that the cult of Stalin plays in articulating conflicting approaches to the history of the war in Ukraine, through a close reading of a 2010 incident in which Ukrainian nationalists ritually beheaded a statue of Stalin that had been erected by the local Communists in the city of Zaporizhzhia earlier that year. This case study demonstrates how the Soviet war myth functions as a force for division in Ukrainian society. It also sheds retrospective light on later developments in Eastern Ukraine known as the "Russian Spring," as well as helping to illuminate the driving forces behind the current Ukrainian "decommunization" campaign.

Finally in Part II, Philipp Chapkovski's chapter investigates the phenomenal popularity of neo-Stalinist literature in Russia. He views this partly as an outcome of the state's reliance on the Victory myth, which makes an unequivocal renunciation of Stalin impossible. Chapkovski sets out to discover who is writing and consuming this literature, and why. His chapter provides an introduction to the key themes and features of this genre, and places its emergence in the broader context of the historical development of neo-Stalinism in the late-Soviet period. He also compares neo-Stalinist literature to Holocaust denial literature, finding both commonalities and important differences. Moreover, he tracks the fates of the leading neo-Stalinist authors in the post-Crimean period, finding that some of them swapped their pens for guns and went to fight in the Donbas; others still have fallen from grace and now face charges of extremism, while the general trend is towards the emergence of a new "right-wing" version of Stalinism in the new political context.[13]

One of this book's contributions to memory studies concerns the proliferation of new groups, agents, narratives and symbols, reflecting

the volatility, fluidity, and heterogeneity of the memory landscapes in the region. The essays in **Part III: New Agents and Communities of Memory** identify and discuss a selection of new memory actors and communities. We approach memory politics in post-Soviet transitional societies not only as a matter of a top-down policy of nation building and state-led identity construction, but also as a bottom-up process in which new groups, communities of memory, and commemorative agents enter public politics claiming recognition of their particular narratives, and sometimes even representation of their group interests in politics and various forms of compensation. In post-Soviet societies, these grassroots initiatives can be captured, or partially captured, by the state (see Chap. 11). At the same time, pluralization has set certain limits on the state's capacity to impose a single narrative of the past (see Chap. 5). In fact, it would be misleading to draw neat divisions between these top-down and bottom-up processes. As several of the chapters show, private, state, and social processes of remembering are deeply intertwined. In this sense our volume responds to Mischa Gabowitsch's call for post-Soviet memory studies to move beyond the binaries that have tended to structure the field to date (Gabowitsch 2015).

The chapters in Part III address three different communities of memory constituted in the post-Soviet decades: the Soviet Afghan War veterans in Belarus (Chap. 8); the "children of war" in Russia (Chap. 9); and former Ostarbeiters (forced labor workers) in Ukraine (Chap. 10). All three communities of memory are essentially transnational—associations of Afghan war veterans, "children of war," and former forced labor workers exist in Ukraine, Russia, and Belarus alike. However, we can also observe significant differences in their political strategies and forms of interaction with the state, depending on the specificities of the political regimes and nation-building processes in these three countries.

Felix Ackermann approaches the role of the Afghan war veterans in renegotiating Belarusian war memory from a special angle, via a study of two post-Soviet war memorials erected on the veterans' initiative and connecting the memories of the two wars. While the Island of Tears memorial created in the mid-1990s in central Minsk reframed the recent Soviet past as national trauma and introduced Christian symbolic language into urban space, the "Stalin Line" memorial, opened on the western outskirts of the city ten years later, reintroduced the figure of Stalin and the narrative of the Great Victory, claiming such values as patriotism and heroism for the public education of Belarusian citizens.

The two memorials illustrate the evolution of the national commemorative culture in line with the Belarusian political regime's sliding towards authoritarianism, and the virtual continuity between the Great Victory of 1945 and the Soviet war in Afghanistan.

Tatiana Zhurzhenko's chapter explores another community of memory which constitutes itself in terms of a generation: the "children of war" in Russia. While the last Soviet war veterans are passing away, those who experienced World War II as children and adolescents now feature as the only living bearers of the memory of this epochal event. At the same time, the "children of war" generation is the most truly Soviet generation as far as their mentality is concerned. Moreover, having entered their "twilight years" in the new capitalist Russia they represent the troubled link between Soviet and post-Soviet history in a society where traditional values of respect for the elderly are in decay. By bringing together issues of generational memory, social justice and Russia's welfare state, the chapter analyzes grassroots social initiatives and strategies of the political elites in Russia aimed at the institutionalization of a special status for the "children of war."

Finally in Part III, Gelinada Grinchenko recounts the history of the emergence of another "community of memory," this time in Ukraine: the Ostarbeiters or "Eastern workers," civilians mobilized for labor purposes in the Third Reich during the war. She shows how the stories of the Ostarbeiters, which were largely silenced during the Soviet period for their dissonance with the Soviet war myth, were recovered with the arrival of Ukrainian state independence in 1991 and incorporated into new national narratives of Ukrainian victimhood. In a parallel move, Grinchenko demonstrates how Ostarbeiters as a social group were reconstituted through post-Cold War restitution politics when the German government finally acknowledged moral responsibility for forced labor as a crime of the Nazi regime and started issuing moral compensation for its victims.

Part IV: Old/New Narratives and Myths focuses on two elements that are fundamental to the creation of meaning: the narratives that shape identities, and the myths spun around these narratives. In this section, we explore different incarnations of narratives and myths of the war, past, present, and emerging, and trace their development over time.

Julie Fedor's chapter examines new Russian authoritarian kinship narratives in which the Red Army soldier is reframed as a mythical progenitor and a shared forefather for all the peoples of post-Soviet space.

This reframing is used to connect the official cult of the Great Victory and private family memories of loss and suffering, and also to construct the "Russian world" as a space that is saturated and sanctified by the Red Army's blood.

Andrii Portnov reflects on the rivalry and interplay between two prominent narratives of the war in Ukraine: the (post-)Soviet and the nationalist narratives. While these narratives are in most respects diametrically opposed, they resemble each other in one particular aspect: both of them marginalize the memory of the Holocaust and the tragic fate of the Jewish population in Ukraine. Portnov's chapter, which traces developments from the early 1990s through to the present, can serve as an introduction for all those interested in the issue of the Holocaust in Ukraine. It offers a survey of public narratives at various levels, from the official political discourse and school history books to museums and memorials. The author shows not only where Jewish and Ukrainian narratives of World War II clash, but also where reconciliation is possible.

Simon Lewis's chapter brings together trauma theory and post-colonial theory in his study of the Soviet myth of Belarus as the "Partisan Republic," which he reads as both displaced trauma and colonial discourse. He explores a diverse range of Soviet and post-Soviet Belarusian narratives of the war in fiction, film, art, and popular culture. He shows that post-Soviet cultural production in Belarus consists of diverse narratives of Belarusian partisanhood that compete with each other to rewrite the Soviet narrative, as well as with the Lukashenka regime's resurrection of Soviet myths about the war.

Finally, **Part V: Local Cases** zooms in on three examples that bring together the local, national, and transnational dimensions: Sevastopol, Narva, and Karelia.

Ewa Ochman's work (2009) has highlighted the special potential that commemorative practices have at the local level when it comes to challenging top-down nationalizing narratives of the past. In addition, they can also serve as a laboratory for new grassroots initiatives which later become appropriated at the national level (as Chap. 11 on the Immortal Regiment initiative born in Tomsk also shows). The three chapters in this section explore the complex interactions between top-down memory projects, both national and supranational, and local memory actors. Adding to the complexity of multi-scalar memory politics, all three cases share a border location. Even if not openly contested by neighboring states as is Sevastopol, both Estonian Narva and Karelia bordering

with Finland are marginal geographic locations where the core of the new Russian identity has been renegotiated in contestation with various "others."

Judy Brown's chapter explores the war mythologies linked to the city of Sevastopol, and the ways that these have been used in the disputes over the city's ownership in the post-Soviet period. Based on the author's fieldwork in the city, the chapter shows how the city's local commemorative infrastructure, relying on grassroots enthusiasm, has served to promote a Russian imperial identity for Sevastopol's inhabitants, drawing heavily on the Soviet myth of the "hero-city." A snapshot of the city indulged in neurotic obsession with its "glorious past" just a couple of years before the Russian annexation helps us to better understand the dramatic events of 2014.

Elena Nikiforova presents another urban memoryscape: that of Narva, which lies on the border dividing Russia and the European Union (Estonia), and the Russian and Estonian national memory cultures. While Narva is part of Estonia and thus in geographic terms falls outside our region, we have included this chapter because it deals with the Russian war memory which overlaps national and even geopolitical borders, as this chapter emphatically shows.

Finally, Aleksandr Antoshchenko, Valentina V. Volokhova, and Irina S. Shtykova explore the distinctive memorial landscape of Karelia and the way that the history of the Finnish past and war memories are negotiated here. This region experienced the so-called "Winter War," which began with the Soviet offensive on Finland on 30 November 1939. The brutal fighting ended with the annexation of Finnish territories on the Karelian isthmus and in Northern Ladoga region in 1940. The authors show how the official memory of the Great Patriotic War influenced the remembering (or rather, the forgetting) of the Winter War and its victims. They also demonstrate how the end of the Cold War and the break with the Soviet past in the early 1990s affected the monumental memorialization of World War II in this border region.

Coda: From Communicative to Cultural Memory

We opened this introductory essay with a story about the resurrection of a World War II tank in East Ukraine. In concluding, let us return briefly to the tank-turned-monument—that quintessentially Soviet memorial that illustrates the ubiquity of this particular war memory in everyday life.

The memorial tank was one of the key symbols of the Soviet Victory myth. Soviet tanks, taken from where they stood once the fighting was over, and then mounted on plinths, were among the first improvised celebratory war memorials to spring up over Eastern Europe. In the early post-war years, one such tank even stood in the center of Vienna as part of the Soviet war memorial at Schwarzenbergplatz. The tank-turned-monument carried multiple messages. It served as a material reminder of sacrifice, but also of power; as a memorial to the dead of the past, but also a warning for the future to the populations living in the landscapes dotted by these tanks. The standard issue tank was an ideal symbol for the new Soviet Victory myth. An empire that had terrorized its own citizens in the 1930s and then suffered catastrophic loss during World War II needed a single, monolithic legitimizing narrative, and it manufactured one in the myth of the collective heroic Victory.

After the communist bloc collapsed, these memorial tanks were generally removed or desacralized in Central Eastern Europe.[14] But in our region, these monuments, like the myth of the Great Patriotic War more broadly, retain residual symbolic power. The communist authorities' symbolic investment in the cult of the Great Patriotic War is still reflected today in the problem of the past's perceived "emptiness" without the comfort of the Victory myth—a problem that is specific to post-Soviet space.

While the Soviet Victory myth aimed to homogenize and dichotomize, a closer look uncovers a kaleidoscopic view on the fragments of this myth as they are transformed in their local contexts. If we zoom in on the Estonian border town of Narva today, as Elena Nikiforova does in Chap. 15, we see young couples visiting the local Soviet tank-monument for wedding photos and children decorating the tank with flowers. Here, the tank memorial has been normalized, perhaps perversely, as a symbol of peace.

Meanwhile, in the midst of a new war in Ukraine, new tank memorials have appeared. In the grounds of the national World War II museum in Kyiv, a T-64BV tank, seized by Ukrainian forces in the Donbas in June 2014 and repainted in the colors of the Ukrainian flag, is now displayed as material evidence of the Russian military presence in Ukraine.

And yet if we had to choose a tank-monument that best exemplifies the current moment, we might instead offer up the suggestive example of the tank-monument that was erected in 2010 in Belgorod, in front of the new Museum of Military Glory at the Prokhorovka battlefield. This

sculptural composition is a life-size rendering of five tanks—two Soviet T-34s and three German "Tigers." Titled "The Ramming", the monument presents the tanks suspended in time, piled up at the moment of the Soviet tanks' deliberate suicide charge.[15] With its depiction of the suicidal *podvig*, the monument reproduces a traditional Soviet motif of heroic self-sacrifice. But what is especially interesting about this new memorial is the departure it represents. Unlike the conventional Soviet tank-monument, this is not a real tank but its monumental sculpture; not a military artifact, but a meta-monument—a pure symbol. In this sense, it illustrates the transition from communicative to cultural memory: the re-codification, the re-mythologization of World War II, as the participants of that war—be they live veterans, or real tanks that participated in real battles—depart. In a way, the monument is an allegory of this transition, as we move into the uncertain future of memory in the absence of witnesses.

Notes

1. On the rush to collect and archive the memories of the last veterans, see also Lassila (2013).
2. The book is one of several collective publications in East European Memory Studies produced by the *Memory at War* project: *Remembering Katyn* (Polity 2012); *Memory, Conflict and New Media: Web Wars in Post-Socialist States* (Routledge 2013); *Memory and Theory in Eastern Europe* (Palgrave 2013); *Martyrdom and Memory* (a special issue of the *Journal of Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society*) (2015); and *Contested Interpretations of the Past in Polish, Russian, and Ukrainian Film: Screen as Battlefield* (Brill 2016). *Memory at War* has also resulted in numerous journal articles, and several single-author books, including: Alexander Etkind, *Warped Mourning: Stories of the Dead in the Land of the Unburied* (Stanford University Press 2013); Tanya Zaharchenko, *Where Currents Meet: Frontiers in Post-Soviet Fiction of Kharkiv*, Ukraine (Central European University Press 2016); Uilleam Blacker, *Memory, Forgetting and the Legacy of Post-1945 Displacement in Russia and Eastern Europe* (forthcoming Routledge 2017)—with several more in the pipeline.
3. This is why we saw fit to include a chapter on Russian memory narratives operating in the Estonian city of Narva. The memory project of the "Russian world" is one that is self-consciously aimed at spreading across current national borders, and the case of Narva offers a vivid example of the enduring hold that the Russian/Soviet narrative of the war has in the imagination of the Russian diaspora in post-Soviet space.

4. In April 2016 school children taking part in the Memorial Society's history essay contest were attacked by nationalists, some of whom were dressed in World War II soldiers' uniforms and playing accordions, and called "fascists"; the police stood by and did not intervene; see Pavlova (2016).
5. See for example the statement by the recently appointed Russian human rights ombudsman Tat'iana Moskal'kova that "human rights" has now become a façade for fascism (cited Obukhov 2016).
6. Etkind commented that:
   [Historical] re-enactors must, they are simply obligated to understand the difference between past and present. They're playing at a strange past now. One must understand the difference between play and reality. Between dream and reality. Let them dream and play at their kindergarten. Let reconstruction stay in its place. When all this starts to get confused and mixed up and to become interchangeable, then this is really dangerous.
   The refusal to see the difference between [past and] present is a frightening thing. A healthy memory must recognize these differences, [it must] mourn for the past but understand that one can't return to the past. The refusal to recognize this difference, the belief that the past is now returning—this is a pathology. Reconstruction which swallows up the present can bring nothing positive. (cited in Zemtsov 2014)
7. The 2016 Night Wolves show was titled "Ark of Salvation," and featured pyrotechnics, motorbike stunts, and long turgid monologues on historical themes. Prokhanov commented on the show: "There's a lot of fire here, light, music, power, dance. Everything that happens in church is here. In the church that the 'Surgeon' [the head of the Night Wolves] has built, a new reality is being created. Because this 'Fifth Empire' is our Russia today. Our ancient imperial consciousness is being awakened in the young people who watch this show. In this sense the 'Surgeon' is a magician, a wizard, a magus!" (cited *Meduza* 2016).
8. This is how it was generally reported in the media; Putin's exact words (responding to a question from Night Wolves' head "The Surgeon" as to whether Victory would have been possible had Ukraine and Russia been divided at the time) were:
   Now with regard to our relations with Ukraine. I'll permit myself not to agree with what you said just now, that had we not been divided, we would have lost the war. We would have won anyhow, because we are a country of winners. And more than that, there's a definite basis for what I've just said. If we look at the statistics from the World War II period, then it becomes clear that … the greatest losses in the Great Patriotic War were sustained precisely by the RSFSR—over 70% of losses. This

means that the war was won—I don't want to offend anybody, but on the whole, at the expense of resources, human and industrial, resources of the Russian Federation. These are historical facts. This is all in the documents. This by no means detracts from the significance that was played [sic] in the shared victory by the republics of the former Soviet Union. But definitely, when we were together, we represented a much more powerful force.

The video of this exchange is available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B1yiaQ-Z-84.

9. On the Flowers of the Great Victory project see further the *Molodezh' Belarusi* website: http://brsm.by/projects/tsvety-velikoj-pobedy/. The description here explains that the colors of the apple flower "embody the unbroken bond between generations and sincere gratitude for the hero-warriors who gave their children and grandchildren the Great Victory, the opportunity to live, toil, and raise children in peace, and also, as in the unforgettable May of 1945, to rejoice sincerely in the blossoming gardens that have been a symbol of the new peaceful victories of sovereign Belarus."
10. On the history of the deliberate creation of the notion of an "East Slavic" language branch and its political uses, see Kamusella (2008). See also Kulyk's discussion of the East Slavic/Soviet narrative which posits that Ukraine, Russia, and Belarus comprise a single entity (Kulyk 2013).
11. This is a trend that has been in place for some years now. Militant pro-Kremlin youth organizations such as Nashi rooted their legitimacy in historical issues, using a sacralized version of the history of World War II to justify threats of street violence in the wake of the 2004 Orange Revolution in Ukraine, for example (see Horvath 2013). The state-manufactured NGO World without Nazism movement was created in 2010, and in 2013 the Russian state identified neo-Nazism as "the major challenge of the 21st century," to cite the title of an international conference organized on this theme in Washington under Russian leadership ("Zasedanie" 2013).
12. Blogger Denis Luzgin was charged for reposting an article that included the statement that "the communists and Germany jointly attacked Poland, unleashing World War II, that is communism and Nazism were honest collaborators." The Russian Supreme Court upheld the ruling that this phrase contradicted "the facts established by the Nuremberg tribunal." See further "Zaiavlenie" (2016).
13. On the post-Soviet fates of Stalin as symbol in the Belarusian context, see Chapter. 8, which explores the new "Stalin Line" outdoor museum near Minsk with its drive to link Stalin to leisure and entertainment, and the Belarusian debates over the figure of Stalin.

14. In Prague, it has now become a tradition for the local Soviet tank to be painted pink and used to make political and artistic statements of various kinds; in Nowa Huta in Poland, the local tank has come to be accepted by residents as an intrinsic element of the urban landscape (Pozniak 2014).
15. The five-meter high monument is designed to enable the visitor to step inside it so as to view another component of the composition, a human figure: the "despairing [*obezumevshii*] German soldier," based on a famous 1943 photograph, but "deliberately aged so as to fit in with the general idea of the sculptural composition"; see "Muzei boevoi slavy" (2015) and Gubina (2010). In a comment on another monument erected at the site in 2015 by the same sculptors, the Sogoian brothers, one of them described their aim as "showing how in battle, people and hardware became a united whole and strove for a shared aim"—an observation that perhaps also helps to explain the curiously "alive" nature of the Soviet tank (cited in Knorre-Dmitrieva 2015). The tanks in a recent cinematic depiction of the Prokhorovka tank battle, Shakhnazarov's *White Tiger* (2012), also resemble living beings, incidentally.

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PART I

Memories of World War II and Nation-Building

CHAPTER 2

Political Uses of the Great Patriotic War in Post-Soviet Russia from Yeltsin to Putin

Olga Malinova

After the collapse of the USSR all the former Soviet republics faced the problem of reconstructing their national identities within the new geographical and symbolic boundaries and adapting the established narratives of their collective pasts to the new political context. In the case of the Russian Federation, this task has been particularly complicated due to the special and ambiguous position of the Russian republic within the USSR. On the one hand, Russians played a dominant role in the Soviet system, and Russian was the Soviet lingua franca, for example; but there were also ways in which the Soviet modernization project effectively prevented the development of a strong Russian national identity. As Geoffrey Hosking (2006) put it, "Russians were the state-bearers of the Soviet Union, but they were also rendered anonymous by it" (405), and "their" republic, the RSFSR, which lacked the republican-level structures granted to the other Soviet republics, was something of an anomaly "in a country where ethnic identity had become paramount" (377).

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Furthermore, as the successor to the historical core of the former tsarist empire, the RSFSR did not possess a "national" identity similar to other Soviet republics where a specific form of nation building compatible with the communist ideology was encouraged by the Soviet "affirmative empire" (Martin 2001). Much like the English identity, the Russian one had historically tended to be associated with the whole country rather than with a specific part, and dominant historical narratives confirmed this vision. The problem was further compounded after the collapse of the USSR in 1991, when the Russian Federation had to create a substantially new identity. While Russian history provided a large stock of symbolic resources that could potentially be used for building a new national identity, this legacy was ideologically loaded and hence highly contested. Both the pre-revolutionary imperial narratives and the dissident anti-Soviet counter-narratives were deeply controversial, sparking fierce political conflicts and tending to divide society rather than foster greater coherence.

The fact that the Russian Federation declared itself the legal successor to the USSR made the demarcation between "the Russian" and "the Soviet" a difficult challenge for the political elites (Morozov 2009; Kaspe 2012). Initially, an attempt was made to define a new Russian democratic identity in opposition to the Soviet "totalitarian" past. This attempt failed, and the governing political elite subsequently embarked on a selective adoption of the Soviet legacy, avoiding its critical reassessment. The more uncompromising critics of this policy have labeled it "re-Stalinization." A more accurate label has been suggested by Ilya Kalinin, who has dubbed this policy one of "nostalgic modernization" aimed at "the positive recording of nostalgia for the Soviet past into a new form of Russian patriotism, for which 'the Soviet' lacks any historical specificity, but is rather seen as part of a broadly conceived and comically heterogeneous cultural legacy" (2011: 157).

Last but not least, Russia does not have an external Significant Other who could be blamed for the current political troubles in the same way that other post-communist countries are able to blame Moscow. Externalizing communism as an alien regime imposed on their nations from outside, the political elites of the former communist countries managed to mobilize their populations around the project of "returning to Europe." In Russia, the awareness that the destructive Soviet regime was a homegrown phenomenon made building a positive collective self-image somewhat problematic. Those attempts that have been made to

find an external scapegoat for the shape of Russia's twentieth century tend to be based on conspiracy theories and a reluctance to confront the past honestly and openly.

Given these difficulties, and in the absence of a commonly accepted grand narrative of the past, the memory of the Great Patriotic War has proven to be the most "politically usable" element of Russia's past. First, the commemorative cult of the Great Patriotic War was effectively institutionalized during the late-Soviet period and internalized by the majority of the population via multiple channels of socialization (such as education, the media, and popular culture). Second, this narrative has consistently enjoyed a high level of social acceptance and has rarely been subjected to criticism. Third, the memory of the war is versatile and capable of fitting various cultural frames, ranging from "heroic sacrifice," "national glory," "defense of freedom," and "salvation of civilization" to "mass suffering," "unrecoverable losses" and "national victimhood." Consequently, it is hardly surprising that the memory of the war has become the cornerstone of official history politics in post-Soviet Russia.

The adaptation of the Soviet commemorative cult of the Great Patriotic War to the Russian nation-building agenda did, however, require a rearrangement of the established official Soviet discourses and practices of commemoration. The methods and strategies adopted by the Russian ruling elite in this connection have evolved throughout the post-Soviet period. In the early 1990s the official symbolic policy was aimed at legitimizing the ongoing reforms as the necessary dismantling of the old "totalitarian" order. The contrast between the new, "democratic" and the old, "totalitarian"/"autocratic" Russia was the central idea of the official narrative of the national past. In this context, the victory in the war was re-narrated as a great feat of the people that was achieved not *due* to the Communist leadership, but *in spite* of it. It became a story of everyday heroism and the double victimhood of the people at the hands of the Nazi and Soviet regimes alike. Quite soon, however, the radical reassessment of the Soviet past in the midst of the troubled transition turned out to be politically costly because it was too painful for the national self-esteem. As a result, from the mid-1990s some elements of Soviet symbolic policy, in particular commemorative practices associated with the war, were partially "rehabilitated."

In the 2000s the official narrative of the national past underwent a substantial change. The idea of the contrast between the "old" and the "new" Russia gave way to the concept of the "thousand-year-long"

Russia, focused on its development as a "great power." The critical attitude to the Soviet past was replaced by its selective appropriation. The Great Patriotic War became the culminating point of the new concept of Russian history, but the emphasis of the official discourse now shifted to reincorporate the idea of *the great state* (its Communist nature now largely left unmentioned). The idea of double victimhood virtually disappeared from the official discourse, and the theme of the heroism of the Russian people who won a triumphant victory, brought freedom to half of Europe, and made the USSR a world superpower, became more salient.

Since the 2000s the triumphalist narrative of the Great Patriotic War became the main pillar of the post-Soviet-Russian identity. This made it particularly vulnerable to challenges posed by alternative interpretations of the events of World War II that focused on the unseemly aspects of Soviet policy (such as the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, the Yalta agreements, or the repressions directed against "disloyal" groups in the liberated territories). As a result, since the mid-2000s Russia has been perpetually involved in "memory wars" with other East European and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries whose national narratives relied upon anti-triumphalist versions of the history of World War II. Later, in the context of the international conflict caused by the annexation of Crimea in March 2014 and Russia's de facto involvement in the military conflict in East Ukraine, the triumphalist narrative of the Great Patriotic War acquired a new dimension: it came to be used as a marker of post-Soviet imperialist identity and became closely associated with pro-Putin "patriotic" attitudes. As soon as this took place, both heroism and suffering were overshadowed by another theme: the notion of taking pride in a glorious past that raises national self-esteem in the present.

In this chapter I examine the political uses of the Great Patriotic War in post-Soviet Russia as part of the official policy aimed at the (re)construction of Russian national identity.[1] A "usable past" has little to do with historiography; rather, it is "an invention or at least a retrospective reconstruction to serve the needs of the present" (Olick 2007: 19). The need for "creating a usable past" was first articulated in 1918 by the US literary critic Van Wyck Brooks who argued that the young American culture lacked shared historical references. Similarly to the USA one century ago but for different reasons, contemporary Russia also suffers from the incoherence of its national historical narrative; but unlike its

counterparts in the USA, the ruling elite in Russia considers the construction of a "usable past" one of its political tasks. My understanding of the *political use of history* corresponds with the definition proposed by Markku Kangaspuro (2011), who argues that this notion refers to the "use of history as an instrument of political argumentation" or to the "attempts to attain power over history in the sense of hegemony of a particular interpretation" (295).

Memory politics in post-Soviet Russia is an object of growing academic interest, not least due to recent heated public battles over the interpretation of the Soviet past. Many authors have analyzed Putin-era memory politics (Ferretti 2004; Zvereva 2004; Wertsch 2008; Malinova 2009; Miller 2009, 2012b; Kangaspuro 2011; Torbakov 2012). According to Aleksei Miller, it is during the Putin era that Russia has developed traits of a full-fledged history policy, in other words, that a whole raft of methods has been assimilated aimed at "the use of the administrative and finance resources of the state in the sphere of history and memory politics in the interests of the governing party" (Miller 2012a: 19). The Yeltsin era has received less attention in the academic literature (Zubkova and Kupriianov 1999; Smith 2002; Merridale 2003; Koposov 2011; Gill 2012). Drawing on both this secondary literature and my own research, I set out here to compare the Yeltsin and Putin periods with a view to tracing continuity and change in Russian memory politics in the post-Soviet decades to date.

Contributing to the existing body of literature, this chapter focuses on political uses of the war memory by the governing political elite, that is, by those who speak on behalf of the state or who have sufficient resources to influence the official symbolic policy. The governing elite is represented first of all by politicians and top state officials, leaders of the "party of power" (currently United Russia, previously Russia's Choice (1993–1995), Russia is Our Home (1995–1999) and Unity (1999–2001)). It also includes functionaries of the Presidential Administration and the party apparatus, political advisers, and some journalists and historians close to the regime who are engaged in decision making in a non-public or semi-public format. In my understanding, these actors promote particular interpretations of the collective past in the course of pursuing political goals such as legitimization of power, justification of political decisions, mobilization of electoral support and reinforcement of social cohesion (cf. Malinova 2011). A variety of political and social actors are usually involved in interpreting the past at different societal levels, but

the state has exceptional resources for the enforcement of a particular version of the past. In Russia's political system, decision making on issues of symbolic politics is very much in the hands of the president and his administration, and therefore in this chapter I mainly focus on presidential speeches and decrees. By analyzing political speeches[2] and media coverage of commemorative ceremonies I shall identify the main frames of representation of the war in Russian official discourse from Boris Yeltsin to Vladimir Putin and Dmitrii Medvedev, revealing links between the political use of history, on the one hand, and Russia's domestic and foreign policy, on the other. The following two sections address political uses of the Great Patriotic War in the 1990s and 2000s respectively.

The Yeltsin Era: Abandoning the Soviet Past, Searching for a New Consensus

In the early 1990s the interpretation of the past in the public rhetoric of the new Russian leadership served first of all to legitimize the radical transformation of the Soviet regime which had been denounced as "totalitarian." The triumph of the democratic forces in August 1991 seemed to have opened up the opportunity to turn Russia into a prosperous democratic country with a market economy. Yeltsin's reforms, introduced in 1992, were supposed to create the Western-style institutions necessary to embark on the road to "civilized," "liberal capitalism." This final choice in favor of the Western economic and political model was paradoxically imagined in quasi-Marxist terms as a revolutionary leap forward, a transition from failed socialism to a new historical formation. This radical political agenda required a total rejection of Soviet ideology and values. Certainly, the collective memory of the previous seventy years could not be obliterated, but it had to be reevaluated and reframed. The treatment of the two major events of Soviet history—the Great October Revolution and the Great Patriotic War—demonstrates two different ways of coping with the past in the 1990s. While the October Revolution became a bone of contention between the liberals and the Communists, the victory of 1945 turned out to be the only undisputed positive achievement of the Soviet era.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the October Revolution became an object of radical reassessment. Previously enshrined as the triumph of the Communist idea, a moment of political and social

emancipation, the October Revolution was now redefined as a catastrophe that interrupted Russia's gradual but steady development along the "normal" European path. As Boris Yeltsin put it, "the destructive radicalism" that stipulated "a disruption from February to October … explains the loss of many achievements in the sphere of culture, economy, law, and public development as a result of the break with the old order" (Yeltsin 1996).

The reinterpretation of the October Revolution can be found not only in the rhetoric of the president, but also in the discourse of the left-patriotic opposition. The Russian Communists, reorganized after the failed August 1991 coup, started to see the "Great October Revolution" not so much as the victory of the working class, but rather as the triumph of the *national* spirit. In their new rhetoric, the Soviet system now began to appear as a realization of genuine *Russian* principles—collectivism in various forms, drawing on concepts from Eastern Orthodox theology and nineteenth-century Slavophile thought and the notion that Russia was destined to be a Great Power. In short, while the new Russian liberal leadership denied the October Revolution any positive meaning and considered it a tragic rather than glorious event, the Communist opposition declared it a substantive element of national identity. In defending the October Revolution and Soviet values as manifestations of national identity, the Communists drew on the legacy of Soviet commemorative culture, institutionalized in collective rituals, museums, texts, films, songs, and even jokes. The interpretation of this historical event became an object of fierce symbolic struggle that manifested itself every year in the lead-up to 7 November, the former Day of the October Revolution. This date remained a public holiday till 2004, albeit from 1996 under a new title, as the "Day of Reconciliation and Accord."

The Great Patriotic War stands in obvious contrast to the highly controversial October Revolution. No significant political force in Russia has ever expressed any doubts about either the fundamentally positive meaning of the victory in the war, or about its significance for the collective identity. This is not to say, of course, that the official Soviet narrative of the war has never been criticized and contested. The new awareness that perestroika had brought about the horrors of state terror and the scale of the people's tragedy posed a serious challenge to the Soviet narrative of World War II. Political actors had to take this challenge into consideration even if they were not going to address it explicitly.

In the first half of the 1990s the new Russian ruling elite sought to reframe the memory of the war according to the new vision of Russia as a democratic European nation. This politics was manifested in the revision of the official commemoration rituals, in the public rhetoric employed by President Yeltsin, and in the quest for new national symbols. The victory over Nazism was represented as a heroic achievement carried out by the people (*narod*) in contrast to the official Soviet narrative which had emphasized the role of the state and the Communist Party. The new narrative partly relied on the political frames of the Thaw era, when the name of Stalin had been banned from public use and the heroism of the ordinary people as well as their mass suffering has been brought to the fore (Koposov 2011: 98–100). But unlike the Thaw-era narratives, the post-Soviet interpretations linked the people's suffering not only to Nazi atrocities, but also to the inhumanity of the Soviet regime that strove for victory at any price. During the Thaw Stalinist repressions were considered regrettable "excesses" (*otdel'nye peregiby*) and the victory in the war served as the final vindication of the Soviet system. It is hardly surprising that soon after Khrushchev's Secret Speech in 1956 the theme of repressions vanished from the rhetoric of the Soviet leaders (Koposov 2011: 99–100). It was the critical reassessment of the "Soviet experiment" in the early 1990s that opened the way for foregrounding the theme of double victimhood—caused by both Hitler and Stalin—in the official narrative of the war. The recognition of the inhumane character of the Soviet regime gave a new inflection to the theme of heroism: the feat of the Soviet people was even greater in light of the fact that victory was achieved not *due* to the Communist leadership, but *in spite* of the Stalinist repressions.

This reframing of the Great Patriotic War can be traced out by examining the evolution of the official Victory Day celebrations during the Yeltsin era. There is a common misconception that annual military parades were held on Red Square on 9 May during the late Soviet period. Annual military parades were in fact held during this period on 7 November, marking the anniversary of the October Revolution. After the Victory parade held in June 1945 there were no Victory Day parades until 1965, and from 1965 these were only staged once every five years. The practice of staging an annual Victory Day parade is actually a post-Soviet tradition, invented in the mid-1990s. But prior to its invention, post-Soviet Russian ruling elites did experiment with various commemorative formats.

In 1992, when, for the first time, Victory Day was celebrated in the new Russia, there was no special official ceremony. Yeltsin simply laid flowers at the Grave of the Unknown Soldier near the Kremlin wall before joining war veterans for informal celebrations in Gorky Park. As early as the following year, however, on 9 May 1993, the Russian President took part in the opening ceremony of the new war memorial complex at Poklonnaia Hill. The official festivities were thus relocated from Red Square to a new place. The idea of constructing the new memorial actually goes back to the 1950s; Poklonnaia Hill, in the west of Moscow, was chosen for its vast space and beautiful view as well as for symbolic reasons (according to legend, it was on this hill that Napoleon waited in vain for the city delegation to bring him the key to the Russian capital in 1812). The construction of the memorial started in 1983–1984 and was only completed in 1995 due to the political turbulence and economic crisis. In 1993 (and then again in 1994) the official celebration of Victory Day was staged as an opening ceremony to unveil particular sections of the new memorial. Thus, for the first time since 1945, the Victory Day ceremony took place at a new memorial site that had no connotations with the Soviet tradition, but instead was associated with the glorious history of Russian arms.

This attempt to change the Soviet style of the Victory Day celebrations coincided with a growing conflict between the President and the Supreme Soviet that culminated in a violent confrontation in October 1993. The lack of a basic political consensus among the governing elite made consolidation of the new commemorative tradition impossible. In 1993 the leaders of the anti-Yeltsin Supreme Soviet were not even granted access to the official podium during the Victory Day celebrations on Poklonnaia Hill (Zaiavlenie 1993; see also Smith 2002: 87–89). Communist and patriotic organizations arranged their own alternative celebrations of Victory Day in the center of Moscow, posing a difficult dilemma for the war veterans, who were forced to take sides on this issue. Thus, the invention of a new tradition was impeded by an open political conflict. According to Kathleen Smith, the decision to transfer the official celebrations to Poklonnaia Hill was a mistake because it effectively meant surrendering the center of Moscow, with its strong established symbolic connotations of power and authority, to the Communist opposition (Smith 2002: 89). In 1995, when the 50th anniversary of the Victory was celebrated, the authorities partially reversed this decision, moving the historical part of the parade (including the veterans' march)

to Red Square, while leaving the "modern" part of it (the demonstration of military hardware) on Poklonnaia Hill.

The Yeltsin-era invention of new commemorative traditions also involved widening the geography of the official commemorative ceremonies beyond the two capitals, Moscow and St Petersburg. During his first presidential term Yeltsin participated in jubilee celebrations marking the end of the Leningrad Blockade (January 1994) and the liberation of Murmansk in the Soviet Arctic (October 1994). In the wake of the 1996 presidential elections, in what appears to have been a last-minute improvised gesture, Yeltsin flew to Volgograd (formerly Stalingrad) immediately after the parade on Red Square in order to welcome local Soviet war veterans on Mamaev Hill. This symbolic gesture was unprecedented—no Soviet leader had ever left the capital city on Victory Day. Another instance of reframing the memory of the war was the commemoration of Marshal Georgii Zhukov. A prominent Soviet military commander who had led the decisive operations of the war, including the defense of Moscow and Leningrad and the seizure of Berlin, Zhukov had fallen into disfavor after the war. The 1957 October plenum of the CPSU Central Committee accused him of "violating Leninist principles" and of the "exorbitant glorification" of his personal role in the war. Despite this, Zhukov continued to enjoy popularity among war veterans; his memoirs, published in 1969, were widely considered an important source of "the truth" about World War II. After coming to power Yeltsin ordered the construction of a monument to Zhukov in the center of Moscow and established an order and a medal in his honor. These symbolic acts were meant to "rehabilitate" the disgraced marshal who was now in a sense reconstituted as a "victim" of the late Stalinist regime and integrated into the glorious military history of Russia. Some observers, however, saw the glorification of Zhukov as a disturbing sign of nostalgia for an "iron hand" and a kind of surrogate for Stalin: "it was hard to get rid of the impression that … Zhukov is just a substitute for somebody else; the Marshal acts for the Generalissimus" (Sokolov 1995). An adherent of the "victory at any cost" strategy and a commander responsible for the deaths of millions of soldiers, Zhukov was a poor fit for the new anti-Stalinist narrative (Polianovskii 1995; Sokolov 1995).

The 50th anniversary of the victory over Nazi Germany in 1995, during which a number of previously rejected Soviet symbols were reincorporated into the official ceremonies, marked a new stage in the evolution of Russian symbolic policy. During the lavish celebrations on

Red Square, the high officials of the new Russian state returned to the top of the Lenin Mausoleum for the first time since 1990. Moreover, the Soviet red banner was "rehabilitated" as the "Banner of Victory" and used during the official ceremony alongside the official tricolor flag. This symbolic gesture was perceived by many as a return of "patriotism which had previously fallen victim to profanation and falsehood" (Yashmanov 1996). Yeltsin publicly rejected accusations that the Russian authorities were thereby supporting public nostalgia for the Soviet order. In his interview with ORT TV channel he objected:

> I disagree. I categorically disagree! This is simply primitive reasoning, in my view. When Alexander Nevsky led the people to victory at Chudskoe Lake, what kind of regime were they living under? Or how about Dmitry Donskoi's victory… Or the smashing of Napoleon? The regime at the time was based on serfdom. So does that mean that serfdom was the decisive factor in the victory of our people and our country? It's exactly the same situation today. No, the decisive factor was not the regime, but the people, our people, its character, its patriotism, its love for the Motherland, its self-sacrifice…. The people was the decisive factor. And this victory belongs to the people. And so does the holiday. (Yeltsin 1995b)

Yeltsin had good reasons for instrumentalizing the 50th jubilee of the victory. This anniversary coincided with the escalation of conflicts between the government and the Communist opposition in the wake of the 1995 parliamentary elections and the height of the military campaign in Chechnya. Both factors hampered a demonstration of unity befitting the solemn occasion. On 9 May 1995 the alternative march from Belorusskii railway station to Lubianka Square organized by the opposition manifested mass support for the Soviet memory of the war and an appeal for the restoration of the USSR (Krasnikov 1995). It had become clear that any radical critique of the Soviet past would split Russian society and alienate a large portion of the electorate.

After regaining office in 1996, President Yeltsin did not follow the advice of those political allies who recommended that he "proclaim the misanthropic Bolshevist ideology illegal" (Yakovlev 1996). In 1996, a year before the 80th anniversary of the October Revolution, Yeltsin issued a decree announcing 7 November "The Day of Reconciliation and Accord." This gesture, however, was half-hearted and did not bring any new official rituals of commemoration (Malinova 2015: 56–61). It failed

in its attempt to reconcile the conflicting political camps (Smith 2002: 83–85). The liberals, some of whom had now moved into opposition to the government, argued that the Communists should admit their responsibility for the crimes of the Soviet regime. This appeal for "repentance" was insistently rejected by the left-patriotic forces. They meanwhile condemned Yeltsin's "anti-national" and "criminal" regime and considered his critique of the Soviet past a further "humiliation of the Russian people." Characteristically, the term "fascism," which had traditionally been exclusively associated with Nazi Germany, was actively used in the 1990s in the domestic political struggle. Democrats used it to label rising Russian nationalism and to cast a slur upon the Communists and their allies from the Popular-Patriotic bloc (the so-called "red-browns," in democratic parlance). Thus, the memory of the war was used not only for strengthening national solidarity, but also to marginalize political opponents.

During his second term Yeltsin tried to play the role of political arbiter calling for a national consensus and the invention of a "new national idea." He was particularly willing to use the shared memory of the war as a means of promoting "national accord and unity" (Yeltsin 1999). In practice this meant the partial re-adoption of Soviet symbols. In 1996 a presidential decree ordered the official usage of the "Victory Banner" alongside the state tricolor. Hence, this Soviet symbol, which had been selectively revived already in 1995, became one of the official symbols of the new Russian state. In the context of acute and ongoing political struggle and the absence of a consensus on the fundamental elements of the new collective identity among political elites, together with the weakness of the state, a radical reassessment of the Soviet past turned out to be too problematic.

This did not mean, however, that the governing elite renounced any attempts at further reframing of the most "usable" symbol of the collective past. In summer 1996 Yeltsin established the Day of Memory and Sorrow on 22 June, the day of Hitler's attack on the USSR in 1941. This decision could be seen as an attempt to create yet another occasion for the political use of this important symbol, an occasion that would, moreover, be relatively independent of the Soviet ideological legacy. In contrast to Victory Day, the new date was less connected with triumph and military glory and more focused on suffering and victimhood. This day is also commemorated in Belarus and Ukraine, which makes

it yet another occasion for demonstrating the "unity" of the East Slavic world.

Analysis of Yeltsin's formal speeches on the occasion of Victory Day in 1995–1998 also indicates an endeavor to reframe the former Soviet discourse about the war. The first president of Russia never interpreted this event in terms of the victory of the Soviet state and/or social system. Instead, he preferred to pay tribute to the people who had won the war. He insistently represented the Victory as "a symbol of the courage, patriotism, self-sacrifice of the soldier and the general, the sailor and the pilot, the worker on the home front and the partisan, the member of the underground and the nurse at the front hospital" (Yeltsin 1995a).

Nor did Yeltsin miss any occasion to appeal to the unity of the peoples of the CIS. Following the established pattern of speeches made by Soviet leaders, he also constantly recalled the cooperation with the Western members of the anti-Hitler coalition and called upon the former Allies to overcome the "political legacy of the Cold War" (Yeltsin 1995a). He was particularly willing to use the common memory of the War for propaganda on the theme of "national accord and unity" (Yeltsin 1999). As we shall see below, the same basic frames would also be used by his successors. It was Yeltsin and his speechwriters who laid the foundations of the new commemorative canon of the Great Patriotic War in post-Soviet Russia.

The Putin Era: The Great Patriotic War as a Myth of National Triumph

With Vladimir Putin's arrival in the presidential office, the symbolic politics of the Russian state underwent another transformation. Unlike Yeltsin who was involved in the bitter political conflicts of the 1990s and usually sided with the liberals against the left-nationalist opposition, Putin, a relative newcomer to public political life, was able to position himself "beyond" both ideological camps. Seeking to consolidate the frustrated and divided Russian society, he borrowed some ideas from the repertoire of the left-patriotic opposition and reintroduced selected symbols of the Soviet past. Three federal constitutional laws from 25 December 2000 established the official state symbols of the Russian Federation (RF): the State Flag, the State Coat of Arms, and the National Anthem. Most controversial and widely debated

was the revival of an adapted form of the Soviet anthem, now furnished with new lyrics. (In 1990 the Soviet anthem had been replaced by Mikhail Glinka's "Patriotic Song," but the Glinka anthem had not proved very popular.) At the same time, the tricolor that invokes the legacy of the Romanov Empire and was used by the democratic opposition in the days of the August 1991 coup was confirmed as the National Flag of the RF. The Coat of Arms, the two-headed eagle, also derives from the earlier coat of arms of the Russian Empire. Combining heterogeneous historical symbols in a kind of post-Soviet bricolage, the laws on official state symbols sketched out the contours of a new approach to the national past.

The new historical narrative presented in Putin's official rhetoric emphasized the value of the "thousand-year-old" Russian statehood as the central element of the national identity. The idea of a "strong state" as the foundation of Russia's past and future greatness was saliently expressed in the Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly in 2003. Putin warned against the threat of the country's disintegration and spoke about the "truly historic feat" of "retaining the state in a vast geographic space" and of "preserving a unique community of peoples while strengthening the country's position in the world" (Putin 2003). This rhetoric demonstrated a fundamental change in the attitude to the Soviet legacy and to the collapse of the USSR; the latter now came to be seen not as the "foundational act" of the new Russian nation as in the Yeltsin era but as a betrayal of the Russian tradition of a strong state.

As a presidential candidate, in his programmatic article "Russia at the Turn of the Millennium" (1999) Putin had argued that "it would be a mistake to ignore and, moreover, to reject the undoubted achievements of that time [i.e. the Soviet period]." In the same publication, however, he also mentioned the "enormous price" that had been paid by the whole society for the failed communist experiment and argued that "for almost seven decades we traveled down a dead-end route which led us away from the main road of civilization." It seems that from the very beginning, Putin did not share Yeltsin's critical attitude towards the Soviet past in its entirety. At the same time, however, he subscribed to the liberal-democratic interpretation of the transition from communism as a return to the "main road of civilization."

A more apologetic attitude to the Soviet past was proposed in the Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly in 2005, when Putin called the collapse of the USSR "the biggest geopolitical catastrophe of the century" (Putin 2005a). This statement contrasted sharply with Yeltsin's interpretation of this event as the unavoidable "natural" death of a system which was doomed to collapse: "the Soviet Union collapsed as a result of a total crisis, it was torn to pieces by economic, political and social contradictions" (Yeltsin 1996). Now that the ideas of the "great power" status and the "thousand-year-old" Russian state shaped the official narrative, the demise of the Soviet Union was redefined as a "catastrophe," caused by the ill-considered actions of irresponsible politicians. It was Russia's position as the heir to "the great Soviet country," and not the country's departure from the totalitarian system, that was emphasized in the official rhetoric during Putin's second term.

This selective appropriation of Soviet symbols was, however, by no means wholesale or unequivocal and in no way meant a total apology for the Communist regime. Speeches by Putin and later Medvedev contained numerous negative judgments about the Soviet system, which was blamed for economic failures and social stagnation, especially in the system's last decades. The positive aspects of the Soviet past mentioned in these speeches were associated mainly with the idea of a great state that had stood the test of World War II, succeeded in (albeit imperfect) modernization, and bestowed upon the country a leading position in the world. Totalitarian features such as state violence and political repressions were bracketed out of this picture.

In its ambivalent attitude to the Soviet past, Putin's regime denounced as "wrong" the leftist traditions of disobedience, revolution, and revolt, and sought to marginalize contentious and divisive historical symbols. In 2004, the most controversial public holiday, the Day of the October Revolution (from 1996 to 2004 the Day of Reconciliation and Accord) (7 November) became a normal working day. As a sort of substitute, a new state holiday, the Day of National Unity, was introduced on 4 November, marking the anniversary of the popular uprising which expelled alien occupation forces from Moscow in November 1612. The new holiday, another attempt to restore the continuity of Russian history, did not become popular and was instead appropriated by nationalists and right-wing extremists. An annual "Russian March," a

mass nationalist manifestation, now traditionally takes place in the major Russian cities on 4 November. Paradoxically, by trying to marginalize left-wing and communist symbols as destructive, the regime created new symbols which were used to legitimize right-wing extremism.

This turn in memory politics from "repentance" to "pride" and from the birth of a new democratic Russia to the "centuries-long" tradition of Russian statehood explains why the myth of the Great Patriotic War has remained the most usable element of Russia's past. Comparable in its significance to certain other meta-events of Russian history (such as the victory over Napoleon), the war is still present in "communicative memory" (Assmann 2008). Politicians addressing it can still count on a strong emotional resonance in Russian society. And unlike many other Soviet symbols and narratives, the war memory did not become an object of zero-sum political games. Despite competing interpretations of this event, virtually all political actors—nationalists, liberals, and "state managers" alike—agree on the significance of the victory in World War II in Russian and world history. According to my calculation, speeches on the occasion of various war anniversaries and memorial dates make up around 33% of all commemorative addresses by Russian presidents between 2000 and 2014 (Malinova 2015: 156–175). This share has remained quite stable throughout this period. No other event of the "thousand-year-long" history is comparable with the war in terms of saliency in the official rhetoric.

To identify core meanings and interpretations of the Great Patriotic War in the presidential speeches, in the following section of this chapter I will use frame analysis, a method that has become increasingly important in studies on political communication in recent decades (e.g. Entman 1993, Simon and Xenos 2000). Notions of frames and framing go back to Erving Goffman (1974) who sought to explain how conceptual frames—ways of organizing experience—structure an individual's perception of society. In media and political communication studies framing is seen as actively applied by speakers/communicators who address an audience in order to promote a particular interpretation of a given issue. According to Entman, "to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation" (52). From the frame analysis perspective, a presidential "message is constructed in such

a way as to contain certain associations rather than others" (Simon and Xenos 2000: 367). This means that speakers (speechwriters) consciously choose to stress particular aspects, meanings, and interpretations of a historical event depending on their political agenda, the current situation in the country, and foreign policy priorities. The repertoire of frames can reflect continuity and succession, on the one hand, or political innovation and a break with predecessors, on the other. Table 2.1 presents a list of the main frames used by Russian presidents in the official discourse on the war. These frames are identified in the official speeches delivered by Putin and Medvedev between 2000 and 2016 on the occasion of Victory Day.[3]

As Table 2.1 shows, there are four main frames that were present in all speeches between 2000 and 2016, namely: commemoration of the war victims and their suffering (1); paying tribute to the war veterans (2); continuity of generations (3); and the political lessons of World War II (4). It is not coincidental that all four frames can be traced back to the Soviet period. The continuity with the Soviet rhetoric is especially obvious in the case of frame 4: in a similar way to the Soviet leaders in the 1970s–1980s, both Putin and Medvedev spoke on behalf of the country that had defeated Hitler's Germany and liberated Europe from the Nazi yoke and in this way had gained a moral right to be a guardian of the international order. Depending on the political context the "lessons of World War II" are invoked in relation to such themes as international cooperation, avoiding confrontation, and respect for national sovereignty and international norms. This frame is often used in the foreign policy discourse (recall, for example, Putin's speech in Gdansk in September 2009 marking the 70th anniversary of the beginning of World War II). It also contributes to the (re-)construction of the Russian identity around the idea of a "great state" as it allows "Us" to be presented as one of the main guardians of the international order.

A tendency towards the "nationalization" of the war memory is reflected in the frequent use of frames 6–9 (the victory as a uniting symbol, as a manifestation of the national character, and as a central element of the national history narrative; and the contribution of different nationalities of the RF to the victory). The nationalization of memory refers to the "re-narration of the Great Patriotic War and the re-interpretation of its key events, symbols and its historical lessons in the process of the construction of new post-Soviet national identities"

Table 2.1 Framing the Great Patriotic War in official speeches by Putin and Medvedev on the occasion of Victory Day, 2000–2016

	Years Frames	*2000*	*2001*	*2002*	*2003*	*2004*	*2005*	*2006*	*2007*	*2008*	*2009*	*2010*	*2011*	*2012*	*2013*	*2014*	*2015*	*2016*
1	Remembering victims and their suffering	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
2	Tribute to war veterans	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
3	Continuity of generations	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
4	Political lessons of WWII	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
5	War as a symbol of patriotism											X	X	X	X	X	X	X
6	Victory Day as uniting symbol	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X
7	Victory as manifestation of national character	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
8	War as central element of national history narrative	X		X						X		X	X	X	X	X	X	

(continued)

Table 2.1 (continued)

	Years Frames	*2000*	*2001*	*2002*	*2003*	*2004*	*2005*	*2006*	*2007*	*2008*	*2009*	*2010*	*2011*	*2012*	*2013*	*2014*	*2015*	*2016*
9	Contribution of different nationalities of RF to victory					X	X			X		X	X	X	X	X		
10	Victory as common heritage of CIS countries	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X
11	Atrocities and crimes of Nazi Germany			X	X		X	X				X		X				
12	Reconciliation with former enemy						X						X				X	
13	Cooperation with Western Allies			X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X			X	
14	Critique of Western partners										X	X		X				
15	Need to strengthen Russian Army	X	X	X						X	X		X				X	X
16	WWII as reminder of basic human values		X				X					X	X	X				

(Zhurzhenko 2013). As shown above, Victory Day has remained a symbol uniting all Russians beyond political and ideological cleavages (frame 6). Table 2.1 illustrates the continued use of this frame in the twenty-first century (with the exception of 2006 and 2009). As Medvedev stated on 9 May 2008, Victory Day is "a holiday that has forever become a symbol of our national unity" (Medvedev 2008). While this frame was in fact introduced by Yeltsin, the next frame (7)—the war as a manifestation of the national character—was brought in by Putin:

> Dear veterans, we are accustomed to being winners. This habit has entered our blood stream, and it has helped us to secure other victories, not only on the battlefield. In the future, too, it will come to our aid in peacetime, it will help our generation to build a strong and flourishing country and to raise high the Russian banner of democracy and freedom. Our people has gone through many wars, and that is why we know the price of peace; we know that peace is first and foremost a stable economy and prosperity. (Putin 2000)

With some variations, the idea of the victory in the war as a manifestation of the Russian national character was included in several speeches by Putin and Medvedev. Victory Day came to be represented as a "festival of the glory and triumph of our people" (Putin 2012). "Nationalizing" the memory of the war, Putin and later Medvedev sought to integrate it into the "centuries-long" Russian state history and traditions of military glory. In this respect, the Great Patriotic War became a central element of the national historical narrative (frame 8).

Other Soviet-derived frames were used less consistently between 2000 and 2016. For example, the contribution of Russia's numerous nationalities to the victory (frame 9) was invoked in order to stress the "multinational" composition of the Russian Federation. Its frequent use in recent years can be explained by the alarming tendency of growing ethnic tensions in today's Russia, and is thus related to frame 6 (national unity).

In the speeches of Putin's third presidential term a clear emphasis is placed on frame 5: the war as a symbol of patriotism. This is hardly surprising given that since 2012 "patriotism" has been a buzzword in Russian political discourse. Remarkably, in the 2000s there was no special talk about the patriotism of Soviet soldiers—but this silence rather reflects the fact that this was so obvious that it went without saying. In 2010 and 2011 Medvedev picked out this frame in the context of the

patriotic education of the younger generations. In more recent memorial speeches by Putin this theme has acquired the status of an identity marker and model of behavior. For example, Putin has interpreted Victory Day as "a sacred symbol of loyalty to the Motherland, [a symbol] which lives inside every one of us" (Putin 2013); "a holiday when the all-conquering power of patriotism reigns supreme, when we all feel with special intensity what it means to be loyal to the Motherland and how important it is to be capable of defending her interests" (Putin 2014).

The reframing of war memory also concerns international aspects of political discourse and reflects Russia's foreign policy agenda. The official Victory Day speeches almost invariably contain references to the victory as a common political and historical legacy of the post-Soviet countries (frame 10). The notions of a "joint victory" and "shared war memory" serve to legitimize Eurasian integration projects in the post-Soviet space, now claimed as belonging to the Russian sphere of influence. On the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the victory in 2005, Putin spoke about the sacrifices made by "all the peoples and republics of the Soviet Union" and concluded that "9 May is a sacred date for all countries of the Commonwealth of the Independent States (CIS)" (Putin 2005c). The Baltic countries, whose leaders declined Putin's invitation to attend the official commemoration in Moscow, were thus symbolically excluded from the "community of common memory."

Considerable attention in the presidential speeches has traditionally been devoted to relations with the Western countries (frames 11–14). The historical cooperation with the Allies (frame 13) has been invoked more consistently than the historical hostile relations with Nazi Germany. References to the cruelty of Nazi Germany (frame 11) have primarily been intended not to recall former hostilities but rather to stress the exceptional suffering and heroism of the Russian people and to highlight the "price" paid for the victory. The theme of the people's double victimhood—at the hands of Hitler and Stalin alike—has virtually disappeared from the official discourse. Occasionally (in 2005 and 2011) Germany was also mentioned as a country that had successfully overcome its past and had now become a good partner for Russia (frame 12). One could argue that such rhetoric was supposed to signal Moscow's interest in a "special relationship" with Germany, which is Russia's most important partner in the EU.

Cooperation with the Western allies (USA, Great Britain and France) during World War II has been systematically invoked in connection with contemporary problems in Europe and in the world. In 2007 Putin argued for "common responsibility and equal partnership" in international relations as a strategy to meet the new threats caused by "the same disdain for human life, the same claims for absolute exclusiveness" as fascist ideas in the twentieth century (Putin 2007). These new threats justify the need to strengthen the Russian army (frame 15). The memory of World War II is used not only as an argument for further cooperation with the Western countries (frame 13), but also for criticism of today's hegemonic Western politics (frame 14). Sometimes former partners in the anti-Hitler coalition appear as threatening the international order. In 2010, making a transparent allusion to contemporary US politics, Medvedev stressed that:

> The war demonstrated the terrifying potential consequences to which claims to world domination can lead. [It showed] just how dangerous attempts to use coercion against free peoples and sovereign states really are. (Medvedev 2010b)

Finally, World War II has been interpreted in terms of basic human values that are shared by the West and Russia alike, including freedom, justice, dignity, and security (frame 16). This representation obviously resulted from the redefinition of Soviet values. It contrasted sharply with the official discourse of the 1990s. In 1995 Yeltsin argued that it was only the end of the Cold War that had made it possible to enjoy the real fruits of the victory of 1945 and to transform Europe into a "united community of democratic nations"; he spoke about the future which "humanity will enter, having rejected forever such dreadful notions as 'totalitarianism,' 'nationalist hatred,' and 'world war'" (Yeltsin 1995a). Ten years later, Putin offered a very different basic narrative of the connection between Soviet Victory and human rights. He described the Victory of 1945 as having "raised high the value of life itself, and called for a genuine respect for the individual and for human rights" (Putin 2005b). In other words, the Soviet Union could claim credit for these positive developments. Those elements of Soviet actions which did not fit this picture, such as political repressions, ethnic deportations, and intolerance, were "forgotten" in this version of the war narrative.

Conclusion

In post-Soviet Russia, the Great Patriotic War turned out to be the most "politically usable" element of the collective past due to its previous institutionalization and its uncontested positive meaning. Both the Yeltsin and Putin regimes sought to shore up their legitimacy by presenting themselves as the "heirs" of the glorious victory over Nazi Germany. The use of the war memory, however, differed remarkably during the 1990s and the 2000s. Yeltsin's leadership tried to separate the memory of the people's heroic feat from the failures of the Soviet regime and Stalinist crimes. Considerable efforts were made to change the established commemorative canon and to foreground previously downplayed aspects of the war, representing it as a story of heroism and double victimhood at the hands of the Nazi and Soviet regimes alike. This interpretation corresponded to the official concept of the new Russian identity that accentuated the historical rupture between the Soviet state and post-Soviet Russia.

The explicitly anti-communist, anti-Soviet approach to the recent past was abandoned by Putin's leadership. A new emphasis was placed on the idea of the continuity of the "thousand-year-old" Russian state, and the critical attitude to the Soviet past gave way to its selective appropriation. The victory in World War II and the post-war success of the USSR as a world superpower were turned into important elements of the history of the great Russian state. The official triumphalist narrative of the war was cleansed of any negative aspects associated with the totalitarian regime (Stalinist repressions, the failures and incompetence of the Soviet military leadership, its indifference to the human costs of military success[4]). Instead of double victimhood at the hands of the Nazi and Soviet regimes alike, the theme of mass heroism and suffering as the "enormous price" paid for the victory took up central position in the official canon of commemoration.

In today's Russia the myth of the Great Patriotic War is loaded with multiple meanings, some of them originating from the Soviet era, others reflecting Russia's new status and the geopolitical situation. Drawing on my analysis of frames used by Putin and Medvedev in the official speeches they delivered between 2000 and 2016 on the occasion of Victory Day I argue that especially prominent in this period were attempts to tailor the discourse about the war for the purposes of constructing a new Russian identity, boosting intergenerational solidarity,

and promoting national unity over political, ideological, and ethnic cleavages. Some scholars have argued that the Great Patriotic War has become a foundational myth for post-Soviet Russia (Koposov 2011: 163). As I have shown here, this was at least in part a consequence of the failure of attempts to create alternative foundational myths based on the birth of the new Russian state from the ruins of the USSR.

Given the central function of the war myth in Russian nation building—and Russia's self-understanding as a great power with geopolitical ambitions in Europe and in the world—one can easily explain Russia's fierce resistance to the historical revisionism that developed in Eastern Europe, in particular concerning the role of the USSR in World War II (Onken 2007; Mälksoo 2009; Kangaspuro 2011; Torbakov 2012). The memory of the war serves as an important source of legitimization for Russia's foreign policy and therefore, as Torbakov has argued, "Moscow perceives attempts of some new EU members to correct the 'mnemonic map of Europe' as a desire to question the self-perception, prestige and the international status of Russia" (Torbakov 2012: 103). This is where the domestic and the international dimensions of memory politics in Russia come together: the memory of the war has become a unique symbolic resource for constructing national identity, and as long as it has mass support, the prospects for acceptance of alternative revisionist narratives of World War II by the ruling elite will remain very slim. The most likely scenario is that Russian and European narratives of World War II, together with the political purposes they serve, will continue to diverge.

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Notes

1. It is a matter of debate whether post-Soviet Russia can be considered a "nation" (Miller 2007; Zevelev 2009; Malinova 2010). For want of a better term, however, and taking into consideration the different meanings of the term "nation" in Russian and English, in this chapter I use the terms "national identity" and "national history."
2. Presidential speeches are available starting from 2000, when the official website of the President was created. Speeches of President Yeltsin were not published in full; even the official newspapers such as *Izvestiia* and *Rossiiskaia gazeta* published only extracts or summaries. This may have

represented a deliberate attempt to break with the methods of Soviet propaganda, which paid heightened attention to the rhetoric of the party leader, and to adopt the Western approach to media coverage.

3. Transcripts are available via the official websites http://www.kremlin.ru and http://archive.kremlin.ru. In my analysis, I first identified the main frames and then registered corresponding statements. My aim was to reveal the repertoire of frames and not to measure the frequency of their use.
4. The only exception here was Dmitry Medvedev's interview for the newspaper *Izvestiia*, published on the eve of the 65th anniversary of the Victory. In this interview Medvedev gave "an official assessment of the figure of Stalin," arguing: "Stalin perpetrated a mass of crimes against his own people. And despite the fact that he worked very hard, despite that fact that under his leadership the country achieved successes, what he did to his own people is unforgivable" (Medvedev 2010a). (It is perhaps noteworthy that Medvedev switched to the passive form when it came to addressing the issues of Stalin's crimes; a literal translation of the Russian original would be "that which was done in relation to one's own people is unforgivable.")

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CHAPTER 3

"Unhappy Is the Person Who Has No Motherland": National Ideology and History Writing in Lukashenka's Belarus

Per Anders Rudling

Introduction

The use of history has varied over the two decades or so since Aliaksandr Lukashenka came to power in 1994. During the first decade of his rule, the Belarusian leader emphasized the unity of the three east Slavic peoples, presenting himself as a champion of restoring a union state with Russia. From 2002 however, the emphasis has increasingly been placed on the preservation of Belarusian independence, protection of its borders, and the consolidation of Belarusian statehood. This political agenda is reflected in official rhetoric and the use of history. During

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Lukashenka's first decade in power, his government presented itself as the guardian of the tradition of the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic (BSSR). Its achievements in the fields of industrialization, education, and, in particular, its exploits during the Great Patriotic War were heavily emphasized. The rival tradition of Belarusian statehood, the legacy of the so-called Belarusian People's Republic (*Belaruskaia Narodnaia Respublika*, BNR) of 1918, was condemned, and its symbols linked to "fascism" and collaboration during World War II. Recent years have seen a cautious rehabilitation of parts of the legacy of the BNR. The appropriation of the oppositional narrative is part of an agenda to consolidate the regime by expanding the repertoire of legitimizing myths, without altering its authoritarian nature. A survey of the official and oppositional uses of symbols and historical references since the mid-2000s, this article is also a study of nationalization policies under Lukashenka.

Background

In *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, Samuel Huntington identified a "civilizational fault-line" running through the western part of Belarus. In the lands to the west of the line, the culture has been shaped by the western Christian tradition, while the greater part of the country, located to to the east of the line, has been colored by the orthodox variant of Christianity (Huntington 1998: 158). The Polish geographer Piotr Eberhardt has ventured an attempt to identify the exact location of this border, which largely follows the division between eastern and western Christianity. Eberhardt positions the Hrodna, Navahrudak, and Vilnia territories—important areas of nationalist agitation—within the realms of "Western civilization" (Eberhardt 2004: 168–169).

This cultural "fault-line" has defined much of the Belarusian nationalist movement. Whereas the Greek Catholic church came to play a key role for the national mobilization of the Ukrainian population in Eastern Galicia, in the Belarusian lands this was not possible because in the Russian Empire the Greek Catholic Church was dissolved in 1839 and forcibly reintegrated into the Russian Orthodox Church. The Roman Catholic clergy in Western Belarus identified with the Polish cultural tradition, whereas the Orthodox clergy identified with Russia and was often hostile to Belarusian nationalism.

Rival Traditions of Statehood

A latecomer to the region, Belarusian nationalism appeared about sixty to eighty years after its Ukrainian counterpart. The first paper in Ukrainian appeared in 1848, whereas the first Belarusian paper did so only in 1906 (Bulgakov [Bulhakau] 2006: 303). The beginning of Belarusian nationalism can thus be dated to the decade before World War I. But the latecomer developed extremely quickly in the following two decades. There is no shortage of raw material and building blocks for national foundation myths drawing on this period (Kipel and Kipel 1988; Michaluk 2010). In fact, between 1918 and 1920 Belarusian statehood was declared or re-declared no less than six times, including three times by the Soviets. However, the Belarusian nationalists were few in number, lacked mass support, and failed to bring about the popular mobilization needed to achieve recognition for their state projects. Even though the overwhelming majority of the Belarusian population consisted of a politically unconscious peasant population that was largely unreceptive to the nationalist message, the energizing of nationalist activism appears to have strengthened the position of those circles within the Soviet government which sought to establish a Belarusian Soviet republic. If most of the six declarations of Belarusian statehood are today largely forgotten, two came to form the basis for competing national myths: the 25 March 1918 declaration of the so-called Belarusian People's Republic (*Belaruskaia Narodnaia Respublika*, BNR), and the 1 January 1919 declaration of the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic (*Belaruskaia Savietskaia Sotsyialistychnia Respublika*, BSSR) (Rudling 2015).

The Belarusian People's Republic (BNR)

Both the BNR and the BSSR were elite projects with limited popular mandates, poorly anchored in the largely illiterate, pre-modern peasant populations. Imperial Germany, which controlled the territory, tolerated the BNR as a harmless, but potentially useful tool to counterbalance Polish claims to the region. After the collapse of the Central Powers the BNR Rada fled Minsk and split into several quarreling factions in 1919 (Pashkevich 2009: 132). In vain, the exiled BNR Rada sought recognition from the delegates at the Versailles Peace Conference (LCVAa 1919). The Rada was sponsored by the government in Kaunas

before eventually being expelled from Lithuania in 1924 (LCVAb n/d; Kasparavichius 2009). In 1925, impressed by the experimental national policies and cultural autonomy in the BSSR, most of the leadership of the exiled Rada returned to Minsk, which they now recognized as the legitimate capital of the Belarusian people.

However, a faction of the Rada, led by Petra Krecheuski, challenged the decision to return to Minsk, and a group of émigré activists who regard themselves as Krecheuski's successors have, with some interruptions, continued their activities to this day (LCVAc n/d). Its legitimacy, continuity, and succession remains disputed, and its political importance may be marginal, yet the BNR Rada remains the last remaining government-in-exile in Europe in the late 2010s (Snapkovskii 1998: 94–99, 103; Haradzienka 2009: 18–29; NARA BNR n/d: 1–8). Today its role is largely symbolic. It is involved primarily in the promotion of cultural activities and as a carrier of an anti-communist historical narrative.[1]

The Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic (BSSR)

During two decades of intensive nation building in many of the newly established eastern and central European states, in addition to the Huntington–Eberhardt line of religious–cultural divide, the Belarusian lands were divided by a concrete, political one. The Peace Treaty of Riga in 1921 divided Belarus between Poland and the Soviets—a devastating blow to Belarusian nationalists (Borzęcki 2008: 276).

During the interwar years the experiences of western and eastern Belarus differed greatly. Western Belarus was not subject to the Belarusization and affirmative action policies of the 1920s, nor did it experience the formative Stalinist 1930s, during which the bulk of the east Belarusian intellectual elite was destroyed.

Following the 1939 Molotov–Ribbentrop treaty, Belarus was again united into one Soviet republic. Although the invading Germans in 1941 divided Belarus once again into several separate administrative units, the almost unimaginable hardships of this period were shared by Belarusians throughout the entire country.[2] Out of a pre-war population of 9 million, 2.3–2.4 million people perished in just over three years.[3] The extremely brutal war deformed the demography of the republic: most of its sizable Jewish population perished in the Holocaust whereas post-war population transfers further decimated a Polish minority already disproportionally targeted by Stalinist purges. In the BSSR, of the soldiers born between

1922 and 1924 only 3% returned from the war (Gimpelevich 2005: 9). Many Belarusians perceived the return of the Soviets as a genuine liberation. The deep scars and trauma of the war, but also pride in the victory over Nazi Germany came to form the basis of a collective memory. Thus, Belarus as a modern polity within its current boundaries appeared only in 1945, out of the ruins of the mass devastation of World War II.

The BSSR would eventually achieve international recognition; it was even a founding member of the United Nations, where it had its own seat. It underwent very significant economic and social transformations in the post-war period. Living standards improved markedly as massive investments were allocated to the republic by the Soviet central authorities in Moscow, particularly in the post-Stalin era. No longer bordering a hostile outside world, the republic went from being one of the most underdeveloped areas in the Russian Empire to one of the most heavily industrialized regions of the Soviet Union. As the formerly rural dwellers moved into the cities, they embraced Soviet cultural norms and values. In Belarus, modernity spoke Russian. In particular, the era of Piotr Masherau's rule as first secretary of the Communist Party of Belarus (1965–1980) is often nostalgically remembered as something of a "golden age." The BSSR, which came to obtain one of the highest standards of living in the USSR became a shop-window for the Soviet Union while being widely perceived as the most "Soviet" of all the republics; Soviet economic and social principles were more strictly adhered to in the BSSR than in any other republic (Feduta 2005: 107; Leshchenko 2004: 337). By 1978, the Communist Party of Belarus was a mass movement with more than half a million members (Wilson 2010: 115). Historical memory in the republic was centered heavily on a narrative of heroic resistance to the German-Fascist invaders during the Great Patriotic War. Large memorial complexes were constructed in Minsk, Khatyn', and Brest, with the cult of the war gaining greatly in importance from the 1960s onwards (Ganzer and Paškovič 2010: 81–96; Marples and Rudling 2009: 225–244; Marples 2014).

Compared to neighboring republics, armed resistance to the Soviets was limited in the BSSR (Burds 2006: 54). The BSSR also lacked an organized dissident movement. Perestroika and glasnost' arrived late in this conservative republic, which political scientist Andrew Wilson has dubbed the "Vendée of Perestroika" (Wilson 2010: 142–143). The collapse of the Soviet Union forced independence upon Belarus. The republican leadership supported the attempted August 1991 coup in

Moscow and when the coup failed the shaken *nomenklatura* declared independence as a way to retain its power (Zen'kovich 2005: 390–414; Wilson 2010: 150–152). Unlike in Ukraine, the declaration of independence was not confirmed by a popular referendum. Stanislau Shushkevich, the first leader of post-Soviet Belarus (1991–1994) complained that the Belarusians were more Soviet than the Russians, and moreover "could not hide their pride in that fact" (Shushkevich 2002: 35). In its first post-Soviet elections (1994) Belarus elected Aliaksandr Lukashenka president on a platform of Soviet nostalgia and closer relations with Russia. The Belarusian leader restored a modified version of the Soviet historical narrative, particularly the myths surrounding the Great Patriotic War, and turned these into a cornerstone of state ideology (Goujon 2010; Marples 2014; Rudling 2009; Silitski 2005). He has presided over the construction of new memorial complexes promoting an often counterfactual narrative of the war. One such project entailed the restoration of the so-called Stalin Line, the defense system along the interwar Soviet–Polish border (dismantled after the Molotov–Ribbentrop treaty of 1939), which supposedly delayed the German attack on Moscow (Marples 2012: 444).[4] In 1996, the Belarusian leader designated 3 July, the day the Red Army recaptured Minsk from Nazi Germany, as the new Independence Day. This replaced the old Independence Day of 27 July, which commemorated the declaration of state sovereignty in 1990 (Leshchenko 2004: 338; Marples 2006: 354).[5] Nationalist commentators propose yet another candidate for the Belarusian national day: 25 March, marking the declaration of the BNR in 1918, the most important date in the oppositional counter-narrative.[6]

Rival Narratives

The BNR and the BSSR are both probably best characterized as proto-states. At the same time, whereas their impact on Soviet and European history may have been limited, their rival claims to represent the Belarusian nation have shaped much of the historiography. The rivalry of two historical narratives has prevented the formation of a consensus regarding state symbolism and founding myths. The two have been seen as mutually exclusive, antagonistic entities, articulated in opposition to one another. Against the myth of the Soviet authorities and Lukashenka's state ideology stood that of the Belarusian emigration and the nationalist opposition. Whereas the geographic dimension of the divided memory

is very pronounced in neighboring Ukraine, in Belarus this divide more often runs between the urban and the rural, between generations, and between levels of education. Somewhat simplified, a Soviet, Orthodox, Eastward-oriented narrative exists parallel to, and in rivalry with an anti-Soviet, Western-oriented, often Catholic, one.

Official Historiography

The immediate post-Soviet years, 1991–1994, saw the beginnings of a new historiography (Lindner 1999: 423–477). This process, however, came to an abrupt end in August 1995 when, two weeks before the beginning of the new school year, Lukashenka ordered the removal of all humanities textbooks published between 1992 and 1994 from the school and university system and their replacement with new textbooks, commissioned by the new regime (Lindner 1999: 441).[7]

Since 1995, the official historiography under Lukashenka has emphasized the "brotherhood" of the Belarusian and Russian peoples and the notion of continuity traced back to Kievan Rus'. A 2003 university history textbook, commissioned by the president, presents, in the Soviet fashion, the history of Belarus as a struggle to be "reunited" with Muscovy-Russia, a process crowned by the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact and the Yalta treaties. Official textbooks deny that Russia has ever figured in the role of aggressor in Belarus, and present such claims as "mean-spirited falsification." Rather, they juxtapose the Belarusian "old Orthodox civilization" to that of Poland in the role of aggressor, "a moral corpse" with its *szlachta* that "admired Western Europe" while "crawling in front of the might and riches of the leading feudals." A publication from the Institute of Social-Political Investigation of the Presidential Administration likewise presents the West as hostile to the Slavs, and involved in "conducting a total information-psychological warfare against the all-Russian *Weltanschauung* [worldview]." In the government's account of the historical role played by the Poles, they are presented as national and class enemies, echoing the rhetoric of the Stalinist 1930s. A 2003 government-commissioned textbook, for example, presents the Poles of the Rzeczpospolita as "occupiers" who "burned and looted" the lands of the Eastern Orthodox Slavs. In 2005, in a lecture to students at the University of Mahileu, Lukashenka denounced the legacy of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL), declaring that "anyone who talks seriously about the GDL

but keeps silent about the oppressed and dependent situation of the Belarusians, which was their lot in that non-independent, Medieval principality," should be regarded as "haters of the Belarusian people" (Saganovich 2008: 72–73).

The image of the western neighbors as a threat is occasionally also reflected in the rhetoric of the president. In 2001, for example, Lukashenka accused Poland of being "a bridgehead from which the invasion of the former Soviet Union advances," and the Polish community in Belarus of disloyalty against the state (Rudling 2011:116–117).

The Great Victory

Victory Day is regarded as one of the most important holidays not only in Belarus, but also in the other two east Slavic republics ("75% zhyteliv Ukrainy"; "Otnoshenie obshchestvo k VOV"). The narrative of the Great Patriotic War occupies a central position both in Belarusian public memory and as the cornerstone of the Belarusian modern foundation myth. This makes some sense from a political point of view: the war was an event whose experience was shared by all parts of Belarus, and it also offers a narrative in which the Soviet regime figures as emancipator. It serves to promote a selective, nostalgic rendering of the Soviet past, a patriotic tradition of which Lukashenka is the major guardian—a patrimonial figure and guarantee for social stability and continuity. This ideological use of history aims to shore up the legitimacy of the regime by presenting it as the guardian of the legacy of the Great Victory, the proudest achievement of the Soviet era and an event which retains a particularly important position in Belarusian historical and political culture.

This narrative also presents certain difficulties, not least the question of how and when the war started. For a regime which seeks legitimacy in a legacy of anti-fascist struggle, the legacy of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact offers particular difficulties. Nevertheless, in 2009, the government announced plans to designate the anniversary of 17 September 1939, the day when the Red Army marched into Poland in accordance with the secret provision of the Molotov–Ribbentrop treaty, a holiday of national unity ("Wszystko wskazuje na NKWD").[8] On the 70th anniversary of the Soviet occupation of Poland, Lukashenka congratulated his fellow countrymen on the "reunification of Western Belarus with the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic":

> On 17 September 1939, the Red Army launched an emancipatory mission *[osvoboditel'nyi pokhod]*. Its goal was the defense of the Belarusian and Ukrainian populations on the territory of Poland, which had been left to the mercy of fate following the German attack and the outbreak of the Second World War. This not only strengthened the security of the USSR, but also became an important contribution to the struggle against fascist aggression. Regardless of the different opinions and assessments of the events connected with this date, it is an indisputable fact that the result of the military operation led to the reunification of the artificially divided Belarusian people, something that was a historical justice. In the liberated lands conditions for the establishment of a new life were established. The Belarusians got an opportunity to develop their statehood within the framework of a united national-territorial entity. (Lukashenka 2009)

The presentation of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact as "liberation," "historical justice," even a "contribution in the struggle against fascist aggression" which "strengthened the security of the USSR" prevents a candid account of the Soviet–German friendship and of the less-than-heroic aspects of the Soviet rule in the former Second Polish Republic between 1939 and 1941. Katyń and other Stalinist atrocities are therefore largely absent from the official narrative (Rudling 2012: 46). Interesting to note here is also Lukashenka's notion of an "artificially divided people." This rhetoric echoes the narrative of Western Belarusian interwar nationalists as well as that of Molotov, who justified the Soviet occupation of Eastern Poland as fraternal Soviet aid, extended to the Western Belarusian (*edinokrovnye*) "blood brothers" (*Komu my idem* 1939: 27).

An Alternative Historical Culture

If the official Belarusianness is firmly rooted in Soviet traditions, the oppositional, alternative Belarusianness finds its symbolic capital in an imagined golden age of the seventeenth-century Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The alternative, nationalist narrative negates the significance of Soviet history, attempting a reorientation of Belarusianness, in the words of sociologist Nelly Bekus, through a "'return' of the Belarusian nation to Europe" (Bekus 2010: 279).

The alternative historical narrative of the nationalist opposition is constructed as a national continuum from the Principality of Polatsk, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, through the uprising of 1863,

the BNR, and independence in 1991. This tradition often juxtaposes Belarusians to Russians, who are frequently depicted as representatives of backwardness and regression, in contrast to the Belarusian–Lithuanian democratic tradition of European culture and learning. One of the key dates here is the 8 September anniversary of the Battle of Orsha, which the nationalist opposition celebrates as the "Day of Belarusian Military Glory." On this day in 1514 a joint Belarusian–Polish–Lithuanian army defeated the forces of Muscovy. In the Russian and Soviet historical traditions, which emphasized unity of the eastern Slavs, this event was downplayed or ignored. The Belarusian Popular Front (*Belaruski Narodnyi Front*, BNF), the most prominent nationalist opposition group in the 1980s and 1990s, celebrated this event as a "total victory" over Moscow, or "the triumph of the Belarusian people over the Russian people" (Wilson 2010: 138; Sahm 1999: 652).[9] The commemorations of the 1514 battle have been important for those who seek to challenge the Soviet narrative of eternal friendship and the quest for "reunification" of the two fraternal peoples. Oppositional celebrations of the Battle of Orsha have taken place since the late 1980s, with various oppositional groups staging annual commemorations of the "Day of Belarusian Military Glory" marked by concerts and historical re-enactments at the site of the battle on the Krapiuva River near Orsha.

Whereas the glories of the early modern period occupy a central place in this mythology, the most important date in this narrative is the proclamation of the BNR. In the words of oppositional political scientist Ales' Lahviniec: "For Belarusians as a nation, for Belarusian statehood, the holiday of 25 March 1918 [marks the moment] when, for the first time in history, the Belarusians spoke out about their right to live in an independent state, to live in a democratic state and be referred to as human beings" ("Parad dlia adnaho hledacha" 2013).

These alternative accounts tend to link the 1918 proclamation of the BNR to the emergence of the independent Republic of Belarus in 1991, sometimes referred to a "restoration" of independence.[10] By inference, the Soviet period therefore appears as an interregnum, or even as an illegitimate usurping of state sovereignty. Oppositional accounts tend to place heavy emphasis on the national renaissance of the late 1980s, culminating in the declaration of state sovereignty in 1990 and independence in 1991 (Kotljarchuk 2004: 48; Leshchenko 2004: 339).

The Warsaw-operated Belarusian-language broadcaster *Belsat* has sought to give voice to alternative historical interpretations. Television shows on historical issues figure prominently in its broadcasts. The anniversary of the establishment of the BNR is commemorated annually ("Hosts' Belsatu" 2009). In 2009 *Belsat* broadcasted a series of historical documentaries, titled *History under the Sign of the Pahonia*. The opening vignette of the program displayed the *Pahonia* and the "oppositional" historical timeline in flaming, expanding numerals: 862, 1410, 1514, 1517, 1588, 1918, and 1991. In order, these represent the establishment of Rus'; the Battles of Grünwald and Orsha; the printing of the first book in Old Belarusian; the publication of the Statutes of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania; the proclamation of the BNR; and the declaration of Belarusian independence in 1991. This narrative anchors Belarus in an east-central European setting, distinct from, even in opposition to, Muscovy and Russia. Graphically visualized as emerging out of a burning book, these dates give the impression of being divinely sanctioned (*Historyia pad znakam Pahoni* 2009).

Another attempt to popularize an alternative historical culture is the campaign *Budz'ma Belarusami!* (*Let us be Belarusians!*), a non-governmental organization (NGO) initiative aimed at providing a "sense of dignity," through national myths of consolidation. "Belarusians are worthy to be a successful nation," its organizers claim, and give the objective of the campaign as being to "Awaken the interest of Belarus' residents to the culture of their country. Admire Belarusians to recognize Belarusian culture as a value. We want our people to say the word 'Belarusian' with pride" (sic). The campaigners use pop culture and cartoons to market their alternative vision of Belarusian identity. The most famous of these is the video clip *Budz'ma belarusami!* (2010). Unlike the regime's often bombastic historical representations, *Budz'ma belarusami!* tells an alternative story of the origins of the nation, tongue in cheek. However, as in other nationalizing discourses there is a heavy emphasis on blood, struggle, sacrifice, and heroic exploits on the battlefield. In this rendering of history, the Belarusians and their ancestors appear as fierce warriors. At a quick pace *Budz'ma* reels off the list of enemies crushed: the Mongols at the Battle of Blue Waters in 1362; the Teutonic knights at Grünwald in 1410; the Swedes at Kirchholm in 1605; and, last but not least, the Muscovite "occupiers" in 1514:

> This is a glorious narrative of how, in 1362,
> Our army at the Battle of Blue Waters,
> Crushed three khans of the Golden Horde,
> And the Lithuanian Duchy suddenly—wow!—
> Created the greatest state in Europe.
> …
> In the frenzied battle of Mahileu
> Seven thousand occupiers fell,
> What occupiers? Oh, those ones… From the east—
> Representatives of the brotherly Russian people.
> They were still called "Muscovites." (*Budz'ma belarusami!* 2010)

Similarly, representatives of the Belarusian diaspora have engaged in other initiatives to challenge the Soviet tradition. The signatories of the 2008 Prague Declaration on European Conscience and Communism include Mme. Ivonka Survilla, "President of Belarus in Exile," as well as the exiled BNF leader Zianon Pazniak. Demanding "redress for the crimes of communism," they call upon the legislative bodies and the authorities of the European Union "to adopt effective legal norms that will allow just punishment of communist criminals." Further, they called for an "adjustment and overhaul of European history textbooks so that children could learn and be warned about Communism and its crimes in the same way as they have been taught to assess the Nazi crimes." They supported the "establishment of 23rd August, the day of signing of the Hitler–Stalin Pact, known as the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, as a day of remembrance of the victims of both Nazi and Communist totalitarian regimes, in the same way Europe remembers the victims of the Holocaust on January 27th" ("Prague Declaration" 2008).

On 25 March, representatives of the Belarusian diaspora gather annually at the Victims of Communism Memorial, inaugurated in 2007 by George W. Bush in Washington. At the 2010 wreath-laying ceremony to commemorate the BNR, Dr. Vitaut Kipel of the Belarusian-American Association declared "We are remembering the national patriots who fought for Belarusian statehood and fell victims to Communist aggressions" (VB 2010).

Following the 2004 enlargement this narrative has become increasingly prominent within the memory culture of the European Union. On Independence Day (3 July) in 2009, when the official Belarusian press was saturated with heroic accounts and hagiographies linked to the victory in the Great Patriotic War, the parliamentary assembly of

the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) adopted a resolution in the spirit of the Prague Declaration, which condemned Stalinism and fascism as "genocidal ideologies," jointly responsible for the outbreak of World War II. Clearly aimed at Russia (Belarus is not a member of the OSCE), the resolution condemned the two ideologies for crimes against humanity, and designated 23 August a day of memory for the victims of Nazism and Stalinism (Peredypkina 2009: xxii; Shamrei 2009: 6; "OBSE priravnila SSSR k natsistskoi Germanii" 2009: 1).

Relative to the cult of the BNR and the exploits of the GDL, World War II has played a much more limited role in the oppositional narrative. There are signs, however, that this may be about to change. In 2013 *Belsat* turned its attention to World War II-era anti-Soviet resistance groups, broadcasting docudramas by Warsaw-based film director Antos' Tsialezhnikau on anti-Soviet nationalist formations, such as the Belarusian Independence Party (*Belaruskaia Nezalezhnitskaia Partyia*, BNP), led by Usevalad Rodz'ka (1920–1946?). Rodz'ka, the wartime mayor of Vitsebsk, was a leading figure in the *Belaruskaia Kraevaia Abarona* (BKA), an auxiliary military formation, and Radaslau Astrauski's deputy in the collaborationist Belarusian Central Rada (BTsR) (Narel 2012: 253).[11]

With scripts written by nationalist activist Siarhei Ërsh, Tsialezhnikau's films have titles such as *Belarusian Resistance: Belarusian Post-war Anti-Soviet Resistance 1944–57* and *Cursed and Forgotten*, and are "dedicated to all living and fallen fighters for Belarusian independence." Tsalezhnikau sets out to disseminate "facts of Belarusian history, which state propaganda aims to withhold from the public discourse," and states that his ambition is to present a more "balanced approach" to these groups, and to "understand the motives of the people, rather than condemning them categorically" (Tsialezhnikau 2013a, b; Viachorka 2013). While Ërsh and Tsialezhnikau do not deny the German tutelage of these groups, they fail to problematize the anti-Semitic nature of the openly pro-Nazi orientation of the BTsR and BKA (Solov'ev 1995). Consequently, the films contain no discussion of the Holocaust in Vitsebsk, which was carried out during Rodz'ko's term as mayor of the city between July 1941 and the summer of 1944, and their narratives are no less selective than the government's accounts of the Stalin era they seek to revise. While they are articulated in opposition to one another, the two narratives show considerable similarities. The myth making is facilitated in part by the lack of solid, critical research on the

topic, something, which in turn, is partly a consequence of the fact that much of the material remains inaccessible in the KGB archives in Minsk (Narel 2012; Pashkevich 2012). However, there are still alternative voices, notably *ARCHE*, the sole independent Belarusian-language intellectual journal, which has courageously continued to carry articles on difficult historical issues. It has not shied away from discussing either Stalinist or nationalist atrocities, or local collaboration in the Holocaust, despite ongoing harassment by the authorities.

Rival Sets of State Symbols

The rivalry between the BNR and the BSSR has not only resulted in competing historiographies, but has also produced two rival heraldic traditions.

The white-red-white flag, designed in 1917 by the 26-year-old nationalist activist Klaudzii Duzh-Dusheuski, invokes the colors of regional heraldic tradition. Its coat of arms, the *Pahonia*, or "the chase," was that of the GDL, and was also used by contemporary Lithuanian nationalists (Kurkau and Bassau 1994; Łatyszonek 2007: 217; Spatkai 2013). The Soviets, by contrast, initially showed little interest in heraldry; for decades the flag of the BSSR was an uninspiring red cloth with the abbreviation "BSSR." This began to change only in 1927, when the Soviets introduced a coat of arms for the BSSR, clearly distinguishable from that of the RSFSR. This coat of arms formed the basis for the current official Belarusian coat of arms. When the BSSR became a founding member of the United Nations, a need appears to have arisen for more distinct republican symbols. In 1951 the Presidium of the BSSR Supreme Soviet issued an edict creating a republican flag which included a green stripe at the bottom of the Soviet flag, and an ornament, taken from a hand towel embroidered in 1917 by a peasant woman, Matrona Markevich, from the village of Kastilishcha, Senna district (Lalkou 2010; Rudling 2015).

This remained the official flag until 1991, when the white-red-white flag and the *Pahonia* were adopted as state symbols. Subsequently, however, after less than a year in power, Lukashenka reintroduced the Soviet Belarusian state symbols following a controversial 1995 referendum. After the change of flags, the hoisted white-red-white flag which had flown above the Supreme Soviet was ritually disgraced on national television, in a show organized by the presidential administration. The flag was shredded, and the pieces were sold for $10 each (Eke and

Kuzio 2000: 527; Sahm 1995: 1021–1033; Sahm 1999: 655). Since the nationalist opposition defiantly retains the 1991–1995 set of symbols, two rival sets of symbols are currently in use. The official state anthem, comprising the music of the BSSR anthem set to new lyrics, is used by the regime, whereas the opposition uses the anthem of the BNR, Makar Kas'tsivich's 1919 hymn *Vaiatski marsh* (The Soldiers' March) (Łatyszonek 2007: 218).

Oppositional circles jokingly refer to the post-1995 coat of arms as the "cabbage" (*kapusta*), due to its shape, which shows some semblance to a head of cabbage. One bitter joke has it that the green contour of the map of Belarus, which replaced the hammer and sickle of the BSSR coat of arms, represents the soul of Belarus ascending to heaven, after the death of the nation. The opposition has also criticized the 1995 flag for containing green, which they see as the color of Islam, and alien to the Belarusian heraldic tradition.



Fig. 3.1 "We will not lay down our work until communism is totally defeated—Long live Free Belarus!" The white-red-white BNR flag used in German propaganda to attract Belarusian workers to Germany

For his part, Lukashenka and his historians have denounced the white-red-white flag and the *Pahonia* as "fascist" symbols, and voices in his administration have demanded an outright ban on their use. These accusations are, by extension, also aimed at tainting the entire nationalist opposition (Goujon 1999: 666; Ritter 2008: 78). This is more of a rhetorical device than a reflection of any historical realities because the white-red-white flag predates the rise of fascism, and its symbolism has no relation to either fascist aesthetics or ideology, even though the symbols were used by Belarusian formations in the service of the German occupation authorities, including the groups led by Rodz'ko and Astrauski (Miatsel'ski 2013) (Fig. 3.1).[12]

The Cult of State Symbols

The government's heavy-handed campaign to promote their official symbols and suppress alternative ones underlines the frailty, rather than the strength of the regime. Arguably, no other European state spends more effort on the promotion of state symbolism and the national flag than does Belarus. Lukashenka's official state symbols appear in virtually every souvenir shop in Belarus: painted as *khokhloma*, wood cuts or on handmade lacquered wooden boxes, designs in straw or bark, hockey jerseys, t-shirts, postcards, notebooks, posters, and office supplies. Book stores carry edifying patriotic tomes: coffee table books on the KDB (in Belarusian; KGB in Russian) and the Belarusian border guards, on the Great Patriotic War, the pro-government youth organization the Belarusian Republican Youth Union (*Belaruski respublikanski saiuz moladzi*, BRSM), the immediate heirs of the Komsomol, and on state medals and awards, providing a visual representation of the patriotic virtues that the government wishes to instill in its citizens.

Interestingly, while the Soviet roots of the symbolism are evident, official propaganda often refer to them in esoteric fashion, as symbols of harmony and wellbeing. A 2004 government-published coffee table book explains the meaning of the ever-present coat of arms in the following terms:

> The first thing that you will note is the green contour of the territory of the Republic of Belarus, as it is depicted on the geographical map. The green contour is in the golden rays of the rising sun. This symbolism is quite easy to read: the citizens direct all their thoughts to the

> motherland—it is our land, we need nobody else's land, but will cede not a single inch of ours! We'll preserve those boundaries, within which it was passed down to us by the previous generations, we'll make it a strong and flourishing power. The wreath of rye ears interlaced with clover and flax flowers is a more complex symbol; its language needs some explanation. Since days of old, the wreath (of roses, palm-leaves, laurel etc.) has been used by peoples as a winner's reward and to personify victory. At the same time it is a symbol of memory and an indissoluble connection of the living with the ancestors… The red star stands out among the elements of the National Coat of Arms. The man has two arms, two legs and a head and is, figuratively speaking, "five-pointed." The five-pointed star is the symbol of man and mankind, the sign of courage and heavenly thoughts. In this quality the red star was used in the times of the great state, the Soviet Union. One of its glorious republics was the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic. Thus, our country's Coat of Arms reveals itself as a bright and memorable story of the Belarusian people. The main national spiritual values of the Belarusians are captured in the National Coat of Arms: civil unity, labor, zeal for the perfection of personality and at the same time readiness to stand up for our freedom and sovereignty. (Skobeleu et al. 2004: 23, 29–30)

According to the regime, these symbols are indispensable for the social life of the state:

> Not a single holiday, as you may see, can do without national flags. They fill the hearts of our citizens with confidence and pride in our heroic working people, with determination to dare and fight for the interests of our country. The National flag unites us, signifying our unity and common will. In times of hard trials the flag of our Motherland has always remained a symbol of courage and of the people's unconquered will to victory over enemies… The flag of the country is defended from any insults. Rescuing the National Flag in battle is considered a valiant, heroic deed. Loss of the flag by a military unit means its dismissal. The Coat of Arms and the Flag of the Republic of Belarus form a harmonious semantic unity and light up our life from birth to death. (Skobeleu et al. 2004: 43, 45)

Rewarding Patriotic Virtue

Official state ideology also finds expression in official state decorations. Virtues such as vigilance, patriotism, and dedication to the motherland are highly prized by the government. The Order of Friendship of the

Peoples is given to "citizens for significant contribution in the sphere of strengthening peace, friendly relations and the cooperation of states, the consolidation of society and the unity of peoples." The Order of the Fatherland is awarded "for the strengthening of the might of the country, for bravery and vigilance, expressed during the defense of the fatherland and its state interests, in the safeguarding of legality and order." The Order "For Personal Bravery" is given out for "extraordinary vigilance and personal bravery… for courage expressed during the defense of state borders; for bravery expressed in the defense of societal order" (Isaeva 2007: 7, 9). State media generously report on the decoration of worthy winners, from "tractor-drivers, agronomists, machine-operators, chiefs of agricultural enterprises and heads of local bodies of administration," to the late Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, who received the Order of Friendship of the Peoples during his July 2008 visit to Minsk ("Lukashenko Confers" 2004; "Venezuelan Leader" 2008).

State propaganda depicts Lukashenka as a patrimonial leader, *bats'ko*, "little father," an honest "master of the house" who rules his country with a firm hand.[13] It has strong pro-natalist undercurrents. In 2006 Lukashenka declared that he would like to see the Belarusian population tripled, to 30 million, and called on Belarusian families to have a minimum of three children (Rudling 2008: 69). Already in April 1995, Lukashenka's Belarus became the first post-Soviet state to reintroduce the Soviet tradition of state awards for childrearing.[14] The Order of the Mother is issued to women "who give birth to and raise five or more children. [The woman] is decorated with the order when the fifth child reaches the age of one year and in the presence of all the other four living children of that mother." The order is also issued if one of the five or more children "is killed or gone missing without trace during the defense of the Fatherland and its state interests, during the execution of civic duties, the saving of human life, the safeguarding of the rule of law and legal order, or in the event of death as a result of wounds" (Isaeva 2007: 10–11). In 2004 and 2010 Ukraine and Russia followed suit, reintroducing similar awards. In terms of reversing an alarming demographic situation, the impact of these orders appears to be modest.[15]

In late 2004 the government launched the propaganda campaign *Za Belarus'!* (For Belarus!), intended to build support for Lukashenka's push for constitutional reforms, especially constitutional changes that remove any term limits on the office of the president. *Za Belarus'!* resembles the slogan *Zhyve Belarus'!* (Long Live Belarus!), used by the



Fig. 3.2 "Our Victory!" Belarusian government poster (2015). Retrieved 14 July 2017 from http://www.belta.by/posters/view/plakat-iz-serii-nasha-peramoga-543/

Belarusian National Front. The propaganda posters and TV commercials typically portray heroic veterans of the Great Patriotic War, vigilant soldiers defending the native land, jolly peasants in folk costumes at harvest festivals, happy adolescents, and patriotic members of the BRSM, the Belarusian successor of the Komsomol, working for world peace. Thus, this state-sanctioned Belarusian patriotism is linked to defense of the native land, securing great harvests and the patriotic enthusiasm of the masses. From 2004, there have been several campaigns following upon one another, with names like "Belarus—a State for the People" (2006), "For a People's Belarus!" (2007), "Together, We are Belarus" (2010), "I Love Belarus!" (2009), "Our Victory!" (2009), and "We are Belarusians!" (see for example Figs. 3.2 and 3.3).[16]

Political scientist Natalia Leshchenko notes that state sovereignty has been used to set up a "defensive outer shell" for Belarus (Leshchenko 2004: 346). The message of the official campaigns, aimed at shoring up patriotic morale is that without the national community, the individual is nothing: "Unhappy is a person who has no Motherland. Who will respect a person who left his motherland to the mercy of fate in order to protect only himself and to get some benefit? He is despised and is considered a traitor" (Skobeleu et al. 2004: 45). In another effort to cultivate love of the homeland, the authorities proclaimed 2009 *The Year*



Fig. 3.3 "For a Belarus for the People!" (2015). Retrieved 14 July 2017 from http://www.belta.by/posters/view/plakat-iz-serii-za-belarus-dlja-naroda-529/

of the Native Soil, promoting Belarus as a tourist destination not only to Belarusians, but also to foreigners (*Kalendar'* 2009).

The regime puts emphasis on individual relationships to state symbols and has adopted modern marketing strategies to promote their dissemination: Belarusian citizens are encouraged to physically express their dedication to the Motherland by displaying state symbols and the official, red and green colors on their lapels or dresses, similarly to the North American habit of displaying ribbons of various colors—yellow, pink, and otherwise, to mark support for various causes (see Fig. 3.4).

Appropriating the Oppositional Historical Narrative

One aspect of the regime's increased emphasis on "national" values has been an expansion of its use of historical references. This has included a partial appropriation of elements of the rhetoric, mythology, and historical representations employed by the nationalist opposition. Anniversaries, previously ignored or counteracted by the authorities are now increasingly included in the regime's official commemorations. In 2007, in the lead-up to the opposition's annual 25 March "National Unity Day" demonstration, the authorities launched a campaign titled "For an Independent Belarus," for the first time commemorating the 25 March

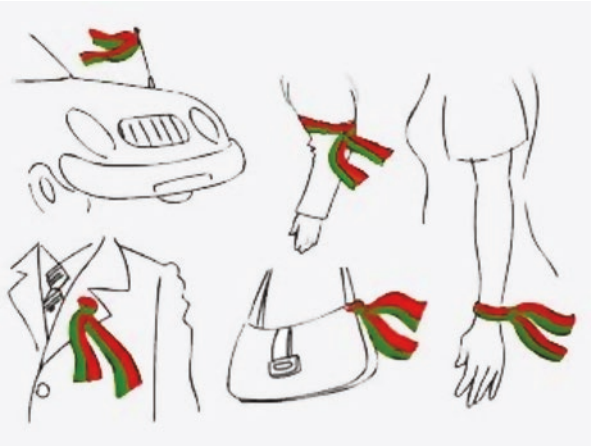


Fig. 3.4 Belarusian Republican Youth Union campaign to wear patriotic ribbons in the official national colors. Retrieved 24 August 2009 from: http://www.brsm.by/en/za_berarus_en (URL no longer operational as at 14 July 2017)

1918 proclamation of the BNR (Bekus 2010: 167; Marples 2007). For the anniversary the following year, state-run newspapers published a number of stories on the topic, carrying long articles in commemoration of the 90th anniversary of the BNR. Under headlines like "The Highest Ideal—Independence," one government paper emphasized the fact that the 25 March declaration made Minsk a capital city for the first time in history ("BNR: poverkh bar'erov" 2008; Liakhovskii 2008: 25; Lobodenko 2008: 8; Marples 2008).

In 2007 Belarus TV broadcasted a TV series titled *Maia Kraina—Belarus'* (*My Country is Belarus*) on various topics in Belarusian history, focusing on areas traditionally belonging to the opposition's domains of historical references, such as the medieval principality of Polatsk and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and historical figures such as St Euphrosyne of Polatsk (1110–73), the poet and theologian Symeon of Polatsk (1629–80), book printer Frantsysk Skaryna (ca 1490–1552), and other historical figures from the nationalist canon.

The following year, the authorities started to show an interest in the 1514 Battle of Orsha, celebrated by the nationalist opposition as the "Day of Belarusian Military Glory." For years, the local authorities put

considerable effort and creativity into preventing the celebrations, which were regularly also accompanied by protests and counter-events organized by Communists and other pro-Soviet forces (Sahm 1999: 653). Some participants faced legal consequences. In September 2005, four members of the BNF were sentenced to pay a fine of almost four million Belarusian rubles (about €1500) each for celebrating the 491st anniversary of the battle. In 2007 the police cordoned off the field, claiming that an anonymous caller had told them that the field had been mined. Therefore, the change was all the more striking when, in 2008, the "Day of Belarusian Military Glory" was allowed to take place, albeit with a sizable police presence. In 2009, the official Belarusian National Tourism Agency included the battle in its promotional material as an event worth commemorating.[17]

Another example of the state's attempted appropriation of nationalist memory projects is the case of the medievalist re-enactment group *Stary Ol'sa*. This group, which is sympathetic to the nationalist opposition, has in recent years been commissioned to perform for the Belarusian military. *Stary Ol'sa* is best known for their interpretation of the ballad The Battle of Orsha (*Bitva pad Orsha*), glorifying the defeat of the Muscovites (Stary Ol'sa official website). YouTube carries clips with uniformed soldiers, led by their officers, clapping their hands and singing along to hymns of the GDL.[18] "A large part of the songs performed by the musicians are dedicated to military historical themes, which ought to assist in raising the young generation of military men," the military organizers stated ("Stary Ol'sa popolnial riady novobrantsev" 2009).

Similarly, the authorities' changed attitudes are also evident in the treatment of historical re-enactors, so-called *Rytsarskiia kluby*, who identify with the military traditions of the GDL. In recent years, re-enactors in historical uniforms of the GDL have become increasingly popular and have also received significant positive coverage in the official media. For example, the group was included in the official program for government-organized 2009 *Year of the Native Soil* festivities (*Kalendar'* 2009: 4). They have also figured prominently in official events such as the 19–20 September 2008 *Dazhynki* Harvest Festival in Orsha. While the latter does not, officially, have any connection to the anniversary of the Battle of Orsha on 8 September, it is telling that an event stressing (official) Belarusian patriotism, the concert "*My—Belarusy*" ("We are Belarusians," the opening line of the official Belarusian anthem) was

held in Orsha during the *Dazhynki* festival, with the word "ORSHA" displayed in huge letters in Old Church Slavonic font over the stage.[19] Moreover, the seventeenth-century Jesuit Collegium, specially restored for the event, was decorated with a mural depicting two "famous personages of the grand Duchy of Lithuania"—Lev Sapieha (1557–1633), editor of the 1588 Lithuanian Statute and Chancellor of the GDL (also a supporter of the Polish–Lithuanian intervention in Muscovy during the "Time of Troubles") and Prince Konstantyn Vasil' Astrauzhski (1526–1608), traditionally known as the defender of the Orthodox faith in the GDL.[20] The selection of Orsha for the annual harvest festival was hardly a coincidence, and it would not be the first time that Lukashenka has tried to upstage or divert attention from oppositional events. President Lukashenka himself appeared at the festival, making a spectacular arrival by helicopter, and delivered a speech in which he denounced the "unemployed" opposition, describing them unworthy of the popular vote (Il'ina 2008). In 2009, oppositional groups commemorated the Battle of Orsha in a different spirit, organizing a giant pillow fight in Minsk. A thoroughly de-politicized event, the organizers emphasized that the event had no political connotations, but was the "best way to release stress and raise the spirits." The pillow fight had the approval of the executive committee of the city of Minsk, and was supervised by the militia ("Boi podushkami" 2009).

Another indicator of the authorities' slowly changing attitude to Belarusian history is discernible in how the regime treats the visiting members of once-dominant dynasties. Visits by representatives of the Romanov family to Belarus were welcomed by high-ranking state representatives, and generated extensive media coverage ("Grand Duchess" 2009).[21] On the other hand, visits by descendants of Polish–Lithuanian magnates, such as the Radziwiłłs, tended to be ignored. Recent years have seen a change also in this regard. When representatives of the Radziwiłł family visited the newly renovated family castle in Nesvizh in 2009, state TV covered their visit extensively. President Lukashenka himself ordered the construction workers to hurry up and complete the renovations in time for the visit. Belarusian authorities treated the visiting Radziwiłłs with reverence and respect. Visiting their family's former land holdings in the Brest area, Maciej Radziwiłł told Polish press how well he had been received in Belarus, musing on how a militiaman had refrained from issuing a ticket upon learning his surname (Narbutt 2009: A16–17).

The regime's quest to appropriate the more distant past has included some blunders. The president, who, somewhat ambitiously, refers to himself as a historian, was heckled by his critics over his 2006 assertions that Frantsysk Skaryna, the first printer of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, who published a Bible in a Belarusian version of Church Slavonic around 1517 was working in St Petersburg (founded 1704) (Snyder 2003: 19):

> What are we embarrassed about? We lived in that state. And Skaryna was not only a Belarusian. He lived in Peter[sburg]. That is where he created. That is our Skaryna. Russians speak about him with pride.[22]

Omissions and Blank Spots

Whereas there has been something of an opening towards certain historical symbolic events which serve national mobilization, others are passed over in silence. The expansion of historical references remains within an ethnic Belarusian/Russian/Orthodox paradigm, whereas the memory of past military conflicts which do not serve the purpose of national consolidation remain suppressed. The memory of Belarusian troops in the service of Nazi Germany is retained for political reasons, the formations denounced as "fascists" and "traitors to the motherland," and linked to today's anti-communist and nationalist oppositional groups; it is frequently insinuated that the latter share not only the symbols but also the fascist characteristics of the former. In the official narrative the Soviet partisans and the Red Army have a monopoly on patriotism. Memories which fall outside this framework are marginalized. This is reflected in the representation of the wartime experience of other ethnic groups. As mentioned above, the Holocaust occupies a peripheral place in official memory culture (Rudling 2013). The memory of those Belarusians who remained loyal to Poland and fought in various military formations under Polish command is marginalized (Grzybowski 2006). In all of Belarus, there is only one single memorial plaque commemorating the soldiers of the *Armia Krajowa* and Polish victims of Soviet terror. References to Belarusian participation in repression of the Polish population are likewise suppressed. Similarly, there is little tolerance for Ukrainian nationalism; in November 2012, the authorities banned the inauguration of a memorial plaque to the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, the UPA, in the village of Dzvin in the Kobryn district. The authorities' attitude to past glories which are not easily "nationalized" is ambivalent,

something which becomes evident in the treatment of the memory of the Napoleonic Wars. On the one hand, dozens of memorials to the Napoleonic Wars and World War I have been restored by the authorities (Kotljarchuk 2013: 24, 29–30). The bicentennial of 1812 was the focus of significant commemorative events in Russia. In Belarus, other than a reenactment of the battle of Berezina, followed by a requiem on 23–24 November 2012, the authorities took little interest in this anniversary. In sharp contrast to their use of "the Great Patriotic War" for the armed conflict of 1941–1945, Belarusian authorities deliberately avoided using the term "the Patriotic War of 1812," long established in the Russian-language historiography, instead referring to the conflict neutrally as "the War of 1812" ("V Belorussii" 2012). If official propaganda constantly reminds the Belarusians of their collective stakes in the common, Soviet victory in the Great Patriotic War, to the current regime, the Russian Empire does not appear to have been a *patria* worthy of rendering this a "patriotic" war.

Conclusion

Despite the increased openness to the oppositional historiography, slightly modified Soviet myths and symbols remain at the center of the rhetoric, symbolism, and historical narrative deployed by the Lukashenka regime. The cult of the Great Patriotic War retains a central role as identity marker, particularly for Lukashenka's core supporters: the older, Soviet generation, current and retired members of the military–industrial complex and their families, older, rural voters, and women (Feduta 2005: 103). Elected on a platform of Soviet nostalgia and on vague promises of reintegration with Russia, Lukashenka has presided over a period of national consolidation and nation building that is unprecedented in modern Belarusian history (Ioffe 2008; Leshchenko 2004: 348). The use of official "patriotism" as a tool to shore up support is a tested strategy among post-socialist regimes (Leshchenko 2008: 1419–1422). The process of "nationalization" in Belarus may not have taken the forms which some of the nationalists in the opposition would have liked to see. However, as Nelly Bekus argues: "The official political discourse, the ideology of the Belarusian state, is in fact a specific version of the Belarusian idea. It coexists and competes with the Belarusianness articulated in the nationalist discourse" (Bekus 2010: 278). An aspect of this is that as the regime adopts an increasingly

"national" form, it seeks to appropriate other parts of Belarusian history, turning it into political capital by adopting some of the references of the nationalist opposition. Meanwhile, the symbols of the BNR remain off-limits, and the regime continues to denounce the opposition as "fascists," "agents," or "traitors," illustrating the weakness, rather than the strength of the regime.

The appropriation of historical references, previously exclusively the preserve of the opposition, is part of the government's attempt to widen its appeal. Ostracized by the West and pressured by an increasingly assertive Russia, Lukashenka has turned to "national" discourses as a tool of mobilization. Whether this will enable the regime to find new appeal beyond its key constituency, the last Soviet generation, remains to be seen.

Notes

1. However, the BNR has occasionally surfaced in the political discussion. In June 2013, David H. Swartz, the former US ambassador to Belarus (1992–94), publicly called upon the Obama administration "to look elsewhere for genuinely democratic governance in Belarus. Specifically—and with all responsibility and seriousness of purpose—I call on the United States to extend formal diplomatic and legal recognition to the Rada of Belarus' government-in-exile, the … BNR, as the country's legitimate authority" (Swartz 2013).
2. The Belarusian heartland formed the *Generalbezirk Weissruthenien*, which was adjoined to the *Reichskommissarat Ostland*, while the westernmost parts around Hrodna and Podliachia became part of the Bezirk Białystok, Polessia was adjoined to the *Reichskommissariat Ukraine*, whereas the eastern Mahileu, Vitsebsk, and Homel' areas were under German military administration. On Belarus under German occupation, see Chiari (1998), Prusin (2010), Turonek (1993).
3. The most authoritative study estimates the population loss at 2.3–2.4 million people. Of these 1.6–1.7 million people were murdered. These included 700,000 POWs, 500,000–550,000 Jews, 354,000 victims of so-called "pacification operations" and 100,000 members of other ethnic groups. To this should be added 550,000–600,000 soldiers from the BSSR killed in battle (Gerlach 1999: 1158–9).
4. On the Stalin Line, see Chap. 8.
5. Some observers have also pointed out that 27 June 1942, was the day when *Generalkommissar* Wilhelm Kube, the top German administrator in occupied Belarus, allowed the *Pahonia* and the white-red-white flag to be

displayed, as "symbols of the Belarusian nationality" (Zen'kovich 2005: 307–8).

6. On the eve of the 2012 National Day, Viktar Sazonau argued in the oppositional journal *ARCHE* that "Belarus also celebrates Independence Day. July 3. Why the third? Why not on the day of the declaration of sovereignty, and not on the Day of Freedom, March 25, when the new rebirth of Belarusian statehood began? But rather on the little-known third [of July], the day of the liberation of Minsk from the Germans in World War II. That day half of the Belarusian people were still under German occupation!" (Sazonau 2012).
7. On the new, post-1995 textbooks, see Zadora (2010: 186–278).
8. However, 17 September 1991 was also the date the extraordinary session of the Supreme Soviet of the BSSR started. At this session, which lasted until 19 September, the name of the state was changed to the Republic of Belarus, and the state symbols of the BNR, the white-red-white flag and the *Pahonia* were adopted as new state symbols (Łatyszonek 2007: 219). The introduction of a day of national unity follows the Russian lead. In Russia, 4 November was similarly designated a "national day of unity" in 2007. The day, which commemorates the expulsion of the Polish army from Moscow in 1612, during Muscovy's Time of Troubles, replaced the Soviet holiday commemorating the October Revolution of 1917. Like the intended Belarusian holiday, the Russian holiday was intended to mobilize the nation by defining an easily identifiable other.
9. On the nationalist discourse on Vorsha, and its place in the *lieux de mémoire*, see Lindner (1999: 457) and Semianchuk (2013).
10. For instance: "The Pahonya and the white, red, and white flag remained the official symbols of the Belarusian People's Republic and its government-in-exile… During the entire 70-year history of the Communist regime, these symbols remained the chief symbols for all people in Belarus in favour of restoring the country's independence" (Lalkou 2010).
11. For hagiographical accounts of Rodz'ko, see the books by Ërsh (Iarsh) (2001, 1998), and Kazak (ed.) (n/d).
12. On the topic of Belarusian collaboration in World War II, see Baranova (2010), Dean (2000), Rein (2011). For examples of the use of the white-red-white flag by units in the service of Nazi Germany, see, for instance *ARCHE* 5 (2008): 232–252 and "Yak Hitler moh peramachy" (2010). For an image showing its use on a recruitment poster for the collaborationist Union of Belarusian Youth (*Saiuz Belaruskae Moladzi*, SBM), see http://jivebelarus.net/viewphoto.html?fid=622.
13. In 2006, as part of the government-orchestrated campaign "For an Independent Belarus," linked to the presidential elections, Belarusian TV broadcast a musical video of the government-sponsored propaganda

song "*Khoziain v dome*" (*The Master of the House*) by the Belarusian group *Siabry*. The song carried a patriotic message of naïve paternalism, linking Belarusian independence directly to Lukashenka, portrayed as the omnipotent and benevolent father of the nation: "Listen to *Bat'ko*:" "He does not teach us anything bad or wrong/*Bat'ko* can accomplish everything/*Bat'ko* can outdo anyone/He is reliable and calm/one look at him, and you see immediately, that he is our master of the house/Our *'Batko'* is strong, but also fair" (Siabry 2006).

14. The phenomenon of awarding prolific reproduction and childrearing was pioneered by Mussolini's Italy in 1933. Nazi Germany followed suit in 1938, whereas the USSR introduced the order *Mat'-geroinia* [*Mother-Heroine*] in 1944, for women giving birth to more than ten children (Weyrather 1990, 1993; de Grazia 1992: 71).
15. The Belarusian population has continued to decrease despite this award, albeit less rapidly than that of neighboring Ukraine and Russia. There is little evidence that these sorts of state decorations have had much effect on the population decline. In July 2009 the population was estimated at 9,648,533, a decline from 10,151,800 in the 1989 census. Retrieved 24 August 2009 from https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bo.html.
16. More examples can be found at: http://www.belta.by/posters/.
17. Nowadays, even the official Belarusian National Tourism Agency makes references to this day. "The famous Orsha battle in which Belarusian troops defeated the Russian army took place on 8 September 1514. This day is annually marked as the Day of Belarusian Military Glory" (*Turizm v Belarusi* 2009).
18. The video segments posted online do not include "Bitva pad Vorsha," although that piece figures prominently in Stary Ol'sa's repertoire. For their February 2009 performance for detachments of the 120th Rachachou motorized brigade, see "'Stary Ol'sa' u voisku" (2009), "Foto i video" (2009).
19. For an example of this, see the video from the *My—Belarusy* concert with a performance of the song "*Belaruska ia"* (in Russian) by teenybopper pop singer Ksenia Sitnik (2009).
20. Konstantyn Vasil' Astouzhski is certainly a less controversial figure for the Belarusian authorities than his father, Grand Hetman Konstantyn Astrauzhski, who led the Lithuanian–Polish forces against the Muscovite army at the Battle of Vorsha. In the popular mind, however, the two are often confused.
21. The welcoming attitude by the authorities contrasted sharply with the sharp criticism from the nationalist opposition regarding the presence of members of the Romanov dynasty on Belarusian territory. BNF leader

Vintsuk Vyachorka protested against Maria Romanova's presence in Belarus, arguing that the "Romanovs are occupiers of our Motherland. They are murderous personalities. Romanov's hands are covered with the blood of … [m]illions of Belarusian peasants, noblemen, bourgeois, priests, dukes" ("Vinstuk Vyachorka: 'The House of Romanov'").

22. Lukashenka's speech on Belarus TV is available online; retrieved 13 August 2009 from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yd0yIhtKI_8.

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CHAPTER 4

Reclaiming the Past, Confronting the Past: OUN–UPA Memory Politics and Nation Building in Ukraine (1991–2016)

Yuliya Yurchuk

Controversies over the history and memory of the wartime nationalist movement represented by the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and its military arm the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA)[1] occupy center stage in Ukrainian public life today. For more than two decades now, this issue has dominated Ukrainian debates on memory politics, with successive political leaders using their position on the OUN–UPA as a primary means of self-definition. And yet the prominence of this topic was not inevitable or pre-ordained. Rather, we are dealing with a process whereby what was originally a regional and rather marginal narrative has gradually become more prominent since the 1980s. In this chapter, I trace the history of this memory from 1991

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to the present. Via an analysis of the changing official political discourse over this period, I investigate what role the issue of the OUN and UPA has played in Ukrainian political debates, and how it has been instrumentalized by different political actors. Which political forces supported and which opposed the establishment of the heroic narrative of the OUN and UPA, and why? My account traces how memory politics changed with the major transformations in Ukrainian political and social life during this period. I argue that post-independence memory politics in Ukraine have been shaped in crucial ways by the tension between two different frameworks of dealing with the past: reclaiming the past, which involves the reordering of hierarchies between previously dominant and subordinate groups in a society, on the one hand; and *Vergangenheitsbewälting* or "coming to terms with the past," which emphasizes a critical view on the difficult aspects of the past, on the other.

Competing Myths: The "Great Patriotic War" vs Ukrainian "National Liberation"

Post-Soviet Ukrainian memory politics need to be viewed first and foremost in the context of the enduring legacy of the Soviet war myth. The significance of World War II in the foundational mythology of the Soviet Union cannot be overestimated; the importance, workings and function of the Soviet war myth have been well established by distinguished scholars (see in particular Tumarkin 1994 and Weiner 2001). The nodal point of this foundational myth was an emphasis on a pronounced anti-fascism that symbolically divided the world into two camps: fascist and anti-fascist. The anti-fascist banner was used as a key justification for Soviet ideology and as proof of the superiority of the Soviet system (Grunenberg 1993). In the interests of preserving the purity of this myth, no questioning or criticism of the Soviet leadership or the Red Army's actions during or after the war was permitted (Kattago 2008).

In the last years of the Soviet Union, the official narrative of the Great Patriotic War started to be questioned in some former Soviet republics. Not everyone within the former Soviet Union saw the Red Army's victory as liberation. For many, especially in the Baltic republics, the victory over Nazism marked the beginning of Soviet occupation. Anti-Soviet narratives of World War II now laid the ground for new national identities in the post-Soviet space. In Ukraine, the history of the OUN and UPA became one of the new themes taken up by national democratic

groups that formed in the late 1980s under the umbrella of the People's Movement of Ukraine (*Narodnyi Rukh Ukrainy*). Some of the national democrats who emerged from the dissident sphere had personally encountered former UPA fighters in the Gulag. Many UPA veterans were still alive at this point, and now joined the local associations of the victims of political repressions that were set up in the late 1980s. Thus, despite its suppression by the authorities, the history of the UPA was preserved as a living memory in Ukraine. The UPA fighters were remembered first and foremost as victims of the Soviet regime.

Two competing narratives of the history of the OUN and UPA have tended to define them categorically as either "villains" or "heroes" (Marples 2007). During the Soviet period, the OUN and UPA were stigmatized as a small anomalous group of "bourgeois nationalists" and "fascist collaborators" against the broader picture of the "normal" "brethren" Ukrainian people who welcomed Soviet rule and "reunification" with the Russian people (Yekelchyk 2004). Partly as a reaction to this Soviet narrative, the Ukrainian national democratic opposition has tended to present the OUN and UPA first and foremost as heroic fighters and martyrs for Ukraine's independence—a narrative that had long been promoted by the Ukrainian diaspora in Canada and the USA and which elides or airbrushes the negative aspects of the organizations' actions and ideology.

The history of the OUN and UPA can be classified as *difficult knowledge*, that is, knowledge about a group's past which is hard to position in the realm of glory, pride, or victimhood, in other words, in the space of positively laden affect (Yurchuk 2014: 41). This applies in particular to the issue of collaboration with Nazi Germany and OUN–UPA attitudes towards ethnic minorities living in the territory of Ukraine, first of all Jews and Poles (Himka 2005; Melamed 2007; Berkhoff 2008). With World War II approaching, the OUN accepted support from Nazi Germany. The OUN leadership believed that the German aggression against the Polish state and the Soviet Union would increase Ukraine's chances of independence and that Nazi Germany would support the Ukrainian cause. But the Nazis were not even prepared to countenance creating a Ukrainian puppet state, let alone granting Ukraine its independence. Soon after the OUN–B proclaimed the establishment of a Ukrainian state in L'viv on 30 June 1941, the day the Wehrmacht entered the city, the Nazis moved to arrest many OUN members, including their leader, Stepan Bandera. Especially from this point, the OUN

relations with Nazi Germany became complicated; sometimes they collaborated, and sometimes they fought against the Germans, improvising and adapting their position as they went along (Bruder 2007). Consequently, the term "collaboration" does not fully or accurately reflect the OUN's complicated relations with Nazi Germany.

The OUN members, many of whom joined the auxiliary police, were involved in the extermination of the Jewish population in Western Ukraine in the first weeks and months of the German occupation (Himka 2011a, b). In 1943–1944 the UPA committed mass killings of Poles in Volhynia and Eastern Galicia as the OUN leaders believed that once the war was over the Polish population would pose the main threat to forming an independent Ukraine in these territories (Motyka and Libionka 2002; Ilyushyn 2009; Motyka 2011). Complicity in the Holocaust and ethnic cleansing of the Polish population (officially declared a genocide in Poland in 2016) corresponded with the ideology of the OUN, a radical form of ethnic nationalism influenced by Italian fascism (Bruder 2007; Zaitsev 2013). Nationalism, however, did not prevent the persecution of ethnic Ukrainians deemed insufficiently loyal by the OUN (Snyder 2003: 164). Most of these difficult aspects of the past are often ignored, neglected, simplified, or outright denied by proponents who have been trying to establish heroic visions of the OUN and UPA in Ukraine since the 1990s.

In the early years of Ukraine's independence, the Soviet Great Patriotic War myth, now adjusted to the nation-building agenda, remained at the core of the official memory politics. The heroic cult of the OUN and UPA was relevant only in those regions of Western Ukraine where the OUN and UPA were active, that is in the L'viv, Ivano-Frankivs'k, Rivne, Luts'k, and Ternopil' oblasts. At the national level the heroic cult of the OUN and UPA was in fact rather marginal up to 2005 when, in the wake of the Orange Revolution, Viktor Yushchenko embarked on the official "rehabilitation" of Ukrainian nationalism, seen as the long awaited restoration of historical justice. In subsequent years, two alternative, indeed mutually exclusive narratives of the OUN and UPA and their role in Ukrainian history polarized public opinion and contributed to the political conflict which split Ukrainian society and the ruling elites. Since the 2013–2014 Euromaidan in particular, the history of radical Ukrainian nationalism has been instrumentalized by Russian state propaganda that demonizes the OUN and UPA and equates Ukrainian nationalism with "fascism." At the same time, the

Ukrainian Institute for National Remembrance promotes the heroic cult of the OUN and UPA as a model for today's fight against the Russian aggression.

"Reclaiming the Past" Vs "Coming to Terms with the Past"

The memory of the OUN and UPA has resonated so strongly in Ukrainian society in part because it goes in tandem with the need to reclaim history as part of the national liberation project that has been closely connected to nation- and state-building processes. The concept of "reclaiming the past" in the process of nation building as a way of dealing with colonial legacies in the post-Soviet space was introduced by Taras Kuzio (2002). Indeed, "reclaiming the past," or regaining control over the narrative of national history which during the Russian and Soviet rule was imposed from the imperial center, has been on the agenda of national democrats since the late 1980s. It corresponds with the vision of Ukraine as a post-colonial state still struggling to emancipate its national identity, collective memory, and culture from colonial legacies (e.g. Riabchuk 2008). My usage of the term "reclamation" also draws upon the scholarship on the discursive and narrative formation of identity (Godrej 2011). Here, reclamation is viewed as a strategy employed as part of the effort to create a new order after the fracturing of an old one. In this way, reclamation can be an effective strategy for resistance, giving the silenced the power to tell their own story.

The American philosopher Hilde Lindemann Nelson conceptualizes the telling of stories as a method of resistance. She underlines the inherently selective nature of the process of constructing one's narrative of the self: "By selectively depicting and characterizing the acts and events of my life that are important to me … by plotting these various elements in ways that connect my stories to other stories that give my stories their overall significance, I come to an understanding of who I am" (Nelson 2001: 6). In this sense, telling stories about the past can become a resource for counter-narratives aimed at resisting and undermining the oppressive identity and replacing it with one that fosters dignity and respect. Counter-narratives can thus become tools for repairing the damage inflicted on identities by abusive power systems. In what follows I argue that the heroic narrative of the OUN–UPA was formed as a counter-narrative that followed the logic of reclamation. In this

connection, the Soviet narrative about the OUN–UPA as "fascist collaborators" has been denounced as false and violently imposed by the Soviet regime, and in its place a counter-narrative has been formed which presents the OUN and UPA as "heroic fighters for Ukraine's independence," a "national resistance" movement, and an "anti-Soviet underground."

At the same time, the controversial history of the OUN and UPA, in particular its abovementioned dark sides, requires a critical attitude towards the past. Consequently, the concept of *Vergangenheitbewältigung* or "coming to terms with the past" is also relevant here. This term refers first of all to the German model of dealing with the Nazi past, whereby history is approached with awareness and recognition of the nation's own guilt (Leggewie and Meyer 2005: 30; Fischer and Lorenz 2007). The notion of coming to terms with the past posits a critical attitude and moral responsibility for a nation's wrongdoings in the past as a crucial part of democracy and human rights culture. While the German case remains exceptional, *Vergangenheitbewältigung* lies at the core of what has been labeled "European memory culture" (Leggewie 2008). There is a dynamic tension between the two principles operating here: as a new nation-state, Ukraine seeks to reclaim its history and identity; at the same time, as a nation which has declared a commitment to European values and made European integration its strategic goal, it is learning to deal with its past in a responsible way. As a post-colonial state, Ukraine needs to produce its own history, distanced from the Soviet master narrative; as a (potentially) European state it is expected to be self-reflexive and self-critical about its past. The post-colonial agenda of reclaiming the past may be questioned on the grounds that glorifying national heroes and silencing or even denying their involvement in perpetrating atrocities and human rights violations runs counter to the proclaimed adherence to European values. This tension is most visible in the case of OUN–UPA memory politics. While some critics of the politics of glorification of the OUN–UPA wonder why democratic Ukraine should choose to take up the legacy of such an undemocratic organization as the OUN (see Rudling 2010: 268), nationalist-oriented Ukrainian historians such as Volodymyr Viatrovych claim that the OUN and UPA fighters for national independence still serve as an important role model in a country that continues to be engaged in a struggle against Russian imperialism. In the following sections I demonstrate how this dynamic tension between reclaiming the

past and confronting the past has unfolded in Ukraine during the post-Soviet decades.

Filling in the "Blank Spots" of History Under Gorbachev and Beyond

The policy of perestroika (*perebudova* in Ukrainian) proclaimed by Gorbachev in 1985 brought along the politics of glasnost' that allowed open discussion of previously silenced historical issues. Alexander Etkind has pointed out that the drive for truth was strong in Soviet society, where access to knowledge about the past (even the past of one's closest family) was limited and where memory had a largely prescriptive character, whereby the forms and content of remembering were censored and filtered by the state (2013: 74). Political developments in the final years of the Soviet Union from the mid-1980s through to the definitive Soviet collapse in late 1991 were shaped in important ways by the struggle to recover historical truth. Civic activists and journalists worked to map the so-called "blank spots" of Soviet history, to generate public debate around these previously silenced issues and to bring this new historical knowledge to society. The blank spots included the state terror of the Stalin period, the man-made Great Famine of 1932–1933, and the Ukrainian nationalists' armed struggle for independence. Activists from Narodnyi Rukh, the Memorial Society, and other civic initiatives were the first to respond to Ukrainian society's growing demand for historical knowledge.

It was only upon the attainment of national independence in 1991 that the Ukrainian state adopted the agenda of "reclaiming the past," first of all by means of symbolic politics and reform of the education system. But the official politics of memory waged during the early years of independence was quite ambiguous, and the figure of the first president—Leonid Kravchuk, the former Ukrainian Communist Party head of ideology who now embraced the nation-building agenda—reflected this ambiguity. A compromise between the old and new political elites resulted in the emergence of a hybrid state in which political power remained in the hands of the former communist elite, but was now adorned with a facade of national symbols promoted by national democratic groups (Wilson 1997, 2005; Riabchuk 2008). As Mykola Riabchuk has argued, the post-Soviet former communist elite (the

"sovereign communists," as he called them) did not embrace all the national symbols and narratives wholeheartedly; rather, they accepted them "opportunistically as something to be further bargained, negotiated and re-interpreted" (2008: 4). Meanwhile, the former communist elite managed to retain some power by transforming its social capital into economic assets. By contrast, the democrats were mainly in charge of "soft politics"—identity politics, education, and culture. The key task in this realm was to replace the dominant historical narrative of the Soviet era with a new narrative of Ukrainian national history that would enable "reestablishment of a unified historical memory" (Kuzio 1998: 214). During the Soviet period, as we have seen, the history of Ukraine had been presented as the continuous striving for unification with the Russian "elder brother"; in the post-Soviet years, Ukrainian history was re-narrated as a centuries-long struggle for independence.

The new national narrative which was established in the early independence years draws on the populist Ukrainian historiography based on the traditions of romanticism and positivism that was established by mid-nineteenth-century historians. This scheme underlines the distinctiveness of the Ukrainian people among other Slavs and demonstrates that Ukraine has always followed its own separate historical path (Kohut 2011). Within this scheme, the goal of Ukrainian history is national independence and state sovereignty. In this framework, the Ukrainian nationalist struggle for independence during World War II came to be seen as one of the pivotal elements in the history of national liberation.

The Ukrainian diaspora in the USA and Canada played a key role in developing the heroic image of the OUN and UPA after World War II (Himka 2005; Rossoliński-Liebe 2010; Rudling 2011b, 2013).[2] During the early years of independence, this role became even more important, as members and organizations of the Ukrainian diaspora were active in bringing this heroic narrative to Ukraine. For instance, the diaspora worked closely with local patriotic organizations such as *Prosvita* and *Plast* in the early 1990s in organizing commemorative events in Hurby (the site of a major battle between the UPA and the Soviet NKVD in spring 1944) or in smaller villages where the UPA conducted their actions (Yurchuk 2014).

Ukrainian diaspora historians played an important role in changing paradigms of history writing. Before Ukraine produced its own post-Soviet history textbooks, Canadian historian Orest Subtelny's *Ukraine: A History* (Subtelny 1988; first published in Ukraine in 1991) often

served as a textbook in Ukrainian schools and universities. Subtelny's book features only a couple of pages on the topic of the OUN and the UPA, but it was the first to fill in the blank spot on this topic. Subtelny's approach largely corresponded with the narrative promoted by the national democrats. In his book, the OUN is presented as an organization that "strove to become a broadly based ideological/revolutionary movement, whose objective was the achievement of integral nationalist goals" (1993: 444) and the UPA is labeled the "underground resistance" (473). Subtelny dealt with the UPA massacres of Poles in Volhynia and Eastern Galicia in a rather cursory fashion, underlining the reciprocal character of the mass killings. It is important to note, however, that the very fact of mentioning these events was revolutionary for its time (474–475).[3]

Schools and universities were the main channel for disseminating the newly formed national historical narrative after 1991. Thus, while history education was used to establish *Homo Sovieticus* during the Soviet period, in independent Ukraine, history education was used to establish *Homo Ukrainicus* (Richardson 2004; Kas'ianov 2008; Kasianov 2012). As the Swedish historian Johan Dietsch has argued, in independent Ukraine "'nationalization' became a lens through which all education was to be filtered and with which it was possible to rid the educational apparatus of Soviet remnants" (Dietsch 2006: 80). In this connection, history education can be seen as an instance of what Pierre Ricoeur has called the "forced memorization" of past events "held to be remarkable, even founding, with respect to the common identity" (Ricoeur 2004: 85). In school and university textbooks the OUN and UPA were presented as an integral part of the history of Ukrainian national liberation and state building.[4] The liberation struggle became the dominant lens through which the ideology and activities of these organizations were interpreted. The formation of this memory of national liberation and underground resistance, like the formation of any memory, was a highly selective process. In this case, any facts that could undermine the flawless status of the resistance movement were suppressed, while the struggle against the Soviet regime, on the contrary, was underlined wherever possible (Dietsch 2006; Marples 2007). Of course, the actual teaching practice on the ground often diverged from the official curriculum, as demonstrated by Peter Rodgers's study of history teaching in eastern Ukraine (2008). Still, at the level of the official state education policies, the contents of the history textbooks demonstrate the new master

narrative of the heroic OUN and UPA as a "liberation movement." Moreover, the broader narrative of World War II history also changed during this period because the Soviet concept of the Great Patriotic War was dropped and replaced in textbooks with World War II. To sum up, during the early years of independence the Soviet taboo on the topic of the OUN and UPA was broken and the newly formed heroic narrative of the national liberation struggle during and after World War II entered media coverage, history writing and education.

The Kuchma Presidency: A Decade of Ambivalence

The 1994 presidential elections were held in the context of widespread economic hardship linked to the post-Soviet transition. The elections brought to power Leonid Kuchma, who ran on a platform centered on promising to stabilize the country. In his election campaign, Kuchma appealed to the Russian-speaking population of Eastern Ukraine, promising better relations with Russia and an end to the "reign of Galician nationalism," by which he meant the influence of the Western Ukrainian elites on Kyiv (Wolczuk 2001: 139).[5] A former "red director," Kuchma presented himself as an "efficient administrator" free of ideological sentiment, and as a commonsense politician whose aim was maintaining the status quo and avoiding conflict (Kulyk 2010: 320–321).

During his term in office (1994–2004) Kuchma made some concessions to national democrats, whose support he often needed in order to break the Communist majority in the parliament. Thus, for example, it was under Kuchma that Holodomor commemorations were added to the official calendar. At the same time, however, Kuchma did not touch the foundations of the Soviet commemorative culture; in fact, he even ordered the official celebration of the jubilee of Volodymyr Shcherbytsky, the leader of the Communist Party of Ukraine from 1972 to 1989. Acutely aware of the controversial nature of the OUN–UPA issue and the strong prejudices against Ukrainian nationalism in the east of the country, Kuchma adapted his speeches to the political preferences of the local population. Thus, when in L'viv, he praised the UPA; when in Donbas; the Soviet Army veterans (Portnov 2013). Commemoration of the OUN and UPA remained a local phenomenon limited to small towns and villages in the L'viv, Luts'k, Ternopil, and Rivne regions, where the UPA was active. Even in these regions, it was only after 2000 that the first monuments appeared in big cities, and these were for the most

part local initiatives financed by local councils, private businesses and individuals.

Kuchma justified his reluctance to address the UPA issue at the national level by citing the lack of consensus among the ruling elites. At the time, heated debates were raging on this issue in the parliament, with the national democrats and the Communists representing opposing positions. The national democrats demanded recognition of the UPA veterans as equal to Soviet Army veterans in terms of official status, rights, and pension provisions. The left forces in the parliament, who continued to see the history of the OUN and UPA from the Soviet perspective, vehemently opposed this demand. Kuchma initially played a waiting game. Eventually, in 1997, on his initiative, a special governmental commission was established with the aim of investigating and evaluating the history of the OUN and UPA. The commission included a working group of professional historians, led by Stanislav Kul'chyts'kyi.

In its concluding report, published in 2005, the historians' working group noted the extreme complexity of the issue. The working group concluded that it would be problematic to establish a single non-contradictory narrative of the history of the OUN–UPA which would be accepted unconditionally in all regions of Ukraine, given how much local experiences of World War II had differed ("Conclusions" 2005). The concluding report addressed controversial issues such as the situational alliance with Nazi Germany, and strove to do so in a non-partisan manner, avoiding the stereotypes and biases of the standard Soviet and heroic narratives alike. In this way, the commission's work constituted an important step towards contemporary European practices of coming to terms with the past and set clear limits on the reclamation of the past paradigm within which the national democrats operated.

Overall, in the early 2000s, the heroic memory of the OUN and UPA continued to be cherished to a greater degree in those regions where their activities still remained in the communicative memory of the local population. In Eastern and Central Ukraine, however, the popular attitude to the OUN and UPA remained largely negative, as these organizations were still associated first and foremost with radical Ukrainian nationalism and collaboration with the Nazis. At the national level, as far as commemorative practices were concerned, Kuchma adhered to the conclusions of the historians' working group and made no attempt to impose a single narrative of the OUN and UPA. Nevertheless, history textbooks nationwide continued to disseminate the narrative of the

OUN and UPA as a "liberation" and "resistance" movement. Later, after the Orange Revolution and especially after the Euromaidan, it would be this heroic narrative that was institutionalized in the memory politics at the national level.

Memory at War: The Past Enters Ukrainian Electoral Politics

Kuchma's last years in power were characterized by a deep political crisis. Following the murder of an independent Ukrainian journalist Georgiy Gongadze in 2000, allegations of Kuchma's role in the murder led to the political isolation of the Ukrainian president in the West and pushed him to seek closer relations with Moscow. Some of his former allies turned into political rivals. Viktor Yushchenko, the Prime Minister in 1999–2001 and Yulia Tymoshenko, the vice prime minister on energy issues in Yushchenko's cabinet, created their own parties. Viktor Yushchenko's "Our Ukraine" bloc, which united a number of small national democratic and nationalist parties, won successes in the 2002 parliamentary elections. The strengthening of the national democratic opposition and the fragmentation of the left (Oleksandr Moroz's Socialist Party, unlike the Communists, had now joined the anti-Kuchma coalition) created a new political constellation on the eve of the 2004 presidential elections. Viktor Yushchenko, the popular leader of the parliamentary opposition, represented the national democratic camp, combining a national emancipation agenda with the pro-European choice. His opponent from the "party of power," chosen by President Kuchma as his successor, the acting Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovych, was a representative of the Donetsk oligarchic clan. While Yushchenko's pro-Ukrainian and anti-Communist electorate was concentrated in the west and center, the Russian-speaking Yanukovych appealed to voters in the east by labeling his opponent a "nationalist" and even "fascist." Both candidates built their election campaign on divisive historical narratives and symbols.

As early as 2002 Yushchenko began to attend local UPA commemorative ceremonies on a regular basis. For instance, on 13 October 2002 he took part in the unveiling of a UPA memorial (in the form of the Ukrainian coat of arms on the top of a hill) in the small village of Hutvyn, in Kostopil' region, about 80 km from Rivne (Fomenko 2002; Kolodiazhnyi 2002). Never before had small villages attracted so much attention from such high-ranking state officials. It was precisely

during this period of Yushchenko's growing popularity as a leader of the national democratic opposition that the OUN and UPA commemorations that had started in villages and small towns in the 1990s moved to the cities. In 2002, the first monument to the UPA in an oblast capital center was built in the West Ukrainian city of Rivne. The monument was dedicated to Klym Savur, a UPA leader notorious for his role in the mass killing of Poles in Volhynia in 1943 (Motyka 2011, 2013). In 2003 the construction of an impressive monument to Stepan Bandera started in L'viv (unveiled in 2007). At the regional level the attitude to the OUN and UPA among the local elites strongly correlated with affiliation to the rival camps. Such affiliation was often demonstrated through participation in a memory project, such as construction of a monument, or a commemorative ceremony. In Rivne, for instance, support for Yushchenko was demonstrated through memory projects dedicated to the OUN and UPA, while support for Kuchma was displayed through memory projects dedicated to Soviet partisans (Yurchuk 2014).

Yushchenko's exhortations to the memory of OUN and UPA touched the hearts of many in the western regions of the country, where this memory had a strong emotional charge conveyed through family stories and its pronounced anti-Soviet associations. Moreover, by the 2000s throughout the country a new generation of voters appeared who had been raised on the textbooks in which the OUN and UPA were represented as fighters for liberation, in line with the "resistance" narrative. This narrative in turn contributed to the attractiveness of the idea of resistance more broadly, including resistance to the present Kuchma regime.[6]

The struggle between President Kuchma and the national democratic opposition was reflected in the debates and activities around the 60th anniversary of the Volhynia massacre which coincided with the beginning of the presidential election campaign in 2003.[7] Both Kuchma and Yushchenko faced the difficult task of stating a clear position on the Volhynian events without alienating Ukrainian or Polish public opinion. As president in office, Kuchma prioritized Ukrainian–Polish cooperation and thus supported the politics of reconciliation. In July 2003 Kuchma and Polish President Aleksander Kwaśniewski met in the village of Pavlivka to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Volhynia events, now declared a "common tragedy" shared by the Ukrainian and Polish peoples. Kuchma was deeply unpopular in Western Ukraine at the time, and his politics of reconciliation with Poland was rejected by the nationalist-minded public who saw it as an admission of Ukrainian guilt.

At the same time, at the peak of the "Kuchmagate" scandal over the Gongadze killing and other crimes, Ukrainian liberals and pro-European public intellectuals aspiring to Ukrainian–Polish reconciliation at the civil society level denied Kuchma's legitimacy as a leader and his moral right to apologize on behalf of the Ukrainian nation (Hrytsak 2004: 134). Against this background, Yushchenko's ambivalent position was generally perceived as more "balanced." With an electoral base in Western Ukraine, Yushchenko emphasized the Ukrainian victimhood narrative and the legitimacy of the memory of Polish atrocities against Ukrainians. In his letter to Adam Michnik on the theme of Ukrainian–Polish relations during World War II, Yushchenko stressed that Ukrainian efforts aimed at studying the crimes committed against Ukrainians by Poles were not driven by any "desire to belittle the Polish tragedy" but instead reflected a striving on the part of Ukrainians to "know their own history better" (Yushchenko 2003).[8] In this way Yushchenko positioned the history of the conflict firmly within the framework of *reclamation* of the past. His main argument was that Ukraine had long been deprived of knowledge about its own history and was now struggling to regain this knowledge. Yushchenko's image as a pro-European politician was so strong before and shortly after the Orange Revolution that his sympathy for the OUN and UPA did not affect his popularity in Poland. It was due to Yushchenko's personal involvement that the protracted conflict around the Polish "Eaglets'" war cemetery in Lviv was finally settled in 2005: with his high moral credit in both Poland and Western Ukraine, Yushchenko was able to achieve more in terms of practical reconciliation than the outgoing and rather unpopular President Kuchma.

During his official visit to Poland on 9 May 2003, Yushchenko made a point of visiting Auschwitz. In this way, he connected a symbolic gesture demonstrating his commitment to European memory culture with his own family history (his father was in Auschwitz as a Soviet POW). In June 2004 the "Our Ukraine" faction in the Ukrainian parliament expelled Oleh Tiahnybok, the future leader of the radical nationalist Svoboda, for his anti-Semitic and xenophobic public statements. Seeking to reach a broader electorate in the 2004 presidential elections, Yushchenko also spoke in favor of reconciliation between the UPA and Soviet veterans and tried to embrace the anti-fascist narrative, as his visit to Auschwitz shows.

At the same time, Yushchenko's opponent Viktor Yanukovych denounced him as a "fascist." Yanukovych was a proponent of the

neo-Soviet narrative of the Great Patriotic War which had already been reinstitutionalized in Russia by this stage by President Putin. On 28 October 2004, three days before the preliminary ballot, a pompous public celebration of the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Ukraine from Nazi occupation was organized in Kyiv (*Radio Svoboda* 2004). On the occasion of this celebration, Putin made a three-day visit to Ukraine in order to demonstrate Russia's support for Yanukovych.

Ultimately, Yanukovych's stake on Russian support misfired. The younger generation of voters firmly supported Yushchenko's drive to emancipate Ukraine from its Soviet and communist legacy and his pro-European orientation. The Russian government's strongly negative reaction to the Orange Revolution and its continuing denunciation of the Ukrainian leadership as "nationalist" and "fascist," together with Russian official memory politics around the war more broadly, all contributed to a strengthening of the heroic narrative of the OUN and UPA as part of the new national consciousness in Ukraine. Especially after Putin's rise to power in 2000, Russian memory politics had become increasingly hostile to the new national history narratives of other former Soviet republics. In the official Russian narrative of World War II, Russians were portrayed as the only participants in the victory over Nazi Germany while Ukrainians along with representatives of other nationalities were increasingly bracketed out of this narrative (Astrov 2012). Russian neo-imperialist and nationalist interpretations of the Great Patriotic War myth alienated many Ukrainians, and a new understanding of World War II as a national tragedy in which Ukrainians fighting in both the Soviet Army and the UPA were seen as victims and heroes started to gain popularity.

Controversy Over Normalization of the OUN–UPA Memory

Yushchenko's victory in the 2004 presidential election marked the beginning of the normalization[9] of OUN–UPA memory at the state level by both discursive and institutional means. The narrative supported by President Yushchenko can be called "integration-oriented" (Portnov 2013: 175), as it was an attempt to merge the heroic cult of the UPA and some elements of the Great Patriotic War myth. In the first months of his presidency Yushchenko spoke about reconciliation through dialogue between the veterans of the Soviet army and the UPA and promised to provide the same social benefits to both groups. In practice,

however, Yushchenko failed to translate these declarations into any concrete political steps.[10] His attempt at initiating a "joint" celebration of Victory Day by both UPA and Soviet Army veterans in Kyiv in 2005 was a dismal failure. Reconciliation was not a popular idea in a society torn by "memory wars" while Soviet veterans' organizations often supported the Party of Regions and the Communist Party against the Orange coalition.

With the purpose of institutionalizing the new politics of memory, in 2006 Yushchenko sanctioned the foundation of the Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance. The Institute was established as a central executive body operating under the Ukrainian Cabinet of Ministers with the aim of "restoration and preservation of the national memory of the Ukrainian people" (Postanova 2006). In 2008, Volodymyr Viatrovych, a young historian from L'viv who had previously worked at the Center for Research of the Liberation Movement and was known for his affirmative nationalist approach to Ukraine's past, was appointed the academic adviser to the head of the Ukrainian Security Service (SBU) in charge of its archives. President Yushchenko assigned the SBU the new functions of managing archives, conducting historical research, and popularizing the new official approach to Ukrainian history. The archives related to the history of the OUN and UPA were to a large extent declassified and opened to historians.

The Institute of National Remembrance cooperated with the SBU and the Center for Research of the Liberation Movement (L'viv) to organize an exhibition "The UPA: History of the Unbowed" which traveled throughout Ukraine from September 2008 to May 2009. The exhibition presented the UPA as heroic fighters for Ukraine's independence while avoiding controversial issues of complicity in the Holocaust and mass killings of the Polish population. About 60,200 people visited the exhibition and more than 350 different mass media outlets covered the event, resulting in more than a hundred articles in the printed media, and dozens of mentions on national and local TV and radio programs (INR 2009). Luts'k and Rivne boasted a record number of visitors to the exhibition; here, excursions for schoolchildren and students were organized. By contrast, in the east and south of the country where local councils were largely in the hands of the Party of Regions, the exhibition met with a negative reaction, and at best with indifference. In Luhans'k the exhibition was sabotaged by the municipal authorities and ended up being canceled. In Odesa a parallel anti-UPA exhibition was organized

and in Zaporizhzhia, a local Communist Party deputy destroyed one of the exhibits (INR 2009). Moreover, in spring 2010 Vadym Kolesnychenko, a notorious pro-Russian deputy from the Party of Regions, organized a counter-exhibition "The Volhynia Massacre: Polish and Jewish victims of the UPA," which was shown in Kyiv and Odesa. The fact that Kolesnychenko did this in cooperation with a nationalist Polish "association of victims of Ukrainian nationalism" caused particular outrage in the Ukrainian media.

In 2007 Ukrainian society split over memory politics once again when Yushchenko granted the title of Hero of Ukraine to Roman Shukhevych, the commander of the UPA. Even more controversially, in January 2010, during his last days in office, Yushchenko granted the same title to Stepan Bandera, the icon of radical Ukrainian nationalism.[11] This controversial decree also had significant international resonance. It was criticized by Polish President Lech Kaczyński (who otherwise personally sympathized with Yushchenko and shared his conservative agenda), as well as by other Polish politicians and by the Roman Catholic Church in Poland. Jewish organizations such as the Simon Wiesenthal Center declared their deep concern regarding the decree which was seen as part of the relativization of the Holocaust (Rudling 2010: 263). On 22 February 2010 the European Parliament, at the initiative of its Polish members, passed a special resolution denouncing Yushchenko's decision ("Resolution" 2010). The resolution was welcomed by the Russian authorities, while Yushchenko personally wrote a letter to the European Parliament seeking to justify his action.

Despite this widespread criticism, Yushchenko considered memory politics to be one of the main successes of his presidency. Lacking any notable achievements in the realms of the economy or international relations (the EU membership which he had promised was still a very distant prospect), he focused instead on his less tangible victories in the field of memory politics. For Yushchenko, history had been reclaimed, and this was his victory.

The Yushchenko era resulted in rather controversial outcomes. The politics of memory institutionalized by Yushchenko at the state level was aimed at creating a new affirmative narrative of national history which included the OUN–UPA as heroic fighters for Ukraine's independence. This politics was criticized by many Western and Ukrainian historians and intellectuals who saw it as a one-sided attempt to whitewash controversial aspects of history of Ukrainian nationalism (Amar et al. 2010).

Favoring *reclamation of the past* the Ukrainian Institute of National remembrance showed little interest in a more critical approach. Certainly, Yushchenko's politics were permanently under attack, but the criticism by his political opponents came mainly from the left, pro-Russian and Soviet-nostalgic perspective and was dismissive of the whole phenomenon of Ukrainian nationalism by indiscriminately labeling all UPA fighters "fascists," "Nazi collaborators," and "traitors." This criticism had little in common with European practices of "coming to terms with the past," which call for a non-ideological approach based on grounded historical research and education. And yet, the very attempt at normalizing the memory of the OUN–UPA, despite its highly divisive effects on Ukrainian society, internationalized the debate about Ukrainian history, stimulated public discussions about the controversial issues of the past, and actually made possible a critical approach to the OUN and UPA from a pro-Ukrainian perspective.

Euromaidan and Beyond

The victory of Viktor Yanukovych in the 2010 presidential elections brought about a new radical turn in the Ukrainian politics of memory. In May that year, a joint Ukrainian–Russian–Belarusian celebration of the Victory in World War II was held, and the notion of the Great Patriotic War returned to the public utterances of high-ranking politicians. This was the first time that a military parade with the participation of the Russian military took place in Kyiv; previously such parades had taken place only in Sevastopol, as host of the Russian Black Sea Fleet. In May 2011, the Ukrainian parliament amended the Law "On the Immortalization of the Victory in the Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945" which ordered the use of the Soviet flag—the "Banner of Victory"—next to the national flag on the Victory day and other occasions such as the anniversary of the liberation of a given city from German occupation. This amendment, which was later canceled by the Constitutional Court, provoked violent clashes between the pro-Russian Soviet veterans and nationalist "Svoboda" activists in L'viv on 9 May. The Institute of National Remembrance's status was now downgraded from a state executive body to a research institution. It was assigned a new director: Valeriy Soldatenko, a Soviet-trained historian and a member of the Communist Party. The theme of the OUN–UPA disappeared almost entirely from the official political discourse—it was now confined

to the rhetoric of the nationalist "Svoboda" party, whose xenophobia and exclusive nationalism made the ruling Party of Regions look like the lesser evil.

The dramatic events of 2013–14—the Euromaidan revolution, the annexation of Crimea by Russia, and the subsequent war in Donbas—radically changed the political context of Ukrainian debates about the past. Historical symbols and myths played an important role during the Maidan protests, mobilizing people and helping them make sense of the rapidly changing reality. During the first weeks of the peaceful protests, EU flags and the blue-and-yellow flags of Ukraine dominated the scene. The more resolute the resistance to the Yanukovych regime became, the more visible were references to the Ukrainian Cossackdom, which embodied the fight for freedom and national liberation (Jilge 2014: 239).

The red-and-black flags of the Ukrainian nationalists (historically a symbol of the OUN–B)[12] were part of this collage of symbols and historical myths—and this raised an important question about the role of radical nationalism in the Maidan revolution. The OUN and UPA symbols (including portraits of Stepan Bandera) were displayed mainly by nationalists from "Svoboda" party and the newly formed "Right Sector," and although far from being non-controversial, they "were not flatly rejected by more liberal or cosmopolitan protesters for fear of splitting and weakening the movement" (Kulyk 2014: 100). The OUN and UPA greeting "Glory to Ukraine!"—"Glory to Heroes!" rang out in the speeches from the Maidan stage and from the crowds. The greeting was "appropriated by the bulk of the protesters and imbued with a new meaning, free of the original claims to ethno-national superiority and exclusivity" (ibid.: 101). The crowds also sang UPA songs. "Glory to Ukraine!"—"Glory to Heroes!" sounded at the mourning ceremony for the "Heavenly Hundred" on the Maidan. In this way, the greeting that served during the clashes with the riot police as a symbol of courage, devotion to Ukraine and willingness to fight, now came to stand for grief, self-sacrifice, and gratitude of the living to the dead.

In general, Stepan Bandera and the OUN–UPA largely lost their negative meaning for many Kyiv protesters during the Euromaidan (Jilge 2014: 247). One of the reasons was that "the very embrace of violence as a legitimate means of resisting the repressive regime led many of them to accept the violent nationalist resistance of the past as one of their role models" (Kulyk 2014: 104). At the same time, the use of the OUN and UPA symbols on the Maidan was criticized by many liberal and leftist

protesters who saw in them a threat of splitting the protest movement and a pretext for Russian propaganda denigrating it as "fascist." This criticism became especially vocal when "Svoboda" Party organized its traditional torch-lit march on 1 January, Stepan Bandera's birthday.

With the war in Donbas unfolding, the greeting "Glory to Ukraine!"—"Glory to Heroes!" became increasingly connected to the memory of the fallen Ukrainian soldiers. In the new political context symbols of Ukrainian nationalism acquired new meaning as the current fight against the Russian aggression made some aspects of the OUN–UPA legacy more acceptable for the Ukrainian society. On the one hand, the war legitimized the tradition of radical Ukrainian nationalism and gave new impetus to the politics of "reclaiming the past," as the current activities of the Institute of National Remembrance demonstrate. On the other hand, as L'viv historian Vasyl' Rasevych (2014) has noted, we are dealing here with a new Ukrainian history—since the beginning of the Maidan, the history of an emerging political nation is being written, and this new history is more appealing than the divisive legacy of the OUN–UPA. An empowered civil society with strong pro-European aspirations—the main outcome of the Revolution of Dignity—is an important precondition for "coming to terms with the difficult past." This process is, however, hampered by the continuing military conflict in Donbas, which serves to strengthen nationalist sentiment.

Dilemmas of Decommunization and the Memory of the OUN–UPA

Although Ukraine had already experienced various political campaigns and legislative initiatives aimed at removing Soviet symbols and denouncing the Communist ideology (most notably in the early years of independence and after the Orange Revolution), it was only in April 2015 that a wide-reaching official "decommunization" program was launched. Four memory laws were adopted by the Ukrainian parliament, comprising the Law on Commemoration of the Victory over Nazism in World War II (1939–1945); the Law on Condemnation of the Communist and National-Socialist (Nazi) Totalitarian Regimes in Ukraine and Prohibition of Propaganda of their Symbols; the Law on the Legal Status and on Honoring the Memory of Fighters for Ukraine's Independence in the 20th Century; and last but not least, the Law on Access to the Archive of Repressive Organs of the

Communist Totalitarian Regime (1918–1991) (Decommunization Laws 2015).

The laws were prepared under the auspices of the Ukrainian Institute for National Remembrance, whose status as a government body was restored in 2014. Volodymyr Viatrovych, the director of the Institute appointed by the new Ukrainian government, was one of the motors of Yushchenko's memory politics between 2005 and 2010. But, despite a certain continuity with previous attempts, the "decommunization" launched in 2015 is taking place in a completely new political context. First, the Maidan protests all over Ukraine were followed by the dismantling of Lenin statues, which were associated with the Yanukovych regime and his neo-Soviet and Russia-oriented identity politics. This movement from below, supported by nationalists as well as liberals, gave strong legitimation to the Institute's initiative. Second, the appropriation of symbols and myths of the Great Patriotic War by the pro-Russian separatists in spring 2014 prompted the Ukrainian government to dissociate itself from the Russian–Soviet narrative of World War II. Against the ongoing military conflict with the Russia-backed separatists, the Institute and the Ukrainian government consider memory politics as a national security issue.

As far as World War II memory is concerned, the message and thrust of the "decommunization laws" is far from unambiguous—something which is not surprising in the Ukrainian case. Replacing the Great Patriotic War with the "victory over Nazism" and establishing 8 May as the Day of Memory and Reconciliation, the new legislation did not, however, cancel Victory Day on 9 May—a holiday that is still highly popular in Ukraine. In this way, while embracing the European approach to commemorative politics, the government also made a concession to those parts of the Ukrainian population who still identify with the traditional meaning of Victory Day. In addition, the Institute of National Remembrance moved to reappropriate the symbolic capital of the Victory for the contemporary Ukrainian cause. In April–May 2015 the Institute launched a public campaign on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II. Social advertisements on TV and public billboards on the streets underlined both Ukraine's contribution to the defeat of Nazi Germany and its fight for an independent state. Ukrainian heroes, men and women, who had fought against Nazi Germany in the Soviet army, in the UPA and in the Allied forces, were presented side-by-side. By recommendation of the Institute, a

new Ukrainian symbol of victory was also launched: a red poppy flower inscribed with the slogan "1939–1945. Never again." Referring to both the European and Ukrainian traditions, the poppy replaced the St George's Ribbon, now associated with the imperialist and revanchist politics of Putin's Russia.

Probably the most controversial of the decommunization laws (and the one which received the most media attention) granted the OUN and the UPA the official status of "fighters for Ukrainian independence"—something Viktor Yushchenko had failed to pass through parliament during his time in office. It should be noted, however, that the law does not prioritize the OUN and UPA; rather, they are mentioned among dozens of other organizations and groups who now belong to the officially established canon of independence fighters. The law also forbids the "public expression of derogatory attitudes" towards these organizations, as well as "public denial of the legitimacy of the struggle of Ukraine's independence in the twentieth century"; moreover, the law declares that "dissemination" of Communist propaganda and symbols is an offence punishable by a prison sentence of up to ten years. These provisions prompted sharp criticism from professional historians in Ukraine and in the West ("Letter" 2015).[13] As Oxana Shevel summarizes the arguments, "critics have noted that the laws have the potential to stifle open debate over history by introducing legal punishment for publically expressing 'wrong' opinions about the communist period or about fighters for Ukraine's independence" (2016: 261). The new legislation has the potential to hinder independent scholarly inquiry and academic publications containing information that might damage the heroic image of the "independence fighters." In the case of OUN and UPA history—a subject still awaiting non-biased specialist study, especially when it comes to aspects such as complicity in the Holocaust and ethnic violence in Volhynia—the new legislation seems likely to have a particularly negative impact.

The decommunization laws and their treatment of the OUN and UPA in particular have also been criticized as potentially aggravating political divisions in Ukrainian society, alienating the east and south of the country, as well as for their damaging effect for Ukraine's international reputation and the prospects for its European integration (Umland 2016). Indeed, as the public protests against the renaming of Moscow Avenue to Bandera Avenue in Kyiv in June 2016 demonstrate, such decisions are far from non-controversial and bear the potential to generate and exacerbate conflicts. On the international front, some consequences

of Ukraine's memory politics can be observed in Poland where in summer 2016 the Senate voted to establish 11 July as a memorial day for "the Poles who were the victims of the genocide committed by the OUN and UPA"—in other words, officially recognizing the 1943–1944 massacres of Poles by Ukrainian nationalists as an act of genocide.[14] It should be noted, however, that this move was only partly a reaction to Ukrainian developments, and in many ways it had more to do with domestic political tensions in Poland. A joint statement issued by the presidents of Ukraine and Poland in August 2016 underlined the fact that despite the "tragic pages of history of Ukrainian–Polish relations," the two countries remained partners ("Spil'na deklaratsiia" 2016). But in any case, it is clear that the glorification of the OUN–UPA is not going to win friends for Ukraine in the world and will not help it to integrate in the European institutions.

To sum up, "decommunization" bears the idea of reclamation of the past at its core, and the new legislation privileges and prioritizes this paradigm by establishing the national canon of "fighters for independence" which includes the OUN and UPA. Those aspects of the new legislation which politicize history, reduce its complexity by establishing "correct" heroes, and forbid alternative opinions pose a danger of hindering independent historical research and free public debate. In this way, the postcolonial politics of reclaiming history clashes head on with the principles of coming to terms with the past, and thus with the European principles to which Ukraine aspires. Some other elements of decommunization, however, such as the opening of the former Soviet archives, on the contrary, facilitate independent historical research and open discussions about the past.

Conclusion

Oxana Shevel has pinpointed the difficulties faced by Ukraine in a passage that is worth quoting at some length. She writes:

> The fundamental dilemma in Ukraine's decommunization process is how to undo the legal, institutional, and historical legacy of the Soviet era without repeating the Soviet approach of mandating one "correct" interpretation of the past and punishing the public expression of dissenting viewpoints. This dilemma is further complicated by the fact that criticism of the decommunization laws has come both from intellectual circles in

> the West and in Ukraine that are genuinely concerned with upholding freedom of expression and fostering free historical inquiry, and from retrograde forces in Ukraine and Russia concerned first and foremost with keeping Ukraine in the Russian sphere of influence and preserving the Soviet era memory regime with its assessments of events, groups and individuals (Shevel 2016: 263).

In other words, Ukraine faces a twofold challenge: it must find a way to confront the nation's difficult past in a critical and responsible manner, but one that does not render impossible the task of reclaiming the past, that is, of emancipation from old imperial narratives. The historian Andrii Portnov, a strong proponent of the *Vergangenheitsbewälting* paradigm, has noted the effort that this dual task requires. The honest and complete appraisal of "the history of ethnically exclusivist nationalism, the terror politics of the OUN, and the anti-Polish and anti-Jewish crimes of the UPA," Portnov writes, must be combined with careful attention to avoiding the ideological traps entrenched in this territory. In particular, historians need to work to move beyond the old binaries, and to be aware of the ways in which a critical approach to the history of Ukrainian radical nationalism has all too often entailed the downplaying of Soviet crimes and the denial of Ukrainian historical subjectivity or agency, whether intended or otherwise (Portnov 2016a).

Both paradigms—reclaiming the past, and coming to terms with the past—can be powerful tools for constructing new stories and new identities, but they also have the potential to silence and oppress. As this account of the past 25 years of Ukrainian memory politics has shown, these two frameworks are often in stark opposition to one another; but at other times, they feed on and fuel one another. Handling the complex legacies of the history of the OUN and UPA is a daunting task by any measure, and it has become even more so now that it has been taken out of the regions where this history was primarily played out, and into the center of the national political arena. As this chapter has shown, the politicization of history and the instrumentalization of the complex legacy of the OUN and UPA in electoral politics are fraught with the risk of further polarizing Ukrainian society. The Ukrainian state still has to learn how to handle its difficult past in the international arena; the importance of *Vergangenheitsbewälting* is difficult to overestimate in Ukraine's relations with Poland and Israel, and for the country's European aspirations in general. (This is true at least for the moment; it does seem likely that

the rise of nationalism that is underway in many EU countries at the time of writing (2016) will destabilize the established consensus on coping with the difficult past as a precondition for European stability and security.) Russian aggression against Ukraine which Putin's regime legitimizes as the "fight against Ukrainian fascism" perpetuates the historical pattern of the nation as a "collective victim" and does not make the task of coping with the past any easier. One thing is certain: at the level of national memory, the legacy of the OUN and UPA will surely continue to present ground for disputes and discontent. The way Ukrainian scholars, civil society activists, and the Ukrainian state deal with this difficult past will be one of the most important tests of the maturity of the Ukrainian democracy.

Notes

1. The OUN was founded in Vienna in 1929 by radical Ukrainian nationalists and émigré intellectuals who refused to accept the defeat of the Ukrainian forces in the Polish–Ukrainian war of 1917–1918 and the resulting Polish sovereignty over Eastern Galicia. Unlike other Ukrainian political organizations (such as the Ukrainian National Democratic Alliance, UNDO) which preferred legal and parliamentary methods, the OUN sought to achieve national independence through violence and terrorism justified by repressions of Polish authorities against ethnic Ukrainians. In 1940 the OUN split into two factions: a more moderate group of older members led by Andrii Mel'nyk (OUN–M), and a more militant group of young members led by Stepan Bandera (OUN–B). Almost all the memory disputes around the OUN are focused on the OUN–B. In the interests of clarity, in this chapter I generally use the term "OUN" as a shorthand form. The UPA was created in Volhynia in 1941, and had been subsumed by the OUN by spring 1943. After World War II the UPA continued to resist the newly established Soviet regime in Western Ukraine until the early 1950s; many UPA fighters ended up in the GULAG.
2. It should be stressed that post-war attitudes to the OUN–UPA were influenced by the diaspora from Eastern Galicia which tended to recount the Galician experiences of the UPA, not the Volhynian ones (Rudling 2006: 180). The first UPA units in Galicia were formed at the end of 1943, almost a year after the UPA was formed in Volhynia. In Galicia, there were far fewer massacres of Poles, and the UPA was known primarily for its post-war activities fighting the Soviets (Motyka 2011). It was precisely these experiences that influenced the construction of the

main historical narrative about the UPA, both in *émigré* scholarship and in Ukraine. After 1991, Ukrainian "nationalizing" historians imported a historical narrative of the OUN and UPA which had already been developed by émigré historians—members of the OUN and UPA soldiers who migrated to the West (Dietsch 2006; Rudling 2011a: 751–53; Rudling 2013: 230; Satzewich 2002).

3. Subtelny, of course, was writing at a time when it was very difficult to access archives in Poland and Ukraine. Since then, historical knowledge on this topic has rapidly advanced as researchers have uncovered new information.
4. Although there were many changes in the textbooks published between 1991 and 2014, in general one can say that it was the interpretation of OUN and UPA as a "resistance movement" that became the official version in the textbooks; see Dietsch (2006); Marples (2007); Richardson (2004).
5. Kuchma tended to use the term "Galician nationalism" as a catchall phrase for all national-democratic groups.
6. In my study of the popular reception of OUN–UPA memory, conducted via the analysis of interviews, students' essays, and posts on the livejournal social media platform, I found the "resistance" narrative to be very widespread. Furthermore, the parallel was often drawn between the OUN–UPA anti-Soviet "resistance" and opposition to Kuchma or Yanukovych (see Yurchuk 2012, 2014).
7. In dealing with the past conflict, Ukrainian and Polish historians mainly operated within the national history framework. In Ukrainian public discourse the Volhynian conflict was presented as a response to anti-Ukrainian policies implemented by Poland in the interwar years and as a (tragic but unavoidable) stage in the battle for national independence. In this discourse the mass killing of Poles is presented as the Volhynian *tragedy*. In Polish public discourse, on the other hand, the 1943 Volhynian conflict is presented as the quintessence of the long-lasting Ukrainian resentment against Poles that culminated in the massacre. The Polish terms for this ethnic conflict are the "Volhynian *massacre*" (*Rzeź wołyńska*), "genocide" (*ludobójstwo*), or "ethnic cleansing" (*czystka etniczna*). These different narratives are not easily reconciled (for discussion see Portnov 2016b).
8. Yushchenko's statement was published in the Warsaw newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza* but it did not appear in any Ukrainian paper of a similar status. Later the article was republished in the L'viv based intellectual journal *Ji*, a journal which has a rather limited readership.
9. According to Gavriel D. Rosenfeld (2015: 7), "normalization involves a process through which a specific historical legacy comes to be viewed like any other. The legacy may involve a particular era, an event, a person, or a combination thereof. But for a given past to become normalized, it has to shed the features that set it apart from other pasts. The normalization of

the past can also shape the formation of group identity, enabling nations and other collectively defined groups to perceive themselves as being similar to, instead of different from, others. Normalization can furthermore liberate national governments to embrace the same kind of 'normal' domestic and foreign policies that are pursued by other nations."

10. The issue of financial support of the UPA veterans, however, has been partly addressed at the local level. Some local councils in Western Ukraine pay additional monthly allowances to the UPA veterans; see Portnov and Portnova (2010: 36).
11. Yushchenko's decree was canceled by a district administrative court in Donets'k in April 2010, after Viktor Yanukovych won the presidential elections.
12. See Note 2 for an explanation of this term.
13. See also discussion of the laws by the Ukrainian and international historians and intellectuals on the website of *Krytyka* (2015): "The Future of Ukraine's Past" (retrieved 9 January 2017 from https://krytyka.com/en/solutions/featured/future-ukraines-past).
14. On the Polish response, see Rasevych (2016). Rasevych claims that popular attitudes to Ukrainians in Poland have dramatically worsened since 2014 as a result of Ukrainian official memory politics.

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PART II

In Stalin's Shadow

CHAPTER 5

From the Trauma of Stalinism to the Triumph of Stalingrad: The Toponymic Dispute Over Volgograd

Markku Kangaspuro and Jussi Lassila

On 31 January 2013, two days before the 70th anniversary of the end of the Battle of Stalingrad, Volgograd City Duma reached a landmark decision in the history of post-Soviet-Russian memory politics. The Duma resolved that henceforth, on six key commemorative dates annually, the city of Volgograd would revert to its former name of Stalingrad—on the anniversary of the Soviet victory in the Battle of Stalingrad (2 February); Victory Day (9 May); the Day of Remembrance and Mourning, marking the German invasion of the USSR and the beginning of the Great

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Patriotic War (22 June); the Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Nazi Bombing in Stalingrad (23 August); the anniversary of the end of World War II (2 September); and the anniversary of a key turning point in the Battle of Stalingrad, marking the beginning of the defeat of the Nazi forces there (19 November) ("Naimenovanie 'gorod-geroi Stalingrad'" 2013). The case of Volgograd/Stalingrad stands out in sharp relief against the backdrop of the general toponymic landscape in today's Russia. The vast majority of Russian towns, squares, and streets retain their Soviet-era designations, which remain in place as relatively inconspicuous everyday relics of the Soviet past, but the case of the city of Volgograd and the dispute over its name is a different story. This dispute has posed a real challenge to the Putin regime's stance on the Soviet past. The city lies at the heart of Russian identity politics, as the site of the Battle of Stalingrad, the historic turning point that enabled the creation of the major symbolic resource at the state's disposal, and a key component of Putin's "non-political" politics: the cult of the Soviet Victory in the Great Patriotic War (Gudkov et al. 2012: 76; Gudkov 2012). Thus, for instance, it was Volgograd that Putin chose as the setting for his announcement, in May 2011, a few days before Victory Day, that a special Russia-wide People's Front was to be established around the United Russia party for those citizens and organizations not belonging to political parties. He had decided to make this declaration in Volgograd, "because how we could have won without Stalingrad?" (quoted in Savinykh 2011) Since then the country has undergone a series of dramatic domestic political developments, from the Kremlin's popularity crisis in 2011–2012 to its recovery following the annexation of Crimea in 2014, but through these changes, Stalingrad continues to represent the core symbol of national triumph.[1] At the same time, Stalingrad also always inescapably refers to the most acute trauma of the state's past: the Stalin era. When viewed in this context, the ceremonial renaming looks less like a successful political compromise; rather, the Volgograd City Duma's decision offers a vivid illustration of Thomas Wolfe's encapsulation of Russia's overall difficult relationship to its own past, in which "crimes and acts of heroism are embedded in the same historical moment, the same historical process" (2006: 279).

The case of the symbolic politics around "Stalingrad" offers rich material for studying the dynamics of triumph and trauma in Russia. The roots of this issue extend back to the death of the city's namesake in March 1953. The Putin-era debate on Stalingrad enables us to view the Putin regime's identity politics in microcosm. A key point of contention

here—the history and the nature of the Soviet Union as a milestone in Russia's history toward a modern industrial state—reverberates strongly throughout this debate. To put it bluntly, all the past state achievements that present-day Russia aims to project as part of its aspirations for the future are related to the Soviet era. Stalingrad as a symbolic codification of this projection encapsulates Russia's overall difficulty in handling the relationship between the past's triumphalist and traumatic dimensions.

In this chapter we examine the Putin-era discussion on the name of Stalingrad. We argue that the renaming process encapsulates the key trajectories of Russia's post-Soviet identity politics. We aim to demonstrate that this process represents a twofold, and somewhat paradoxical, dynamic between the state's bid for hegemony, on the one hand, and the inexorable pluralization of commemorations of the national past in today's Russia, on the other. In other words, the hybrid nature of the state's memory politics, neither purely authoritarian nor purely democratic, has resulted in a tension that is illustrated by the Stalingrad case. On the one hand, the debate on Stalingrad represents a state-driven attempt to consolidate a non-ideological state-centrism as the backbone of the official national history. On the other hand, however, owing to society's irreversible and ongoing fragmentation, the state's ability to carry this process in hegemonic terms is severely limited, and this results in open conflict and a lack of consensus between various interest groups. In order to identify these groups and their different positions concerning the state's role and commemorative pluralization on the theme of Stalingrad, we plot them here along the "axes" of triumph and trauma. We start by sketching out the backdrop of Russia's attitudinal climate and introduce our data on the basis of media statistics on the topic. Next, we set out the historical background of the commemorative institutionalization of the memory of the Battle of Stalingrad, before providing a detailed analysis of selected media examples. The chapter concludes with a graphic illustration and discussion of our findings.

From Triumph and Trauma to Data

Bernhard Giesen has noted that triumph and trauma mark the limits of all collective-national identities (2004). Giesen's concept of the dynamic relationship between triumph and trauma provides a useful vantage point for approaching the debate over the symbolic politics of Stalingrad in Russia. Here triumph and trauma are entangled in complex

ways. The Putin regime strives to sustain the Soviet triumphalist narrative, but in post-Soviet conditions it is not possible to simply exclude the growing role of the other parties, which are now unavoidably present. Global expectations due to the internationalization of the media have everywhere brought the traumatic sides of triumph to the fore (Giesen 2004: 152). In the case of the post-Soviet symbolic politics surrounding Stalingrad, this process provides the major dynamic at work here by counter-mobilizing various groups, most of them acting either for recognition of past traumas, on the one hand, or against "spoiling" the collective sense of triumph, on the other. In our analysis of the Russian debates over the symbolic memory politics surrounding Stalin, we highlight an additional dimension to this dynamic. We argue that at issue here is not only the trauma of Stalinism, but also the trauma experienced by some parts of society in connection with the state's perceived neglect of the triumphalism associated with Stalin as a historical figure. In this light, the state has figured as a central actor in acknowledging the trauma of Stalinism by maintaining the city's de-Stalinized name (Volgograd). With the ceremonial partial revival of the name "Stalingrad," however, the state has also now seemingly entered into "dialogue" with those societal and political groups which seek a complete revival of the city's triumphalist name.

In this study, we approach the notion of cultural trauma not as an individual psychoanalytic concept but as a social process. Jeffrey C. Alexander offers a useful distinction here. He defines cultural trauma "not [as] a result of a group experiencing pain," but as "the result of this acute discomfort entering into the core of the collectivity's sense of its own identity" (2004: 10). Hence, "[c]ollective actors 'decide' to represent social pain as a fundamental threat to their sense of who they are, where they come from, and where they want to go" (ibid.). The debate on Stalingrad's name illustrates and complicates the connections between trauma and identity. In this case, while some see the renewed emphasis on Stalingrad as marking a denial of the traumas of Stalinism, others perceive the emphasis on Stalin's crimes within the discussion on Stalingrad's name as a continuation of an ongoing traumatic collapse of national meaningfulness, that is, a manifestation of the group's traumatic loss of a "great past" capable of holding together a strong sense of identity.

As our examples will demonstrate, even though the politics around the post-Soviet status of Stalingrad's name often imply a kind of zero-sum

game between triumph and trauma, in fact, citizens' views on the topic are quite far from reflecting clear-cut positions. Rather, as shown by the results of a Levada Center poll conducted in 2013, two weeks after the symbolic revival of the name of Stalingrad, we are dealing with a situation in which traumatic Stalinism and triumphalist Stalingrad are deeply intertwined (Levada Center 2013). The poll's results, compared with the results from previous years, are provided in Table 5.1 (margin of error is 3.4%).

As the percentages in Table 5.1 reveal, perceptions of Stalin are not only divided into positive and negative associations; more importantly, these associations are intertwined in many respects. Thus, for example, while 55% of Russians had a positive view of Stalin in February 2013, the number of those who see Stalin as having played a relatively positive role has been growing since 2003. At the same time, the number of those who see Stalin's role as absolutely positive diminished from 2003 (18%) to 2013 (9%). However, since the crisis between Ukraine/the West and Russia in 2014, the number of the indifferent respondents has decreased while the number of those who respect Stalin has increased (30% in March 2015 in comparison with 22% in October 2008) (Levada Center 2015).[2] As previous polls have documented, the major argument for Stalin's positive image is based on his role as commander-in-chief during the war (Carnegie Center 2013).[3] Nonetheless, the largest proportion of respondents (43%) in 2013 viewed the restoration of the name of Stalingrad negatively—either because they viewed this as an attempt by the regime to camouflage its problems, or because they objected to the lack of attention paid to Stalin's crimes, regardless of the fact that the most popular option was Stalingrad's linkage to the heroic battle, not to Stalin. Seemingly for these reasons, the majority of Russians (55%) were against the revival of the name of Stalingrad, while 23% supported it.

The poll results prompt us to examine more closely the public discussion on Stalingrad over the course of Vladimir Putin's rule. Using the Integrum databases[4] to track this discussion, we observed that the number of Russian printed and online articles mentioning Stalingrad grew steadily from 2000 through to the end of June 2013 (when we finalized the data collection).[5] Since our aim was to trace the overall trend in Putin-era symbolic politics with regard to Stalingrad, this period was optimal. The first peak in frequency appeared in 2003, seemingly related to the 60th anniversary of the victory of the Battle of Stalingrad (5747 articles). The next peak was the result of the 60th Victory Day anniversary in 2005 (8373 articles). In 2010, in connection to the 65th

Table 5.1 Results of 2013 Levada Center poll on attitudes towards the renaming of Volgograd

Which of the following do you link with the death of Stalin?	*March 2010 (in %)*	*February 2013 (in %)*
The end of terror and mass repressions, liberation of millions of innocent people from jails	47	55
The loss of the great leader and teacher	19	18
Other	6	4
Hard to say	29	23

In your view, why are the country's leaders increasingly talking about Stalin as a prominent state figure?	*March 2010 (in %)*	*February 2013 (in %)*
State power is trying to use the cult of Stalin in order to defend its own policy and the abuse of power	16	19
State power is trying to use the cult of Stalin in order to strengthen its own authority as the inheritor of the honor of the war's victory	23	21
State power is trying to use the cult of Stalin for the gradual revival of the Soviet system	8	6
State power is trying to use the cult of Stalin as a solution to hopelessness, as a substitute for the nonexistent "national idea" since there is nothing "sacred" in the country	20	19
Hard to say	33	36

In your opinion, what kind of role did Stalin play in our country?	*March 2003 (in %)*	*February 2008 (in %)*	*October 2008 (in %)*	*December 2009 (in %)*	*December 2010 (in %)*	*February 2013 (in %)*
Absolutely positive	18	10	8	10	11	9
Relatively positive	35	29	33	39	40	40
Relatively negative	21	25	27	23	21	22
Absolutely negative	12	13	10	9	9	10

(continued)

Table 5.1 (continued)

In your opinion, what kind of role did Stalin play in our country?	*March 2003 (in %)*	*February 2008 (in %)*	*October 2008 (in %)*	*December 2009 (in %)*	*December 2010 (in %)*	*February 2013 (in %)*
Hard to say	14	22	21	19	19	19

In your opinion, what motivates the local and federal authorities who stand behind the initiative to return the name of Stalingrad to Volgograd?	*February 2013 (in %)*
Attempt to immortalize the memory of participants of the Battle of Stalingrad	31
Attempt to return the name of Stalin as the victor of the war and muffle the memory of repressions and crimes of Stalin's regime	18
Attempt to direct public attention away from corruption scandals, decrease of trust in the regime and the growth in energy of the opposition	25
Other	4
Hard to say	22

With which of the following do you agree the most?	*February 2013 (in %)*
Volgograd should keep its current name	55
Volgograd's historical name Stalingrad should be reinstated	23
Volgograd's historical name Tsaritsyn should be reinstated	6
Hard to say	16

anniversary of Victory, the number was 14,993. While the reasons for the frequency of Stalingrad within the latter peak are obvious (reflecting the fact that Stalingrad functions as a central symbol for Victory Day), we chose to focus on the peak which was related to the 65th anniversary of the end of the battle (2008, consisting of 12,193 articles). From 2008 to 2013 the number of articles mentioning Stalingrad remained at a level of more than 10,000 annually. Interestingly, the sudden recovery of Putin's popularity over the course of the year 2014 in relation to the annexation of Crimea and the state of war with Ukraine was not reflected in a growth in the number of articles on Stalingrad. Thus, while in 2013

the number of articles mentioning "Stalingrad" was 17,855,[6] by 15 October 2014 the number of such articles in that year was 10,390. In all probability, then, the depth of Russia's patriotic wave notwithstanding, the year 2014 does not appear to have marked any dramatic change in the development of the official stance on and symbolic politics surrounding Stalingrad which can be seen as compared to the preceding decade.

Having identified the basic quantitative trends between 2003 and 2008, we then analyzed the longest articles from the newspapers *Komsomol'skaia pravda* and *Izvestiia* which related to the anniversaries of the battle. Both newspapers can be considered to be important representatives of the Russian print media generally linked to the Putin-era patriotic moods; *Komsomol'skaia pravda* as Russia's biggest daily tabloid, and *Izvestiia* as a more conformist and decorous newspaper with regard to the Kremlin's policies. In addition, we chose two articles from the government's official newspaper *Rossiiskaia gazeta* published in 2012 to illustrate the official voice with regard to the Stalingrad topic. Finally, given that 2 February 2013 marked the 70th anniversary of the victory in Stalingrad and the culmination of the processes under study, we also decided to examine a few examples of media coverage on this particular date. Here we chose items from one of the main television channels, an article from *Kommersant*"—a small but important newspaper known for its critical stance towards the Kremlin—as well as a few online media sources. Below we provide a brief historical introduction to the topic and to the commemorative institutionalization of the Battle of Stalingrad, before then going on to examine these examples in detail.

De-Stalinization and Commemorative Institutionalization of the Battle of Stalingrad in the Soviet Period

The first written records mentioning the city of Tsaritsyn date to the late sixteenth century. Even then, the city occupied an important strategic location on the Volga River, but it was during the 1920s that the city underwent major growth. As part of the large-scale urbanization and industrialization of the Soviet Union in the 1920s and 1930s, the city's emerging nature was crucially tied to the political development of the young Soviet state. Just as Lenin was the symbol of the October Revolution and the founding father of the Soviet Union, Stalin with his

emerging personality cult as Lenin's successor became the second creator of the Soviet state, the man who stood next to Lenin in "the building of socialism in one country," Stalin's doctrine for the country's modernization. Motivated by these ideological circumstances and by the fact that Stalin was a leading Soviet commissar of the Southern front during the Civil War and participated in the victorious battles against the Whites over Tsaritsyn in particular, the city was renamed in his honor in 1925. Along with this symbolic gesture, the city's growing role as an important center of heavy industry made Stalingrad an important emblem of Soviet modernization.

Against this background it is unsurprising that Stalingrad became an obsession for both Stalin and Hitler over the course of the German invasion of the Soviet Union, especially after the dramatic defeat of Hitler's attempt to capture Moscow in December 1941. In addition to Stalingrad's industrial importance and the city's strategic location, particularly as the gateway for transportation routes via the Volga River and as Hitler's stepping stone to the Caucasian oil fields, the city's very name conveyed significant psychological expectations for both dictators; victory or defeat of the city would also be a massive moral and symbolic victory or defeat in the battle between the two ideologies and their major representatives (Beevor 1999; Kershaw 2008). By the end of October 1942, four-fifths of Stalingrad was in German hands and it seemed that it would be only a matter of time before Hitler gained the final victory. However, as we know, the Red Army's fierce resistance and the German lack of reserves, ammunition, equipment, petrol, food and medicine halted the progress, and ultimately created an insurmountable defeat for Hitler that changed the course of the war and of global history.

Whereas for Nazi Germany Stalingrad also represented the quintessence of the Soviet contempt for human life, explaining why the Red Army did not surrender like British or French troops despite hopeless conditions, for the Soviet Union, and today's Russia, it is precisely this extreme and improbable persistence in the face of hopelessness that lends the word "Stalingrad" its mythical substance. The battle became an essential element in the narration of the Great Patriotic War, discursively constructed as representing the salvation of the Soviet nation from the dark Armageddon of Hitler's potential victory. In this respect the name Stalingrad became associated not only with Stalin but also with the core of the Soviet narrative of the Great Patriotic War.

Stalin's death in 1953 was followed by a succession struggle in which the previous boundaries between groups and hierarchies were reordered, and the new leadership made a partially public attack on the old regime. At the 20th Party Congress in 1956, the new party leader Nikita Khrushchev delivered a "secret speech" denouncing Stalin's personal cult. The speech, which would later be disseminated widely, represented a symbolic part of the concrete power struggle within the Communist Party. On the one hand, naming places in honor of Stalin over the course of his reign entailed symbolic power for his regime, and removing persons from public life by changing place names and doctoring photographs likewise played an essential role in symbolizing power relations, on the other. After Stalin's death, a similar logic of removal and rehabilitation played a vital role in the public life of names related to Stalinist purges. In general this logic is bound up with a political system which cannot absorb any existing dissonances. The impossibility of ideational dissonances results not only in a strong necessity to reframe the new present, but also an obligation to rewrite the past. At the same time, a system which does not allow civic reflection on symbolic, or any publicly shared, matters, is vulnerable to the tensions that its own aims of ideological non-dissonance create over time.

Stalin's symbolic power as a substantial constituent of the Soviet system was so crucial that after his death the new ruling elite deemed a public denunciation of him to be impossible. Therefore, it was seven years before the new leadership dropped Stalin from his position next to Lenin in the Soviet pantheon. However, once this did take place, Stalin's banishment became total relatively quickly. A decision by the 22th Congress of the Communist Party in October 1961 marked a fundamental defeat for the Party's Stalinist group and figured as a signpost to the future Soviet society without Stalin: Stalin's body was removed from Lenin's mausoleum to an inconspicuous place in the Kremlin wall, and Stalingrad was renamed Volgograd. Later, in line with Brezhnev's cautious but ultimately unfeasible moves towards Stalin's rehabilitation, Stalin's bust was erected beneath the walls of the Kremlin in 1970 (Adler 2005: 1096).

The Battle of Stalingrad did not receive its memorial during Stalin's lifetime. The Soviet Victory cult is, of course, a late-Soviet phenomenon whose trappings were mostly put in place by Brezhnev. Stalin himself had in fact actively suppressed the memory of the war. After the war, he prohibited the publication of war memoirs and Victory Day was canceled as an official holiday in 1946. One explanation for this move has been that Stalin wanted to downplay the actual war leaders and heroes as potential rivals for his

power. Another explanation has been that he wanted to turn people's attention away from the past war to the new foes—the former Allies—once the Cold War began. In addition, the "continuation" of the war several years after 1945 in the form of overwhelming devastation and infrastructural chaos should not be underestimated as an explanation for what seem to have been attempts by Stalin to turn the public's gaze away from the recent victory and the destruction it had wrought (Tumarkin 1994: 95–105).

Subsequently, however, the importance of the Battle of Stalingrad in enabling the final victory in 1945 was reflected in the single most recognizable symbol of the Soviet Victory cult: the massive statue of a woman brandishing a sword, *The Motherland Calls* (1967), towering above the city on Mamaev Kurgan. This was to become the most colossal and emblematic war monument associated with the triumphalist narrative of the Great Patriotic War (Palmer 2009). Yet at the same time, the process of the battle's monumentalization crystallized the challenges associated with projecting the value of the war within the de-Stalinized framework.

During the interregnum between Stalin's death and the launch of full-scale de-Stalinization in late 1961, the first plans for the Stalingrad memorial reflected the prevailing party line on Stalin. The planned memorial was initially named the State Museum of the Defense of Tsaritsyn–Stalingrad dedicated to preserving the memory of "the Soviet people's heroic deeds during the struggle with foreign interventionists and counterrevolutionaries between 1918 and 1920 and against the forces of fascism during the Great Patriotic War" (Palmer 2009: 381). In other words, Stalin's role as a revolutionary hero in the battle for Tsaritsyn during the Civil War was conflated with the triumphalist commemoration of the Battle of Stalingrad.

The memorial construction project faced serious challenges, mostly linked to shortages in engineering expertise and materials under the Soviet planned economy (Palmer 2009). In addition, the construction process was affected by the changing ideological emphases over this period. By the time the decision was finally taken to unveil the monument, the process had gone through the post-Stalin interregnum, Khrushchev's Thaw, and the beginnings of the emerging cult of the Great Patriotic War under Brezhnev. Both of these sets of challenges, material and ideological, resulted in repeated delays. The memorial was originally planned to be ready for the 20th anniversary of the victory in Stalingrad (2 February 1963), but this was later postponed to the 20th anniversary of the Soviet victory in the war (9 May 1965), and the memorial was finally unveiled for the 50th anniversary of the October Revolution, on 15 October 1967 (ibid.).

In his speech marking the memorial's unveiling Brezhnev emphasized the sacrifices of the Soviet nations which had made the Great Victory possible, according to the narrative in which the October Revolution and the Great Patriotic War represented the Soviet Union's foundational myths, marking the country's defeat of its external foes (the interventionists and their lackeys). Despite the fact that Brezhnev downplayed Khrushchev's policy of de-Stalinization, he did not change the basic undertone of the de-Stalinized role of the Communist Party in which the collective leadership of the Party and the government, not Stalin, was the reason for the Soviet victory. The monument's enormous size, much bigger than had originally been planned—seemingly a result of Khrushchev's megalomaniac visions—was also intended, in line with Brezhnev's merging together of the October Revolution and the Great Patriotic War, to stand as evidence of Soviet socialism's superiority over capitalism and its historical ramification, fascism (Brezhnev 1967; Palmer 2009: 407).

The basic ambivalence at the heart of the commemoration of the Battle of Stalingrad is a legacy bequeathed from late-Soviet to post-Soviet Russia. At the same time, the whole symbolic fabric related to the name of Stalingrad seems to lack the semantic flexibility to handle the unavoidable presence of the various political dissonances related to it. The contrast with the case of the Treptow Soviet monument in Berlin can help to illustrate this point. The Treptow monument was the first major memorial complex dedicated to the Soviet war triumph. Unveiled on Victory Day in 1949, it was the major paragon for the monument at Volgograd (Palmer 2009). Yet the Treptow monument has proved much more semantically flexible than its Volgograd counterpart. According to Paul Stangl, the Treptow monument has sustained its role as a shrine to fallen Soviet soldiers, a role that, in some respects, "transcends political change from its Stalinist origins into the present post-communist era" (2003: 216). Unlike the Treptow monument with its numerous Stalinist emblems, the museum complex of the Battle of Stalingrad omitted even the name of its major historical locus, obviously because of its ideological inappropriateness: between the years 1962 and 1982 the museum was called the Volgograd State Museum of Defense. In 1982 a panorama entitled *Stalingradskaia bitva* (the Battle of Stalingrad) was unveiled in the museum and, interestingly, it was not before the advent of perestroika in 1985 that the whole museum was renamed after the panorama ("Iz istorii muzei-zapovednika" 2013).

Post-Soviet Stalingrad and Commemorative Pluralization

Whereas the memory of Stalingrad has certainly retained its vitality in post-Soviet Russia, the rupture of the Soviet commemorative hegemony was a major condition shaping Stalingrad's post-Soviet role. In general, the post-Soviet context for the Stalingrad debate can be framed by conceiving a division in rough institutionalist terms between general state strategies for approaching the past. On the one hand, we can conceive a *democratic strategy* which, in ideal terms, can be seen as a more or less consensual outcome of power struggles between those representatives of society which have various interests (political, emotional, financial, etc.) in the state's past. In this situation the state has lost its monopolistic right to control the past and the discussion on this issue has been institutionalized in the course of debates between various interest groups, often competing with each other. The symbolic outcome of this situation is the articulated coexistence of various, politically competing, monuments and views on the past. Within this situation the task of the state is (or should be) to guarantee fairness of competition between the various "memory groups" wishing to contribute to the state's "poetics of history,"that is, the ways in which history should be narrated (Fogu and Kansteiner 2006). In order to do so, of course, the state needs to accept the resulting commemorative and historical plurality of this competition.

On the other hand, we may also conceive an opposing, *authoritarian strategy*. Again, if we depict this as a Weberian ideal type, then within this situation the state coercively imposes its monopolistic view on the past while other views are either suppressed, or have to be reconciled with the state. Moreover, the lack or the weakness of institutionalized interest groups in the field of memory politics and history, in contrast to a democratic situation, facilitates the state's authoritarian role by filling the vacuum created by the lack of institutionalized interest groups and their respective memories.

At first sight, post-Soviet Russia seems to fall into the authoritarian category when it comes to commemorative practices. This is especially the case regarding the emphatic commemoration of the Great Patriotic War, though the state's authoritarian role here has not surpassed the role of various interest groups with a stake in the war's memory, as our study shows. Furthermore, as illustrated by the Kremlin's reluctance to take a stand on numerous forgotten Soviet-era symbols (most often

related to Lenin), Russian state activities in the sphere of memory politics do not fully qualify as authoritarian. The state has not systematically removed and replaced the old (i.e. communist) symbols. The other side of the coin is that, over the course of Putin's rule in particular, the state has not only passively ignored or forgotten many of the old symbols but has also actively taken up, absorbed and reinterpreted several Soviet symbols in an attempt to consolidate the nation's symbolic toolkit. The most notable examples here are the Soviet-era national anthem, the army's red flag and various Soviet-era honorary decorations and medals, including the recent revival of the order of Hero of Labor, launched by Stalin in 1938 (for more on the background to this issue, see Schlögel 2012).

If the state's role in post-Soviet Russia's struggle over Stalingrad cannot be defined as strictly authoritarian, the picture is no less murky if one aims to frame it as democratic. Perhaps, it is the state's conscious as well as unconscious oblivion and uncertainty about the past which facilitates the move on the part of the most vocal interest groups—most notably the communists—to resort to reimagining an omnipotent state with a unipolar history.[7] The debate on the name of Stalingrad brings to the fore the demand for a unipolar history, whose necessity seems to indicate keeping up appearances of the state in the present instead of accepting a historical period—no matter how incompatible with the present—in its historical realm with its symbols. The state's partial negligence and selective instrumentalization of the past inevitably leads to a non-consensual plurality when it comes to commemorative emblems and narratives. A highly illuminating case in point was the Kremlin's plan to create a single standard history textbook—with a strong patriotic emphasis—for secondary-school students, sparking lively criticism and public discussion (see, for example, Chernykh 2013). As this textbook debate implies, critics expect plurality instead of unilateral historical interpretations; in other words, they expect official (i.e. state-led) articulations acknowledging the plurality of the past as well as recognizing the past's incompatibility with the present (for example, recognizing that the present-day democratic goals of the constitution are incompatible with the values of the Soviet past). Let us now take a look at the development of the Stalingrad discussion in the Russian media from 2003 up to the ceremonial revival in 2013.

Towards the Ceremonial Stalingrad

Paradoxically, in light of the Stalingrad debates, it seems that the Kremlin is the major agent in "accepting" and validating the current state of commemorative plurality. Nonetheless, the state has fallen into this position rather than purposefully adopting it. That is, the current situation is not the result of an articulated policy on the state's difficult past, but, by contrast, came about as a result of the state's systematic avoidance of discussions on this issue, such that the state has effectively abandoned the past to others. In light of the related coverage in the newspapers *Komsomol'skaia pravda* and *Izvestiia*, we can say that public representations of the 60th anniversary of the Battle of Stalingrad in 2003 exhibit, on the one hand, something of a partial continuation of the de-Sovietization of the national past. The designation of Stalingrad is largely associated with negatively valued aspects of the commemoration represented by the Communist Party of the Russian Federation. On the other hand, the issue of reviving the name of Stalingrad is generally dismissed as irrelevant or at least insignificant. This is exemplified by an article published in *Komsomol'skaia pravda* in the lead-up to the 60th anniversary of the battle, under the headline "Bitter Dregs of the Stalingrad Pot" (Yemel'ianov 2003). In keeping with the newspaper's populist-patriotic reputation, the article creates a sarcastic image of the official festivities held in Volgograd in line with the headline's tone, as the following excerpt reveals:

> The celebration of the great[8] victory of Russian arms—the defeat of Hitler's forces in Stalingrad in winter 1942–43—attracted presidents, ambassadors, scions of the Romanov family. The Motherland Calls again.
>
> The mosaic portrait of comrade Stalin has been cleaned up in the Volgograd planetarium. The profile of the generalissimo is on celebrity calendars and vodka bottles. There is a discussion on the "revival of the city's historical name" in the media.

Furthermore, the actual substance of the article focuses on a civilian's eyewitness story about surviving in the city during the battle, described in naturalistic detail that can hardly be combined with heroic sacrifice, but rather conveys only bitter suffering:

> Ivan Bezuglov never forgets the thin arms and legs, like matchsticks, of his starving brother who survived the Germans in autumn '42 and winter '43. Their home was destroyed in the first bombing. The family lived in a dug-out, drank grass boiled by the grandma and ate grain from abandoned fields. —"Are you gonna stay for death…" a soldier said after leaving half a loaf of bread and three sugar cubes. The next day a bomb from our plane dropped onto the dug-out next to them.

The sarcasm expressed in the article with regard to the official Victory festivities is fueled by the perceived lack of the official recognition of this ordinary suffering. In this respect, the well-known casualties and horrific conditions in which civilians lived—as a traumatic dimension of the war's triumph—play a central role in the article. Speculating about the program for Putin's forthcoming visit to the city, the article contrasts the official commemorative symbolism against the memories of those whose voice has been neglected or forgotten:

> Over the course of a visit of a few hours Putin will definitely see an overcoat of our officer torn by 160 (!) [original punctuation—MK and JL] bullets and shards. And the notebooks of Field Marshal Paulus, one of which contains a drawing of the "Barbarossa" attack on the USSR.
>
> And on Mamaev Kurgan VVP [Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin] can compare the ferroconcrete figure of Mother Russia with a miniature of it, 500 times smaller, manufactured from silver and malachite for him and officially worth 17,000 rubles.
>
> …My father survived the bombardment on 23 August. However, he did not live to see the 60th anniversary of the most important battle of the war. And maybe he wouldn't have been allowed to anyhow. He was just one of thousands of lads [*patsanov*] whose childhood was taken away by the war but who raised a son, planted more than a single tree and built more than a single house. In our country this does not count for much.

A more conformist approach to the 60th anniversary of the battle is present in the *Izvestiia* coverage, which describes the official protocol of the president's visit, his meetings with local veterans and particular details of the battle's commemorative emblems, such as Mamaev Kurgan and the size of the painting "Defeat of the Nazi-German Forces

at Stalingrad" inside the museum (Sadchikov 2003). The inclusion of these details reveals the newspaper's framing of Stalingrad in terms that are more local than a matter of assumed general knowledge; that is, it assumes a level of unfamiliarity with the city's wartime history among the wider readership. A clear distinction between the episode's past and the present commemoration becomes apparent in the article's description of how the local veterans greeted the president: "On Mamaev Kurgan the president met with veterans from the 37th division. They introduced themselves in an original manner—they used the military designation which was used during the battle" (ibid.).

The author does not specify what this wartime designation was, apparently having deemed it unnecessary or inappropriate to do so. In *Izvestiia* Stalingrad's official role as a history politics resource is reduced to a routine convention to celebrate an important episode of the war. Although the article's conformist approach does include a mention of the celebration's evident identity politics dimension—especially its patriotic value—this is relegated to the discussion of Putin's diplomatic dialogue with veterans, and in particular, with the veterans' viewpoints:

> The issues that were discussed yesterday were mainly the same that the head of the state discussed with veterans two years ago: patriotic education, the everyday problems of elderly people, medicine prices. "I was delighted that there were so many youths and children at the meeting on Mamaev Kurgan, they came to pay homage to those who died as well as to rejoice in your feat of valor," Putin said. Then he promised the veterans to raise pensions from one thousand (for those who worked in the rear) to one and a half thousand rubles (for those who were at the front). "However, this is not about money. It is more important for you that you are remembered."
>
> Representatives of the veterans, in turn, expressed gratitude to the president for having revived the words 'Motherland,' and 'patriot for the country,' and expressed their readiness 'to help in the rebirth of Russia, to make it a great power [*derzhava*].' (*Izvestiia*, ibid.)

Hence, whilst the patriotic mode familiar to the Putin-era official discourse on the war is present in *Izvestiia*, it is framed here not as the state's integrated discourse but as a separate veterans' discourse, underlined by the article's use of quotation marks.

A clearly different approach is present in *Komsomol'skaia pravda*'s coverage in the lead-up to the 65th anniversary in 2008, when the tabloid wrote about the visit of the incoming president, then first deputy prime minister Dmitrii Medvedev, to the site of the battle, headlining the story by mentioning Medvedev's emotional response to the site:

> Dmitrii MEDVEDEV: "At Mamaev Kurgan I Felt Internal Turmoil…"
>
> First Deputy Prime Minister Congratulates Veterans on 65th Victory in Battle of Stalingrad
>
> On 2 February in Volgograd all day long people gathered at Mamaev Kurgan to pay their respects to their grandparents who perished 65 years ago in the battles around Stalingrad. At the previous jubilee, marking the 60th anniversary of the victory in the Battle of Stalingrad, President Vladimir Putin had come. This time the first deputy prime minister Dmitrii Medvedev was expected. (Podvintseva and Vorontseva 2008)

The newspaper's stance on the event is here emphatically descriptive, in line with official procedures of the visit; no critical comments or alternative interpretations are provided. By the same token, the name of Stalingrad has become a valid designation that need no longer be justified by couching it as a "discursive relic" used by veterans, as was the case five years before. Furthermore, the state's new, supposedly active role, in lifting Stalingrad out of the local domain and into the state's custody, is framed by a purely conformist mode, as the following excerpt reveals:

> [A]t the jubilee concert the first deputy prime minister announced some good news.
>
> "A few days ago the government signed a decree on the federal status of the statue on Mamaev Kurgan," Medvedev announced.
>
> The audience responded with friendly applause. This news is especially topical in Volgograd since there are regular rumors about tycoons' [*firmachi*] plans to build now one thing and now another, ski tracks on Mamaev Kurgan, an entertainment center not far from it… But now nobody will dare to do anything of the sort. (ibid.)

The article also cites a local veteran on her impressions of her conversation with Medvedev. These impressions, which express the expected

attitude of the wartime generations towards the city's name, are compounded with Medvedev's sympathetic attitude towards the issue which frames the name with more or less positive expectations:

> And Dmitrii Anatol'evich said that his grandfather told him about the war and that he'd heard from him that the most horrific battles were here and on the fields of Kursk. And then I plucked up my courage and asked him whether it might be possible, even if only on greeting cards, to write not Hero City Volgograd but Stalingrad. He promised to think about it. (ibid.)

The newly defined custodial role for the state with regard to Volgograd's local war monument and the Stalin-era name of the city, here filtered through into the patriotic media, mediates not only the Kremlin's growing emphasis on the emblems of the Great Patriotic War, but the regime's evident concerns in the sphere of domestic politics as well. While the major proponent of Stalingrad's revival has been and remains the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, it has also been the Kremlin's most powerful opponent since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The Putin-era shift towards patriotic themes in the state's policies has led the Kremlin into the playground which was mainly left to the communists during the Yeltsin era, at least until Yeltsin initiated some activities in this field in the mid-1990s.[9] This concerns in particular the Soviet-era achievements, of which the Victory in Great Patriotic War is the greatest of the great. In symbolic politics this has meant a struggle over the control of the same symbolic resources between the Kremlin (i.e. United Russia) and the communists (Bondarenko et al. 2011). Since the communists have a strong role in several Russian regions, for example in Volgograd, the Stalingrad debate would appear to be an ideal case for examining this confrontation.

This conflict is played out for example in coverage in the government's official newspaper *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, which draws a contrast between the "history-conscious" state and "amoral" businessmen, in a mode of representation similar to that present in the *Komsomol'skaia pravda* article discussed above. Two articles in *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, published in 2012, discuss the fate of the historical epicenter of the Stalingrad victory: the old department store in the city center whose basement was the site of the surrender of Field Marshal Friedrich Paulus, the head of the German forces. As the following excerpt in the article

"Battle of Stalingrad in Dollars" reveals, the historical battle of the past was here transformed into a moral battle in the present:

> And now, seventy years later, spears have crossed over this historical building once again. This time veterans, the public, and the district prosecutor are against the retailers. Historical memory and national pride are against money and the new masters of life. After seventy court hearings, the state, whose interests were represented by Rosimushchestvo [the agency responsible for managing state property—MK & JL], has won the war for this memorial. Nonetheless it still remains in the hands of entrepreneurs. (Borisov 2012a)

The same symbolic transformation of the battle's historical value into present identity politics with clear leftist populist undertones continued in another article in the government's major newspaper: "The Headquarters of Paulus Have Not Been Taken Yet" proclaimed that "it is a crime that our all-national [*obshchenatsional'nyi*] shrine, marking not only the end of the Battle of Stalingrad but the fundamental turning point of the whole Great Patriotic War, appears to be a private store [*lavochka*]" (Borisov 2012b). Here the government's major media representative has appropriated the basic position of those circles (that is, for the most part, representatives of the Communist Party) for which the revival of the name of Stalingrad is not only about the revival of the battle's glorious name. The revival is also about correcting the current way of life in which money-driven entrepreneurs have taken over the state. At the same time, within this longing for the lost Soviet state, Stalingrad-minded circles have, at least partially, adopted the symbolic framework of the present situation insofar as they regard Stalingrad as a "brand" capable of increasing investments to the city and its region, and transforming it into a "real mecca for tourism" (Uritskii 2010). According to this logic, given that the name of Stalingrad is better known abroad, renaming would lead to a new boom in investments and the new income thus obtained would cover all the administrative costs that the renaming would entail (ibid.). This line of argument clearly seeks to refute the government's major argument for maintaining the current name: the obvious administrative costs associated with any renaming.

After the Ceremonial Revival

The Volgograd City Duma's 31 January 2013 decision to revive the name of Stalingrad for six days annually brought the major competing viewpoints on the new-old ceremonial name to the fore. An instructive

example here is the commentary on this issue on a popular talk-show on one of Russia's major television channels (*Rossiia*), *Sunday Evening with Vladimir Solov'ev*, which aired a program related to the topic immediately after the decision ("Voskresnyi vecher" 2013). Six participants of the discussion, loosely chaired by the host Solov'ev, expressed views which encompass the dynamics between triumph and trauma with regard to Stalingrad's name. The pro-Stalingrad camp included Aleksandr Prokhanov, a well-known proponent of Stalinism which he blends together with great-Russian nationalism and religious mysticism, and Nikolai Kharitonov, a Duma representative from the Communist Party. Both of them regard the victory in the Battle of Stalingrad as the incarnation of the greatness of Stalin, and believe that the city of the battle thus deserves to carry his name. Admittedly this viewpoint blurs together this particular battle's reputation and the role of Stalin as a Soviet leader in general, revered in this capacity as the greatest of the great for the Communist party over the previous two decades. By contrast, another representative of the pro-Stalingrad group, writer Mikhail Weller, recognized the negative legacy of Stalin, but aimed to decouple the reputation of the battle from this legacy. Weller argued that Stalingrad was an "independent semantic category" carrying only the glorious reputation of the battle, and that it had nothing to do with the crimes of Stalin. By contrast, Nikolai Svanidze, historian and representative of the program's anti-Stalingrad group, emphasized the heroism and importance of the battle as well, but said that for him the name Stalingrad symbolized nothing but the horrors of Stalin. For Svanidze, Stalin was the major culprit responsible for the horrifying losses in the war, including in Stalingrad, and should be given no credit for the Soviet Union's victory. Historian Yurii Pivovarov, another representative of the anti-Stalingrad group, also saw Stalin as the major criminal in Russia's history. In addition, he argued that for him the post-Stalinist name of Volgograd was somewhat empty and meaningless as well, and that Tsaritsyn was the only legitimate name for the city. Pivovarov also considered the ceremonial renaming of Stalingrad to be a wrong and dangerous signal when it came to symbolizing Russia's post-Soviet political trajectories.

The third representative of the program's anti-Stalingrad group, Aleksandr Arkhangel'skii, a literary scholar, shared Pivovarov's views in seeing the ceremonial renaming of Stalingrad as a catastrophic signal for today's Russia. However, he did not see any sense in wasting political energy on debating historical names in the situation of the acute societal

problems that Russia faced in the present. Arkhangel'skii also participated in another of Vladimir Solov'ev's television programs, *Duel,* a current affairs talk-show with a two-participant debating-style format—where he acted as opponent to the aforementioned Stalinist Aleksandr Prokhanov ("Poedinok" 2013).

On the same team as Arkhangel'skii as a representative of Russia's pro-democratic liberal views, Nataliia Osipova, a journalist for the newspaper *Kommersant*", commented on the ceremonial renaming that this case of a city which wished "to be Stalingrad and Tsaritsyn at the same time, shows where the manipulation of public opinion leads" (Osipova 2013). By the same token, adding an ironic twist to the decision, she continued:

> On 5 March, the day of Stalin's death, Moscow could be called Stalinodar. On 4 November when Peter the Great received the title of emperor and on 15 March when Nicholas the Second abdicated, we can call Russia an empire. And on 8 December, the day of the Belavezha Accords, and on 30 December, the birthday of the USSR, we will call it the Soviet Union.
>
> When there is no understanding of what kind of country we are building, all the state can do is change its signposts (ibid.).

In general it is not difficult to disagree with Osipova, since the government's compromise option of the partial renaming has not met its needs when it comes to identity politics. This was anything but a successful decision in terms of satisfying the competing interest groups regarding the national memory. Last but certainly not least, the government itself seems to be emphatically uncertain when it comes to this decision. As the news site *V1.ru* reported on 9 May 2013—Victory Day, and one of those six annual ceremonial days when Volgograd was supposed to become Stalingrad—the city authorities "forgot" the new-old name and continued to use the name of Volgograd (Timoshenko 2013). However, as distinct from interest groups' wishes to see a unipolar state history, either associated with triumph, on the one hand, or trauma, on the other, the Stalingrad debate illustrates that a single hegemonic past is no longer possible in Russia. It seems that the official attempt to seal commemorative pluralism in terms of Stalingrad's ceremonial existence with the legacy of a strong dependence on guided state identities (Oushakine 2009) will no longer satisfy anyone. Indeed, the renaming decision only

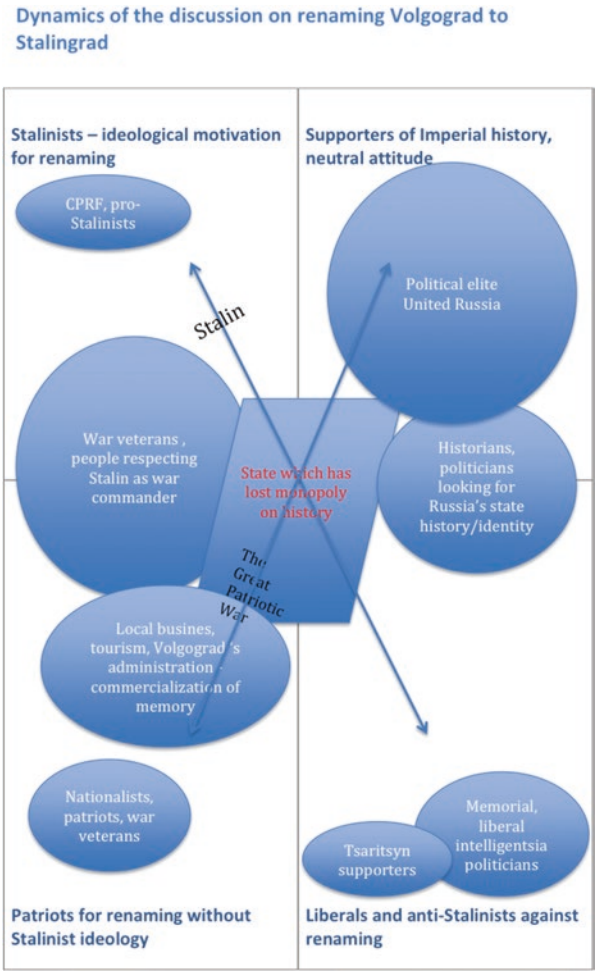


Fig. 5.1 Dynamics of the discussion on renaming Volgograd to Stalingrad

deepened Volgograd's ambiguous status, somewhere between an uncertain testimony to the official trauma of Stalinism and a vacuum for post-Soviet nationalist dissatisfaction.

Conclusion

To illustrate Stalingrad's ceremonial revival in light of the name's historical roots and its identity-political significance as it has emerged over the last ten years, a four-field table can be drawn (Fig. 5.1).

The Stalingrad debate illustrates how a commemorative pluralization appears as a combination of authoritarian and democratic strategies regarding the state's identity politics. Formally the Russian state as a form of presidential power has adapted a more neutral, but simultaneously more vague, attitude towards the past in comparison with the Soviet era. It is this vagueness which demonstrates post-Soviet Russia's lost state hegemony over its past; a vacuum to be filled with more pluralistic discourses conditioned by the dynamics between triumph and trauma, finally resulting in a seemingly original, but ultimately deeply failed consensus to rename Volgograd as Stalingrad for six days annually. To follow the idea that triumph and trauma outline the limits of all collective-national identities, the basic dynamics of the discussion on Stalingrad has been created between those who have been the most vocal opponents of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the most ardent anti-Stalinists. For the pro-Soviet camp, Stalingrad represents the major triumph in both meanings of the word (Stalin and the Great Battle), as a remedy for the trauma of the post-Soviet present. A constitutive counterpart to this camp comprises those who see the growth in Stalingrad's symbolic value as an attempt to neglect their sense of trauma and to camouflage it with false triumphalism. It is the axis between these poles, articulated as the interpretation of Stalin, which runs through Russia's public sphere and its major regulator, the Kremlin. Nonetheless, despite the fact that a clear majority of Russians agree with the state's official position that the name of Volgograd should be retained, the Great Patriotic War as the Kremlin's identity-political backbone cannot be produced within a triumphalist, "non-ideological," axis alone. A crystallization of the Kremlin's lost monopoly on the state's past can be seen in the insurmountable crossing of the Stalingrad discourse with the axis of Stalin as a commander of the Great Patriotic War and the Soviet Union as a social system. Meanwhile, it is the silent majority, "supporters of Volgograd," whose general triumphalist stance towards the state's past has not found a way to cope with the surrounding process of trauma.

The discussion on renaming Volgograd as Stalingrad generates a heated controversy in three dimensions of history politics stretching far

beyond the issue formally under discussion. The first dimension concerns the essential features of the Soviet Union. It is about the essence of the October Revolution, the Bolshevik takeover after 1917 and the subsequent Civil War. As a result of the Civil War Tsaritsyn was renamed after Stalin, the commissar of the southern front. Today, this aspect of the city's history marks the negatively valued Soviet ideology and the symbolic starting point for the traumatic repressions that followed. On the other hand, Stalingrad marked a triumph for the rapid and extensive industrialization—a commonplace feature in Russia's current patriotically flavored modernization discourse with its strong emphasis on the notion of the state's historical progress (see for example Vázquez Liñán 2012).

The second dimension concerns the formation of interest groups around the issue. For the Communist Party of the Russian Federation Stalingrad's renaming as Volgograd due to Khrushchev's de-Stalinization policy in 1961 symbolizes a failed Soviet reform,[10] sometimes seen as a parallel with Gorbachev's perestroika that was followed by the fall of the Soviet Union. For non-communist nationalists Stalingrad represents the glorious history and triumph of the Russian thousand-year empire in her patriotic wars against eternal enemies. In the nationalist frame Stalingrad represents not only collective but, in particular, individual suffering, a bleeding wound whose role in both these dimensions as a source of the great victory was overshadowed during the Soviet period. The role of suffering was reserved for the sacrifice of the Soviet nations, the Red Army and the Party. For proponents of the city's original name, Tsaritsyn, not only was the de-Stalinization process which started in 1961 incomplete, but the whole Soviet period and all its trappings represent Stalinist totalitarianism, including the Soviet "reformist" name Volgograd. Thus, in terms of cultural trauma as a social process, the emphasis on the war's individual suffering and less heroic sides—seen from the viewpoint of anti-Stalinist groups—are sensed as consolidated with the trauma of Stalinism.

Finally, as part of the Putin-era state patriotism, Stalingrad has begun to represent the triumphalist history of the "eternal" Russian state regardless of its political system, from the Middle Ages, to Borodino in 1812, and up to the Great Patriotic War. Hence, it is post-Soviet Russia's ideologically ambiguous nationalism from which the Kremlin draws the leitmotif of its identity politics. From this perspective Stalingrad is part of the nation's patriotic narrative, testimony to the nation's existence, and thus inseparably attached to the state, and more importantly, to its survival through glorious victories, as well as the nation's unavoidable

collective sacrifices. In this discourse Stalin as a Soviet dictator has been detached from the name of Stalingrad which itself represents an epoch-making achievement of the Soviet army and an essential identity marker of Russia's thousand-year history. Given this state-centered and supposedly non-ideological history, the emerging official narrative aims to constitute the Battle of Stalingrad and Stalin as ahistorical phenomena representing the state's glorious history.

This leads us to ask why it is that the state, with all of its resources, is failing to achieve hegemony when it comes to the discussion on Stalingrad. There seems to be a twofold difficulty here. First, there is the obvious impossibility of separating the name of the city and the leader of the glorified Great Patriotic War from Stalin the leader more broadly and from all the connotations linked to his rule. This in turn leads to the discourse of national and individual suffering, the Soviet ideology and its relation to Stalinism. Second, there is the fact that the transnational discourse on World War II challenges the Soviet-Russian triumphalist interpretation of the war and Stalin's role in it.[11] This aspect irrevocably sustains the public discussion on the crimes of the Stalin regime and victims of Stalin's purges as well as the multiple sufferings of the Soviet nations.

However, this leads us back to the question of why the state-led triumphalist narration dominates so strongly, regardless of the general familiarity with the calamitous sides of the Stalinist past in Russia? We can approach an answer by looking once more at Table 5.1, which illustrates that the dominant feature of all of these three different dimensions of the Stalingrad discussion is the patriotic frame, which conjoins both suffering (trauma) and triumph. This is to a certain extent a universal feature for all nations: they look for common triumphs and traumas for the foundations of their identity politics in the nationalistic vein. As long as the Great Patriotic War appears to be the founding element in the Russian state identity, representations of Stalin as the commander-in-chief in that war will be unavoidably intertwined with triumphalism, leaving the sufferings of individuals and nations under his shadow as an inevitable precondition of the triumph.

In this respect the nation's basic need to establish a common glorious narration of the past easily leaves alternative narrations in the margins. Western-minded liberals who justify their position on the Stalingrad issue by referring to transnational narratives of World War II and of Stalin as a dictator have substantially narrower resonance in public discourse than those who advocate different, patriotically flavored interpretations.

Notes

1. It should be noted in this connection that with the annexation of the Crimea and related events since early 2014 the symbolic importance of Sevastopol in the cavalcade of hero cities of the Victory cult has increased.
2. This overwhelming anti-Western trend notwithstanding, 27% of Russians respected Stalin in 2001 (Levada Center 2015).
3. According to this poll, 60% of Russians agreed with the claim that "Stalin's mistakes and faults do not outweigh the most important thing: Under Stalin's rule our people survived as a victor in the Great Patriotic War." However, the number of supporters of this claim was clearly higher in Azerbaijan (72%), Armenia (70%) and Georgia (78%) (Carnegie Centre 2013). See also Levada 2005.
4. Integrum is the largest collection of the Russian language databases in Russia and in the CIS countries and covers a wide range of topics. In March 2010 Integrum contained approximately 400 million documents related to Russia. The scope of more than 5000 databases covers all national and regional newspapers and magazines, statistics, official publications, archives of the leading national and international information agencies, full texts of more than 500 literary works, dictionaries, and more.
5. We selected four corpuses of mass media available for this purpose in Integrum (Central press, Central news agencies, Regional newspapers and Regional news agencies) consisting of 2128 databases (publications and sources) for each year between 2000 and 2012, and for the period from 1 January to 25 June 2013.
6. In addition to the 70th anniversary of the Battle and the renaming dispute, an obvious reason for this new record in the number of mentions is the premiere of Fedor Bondarchuk's 3D blockbuster movie *Stalingrad* in autumn 2013.
7. For more about the meaning of "the lost state" for various nationalist groups in Russia, see Oushakine (2009).
8. Instead of the capital letters commonly used on this occasion, great (*velikaia*) is written here without a capital letter.
9. See Chap. 2. Yeltsin made a conscious move towards veterans during his campaign for the presidency, for instance, by visiting Volgograd on Victory Day in 1996. In line with the media climate of the period, *Izvestiia* registered this visit in highly sarcastic terms (Vyzhutovich 1996).
10. On 23 February 2013 the Communist Party of the Russian Federation decided to apply to the Constitutional Court on the legality of the CPSU Politburo's decision to rename Stalingrad as Volgograd in 1961 (*RIA Novosti* 2013).
11. In this regard it is no wonder that one of the six military ceremonial days when Volgograd is to become Stalingrad is 2 September, the date

of Japan's official surrender date to the Allies in 1945 which marked the end of World War II. Despite the fact that the Soviet Union played a role in the final stages of Japan's defeat (the conquest of the Kurile Islands), this episode has been bracketed out of the official narrative of the Great Patriotic War, which has focused exclusively on the European front. Since the very usage of the terms the "Great Patriotic War" and "World War II" in the Russian public discussion reflects the tension between the heroic Great Patriotic War and not-so-heroic episodes of Stalin's Soviet Union on the fringes of World War II (at the very beginning and the very end of the war), these types of extensions from national landmarks (Stalingrad) to transnational frameworks (the end of the whole war) aim to manage this tension. For more on this topic, see Kangaspuro and Lassila 2012.

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CHAPTER 6

When Stalin Lost His Head: World War II and Memory Wars in Contemporary Ukraine

Serhii Plokhy

Operation Breakneck

A chain saw cut through a thin layer of aluminum alloy with much whining but little difficulty—the monument's neck was hollow. Then someone hit the top of the monument with a metal rod, and the head fell off, hitting the concrete floor. The rest of the monument remained intact. It was the dark winter evening of 28 December 2010. Several young men made their way into the gated area around a three-story pink stucco office building in downtown Zaporizhia in south-eastern Ukraine. They blocked the doors, making it impossible for the guard to get out. They then proceeded to the monument next to the building entrance and started the chain saw. Once the job was done, they left the severed head on the stairs to the building and departed.

The young men belonged to a Ukrainian nationalist organization named for Stepan Bandera, the leader of a faction of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) during World War II, on the one hand,

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and the Ukrainian national symbol of the trident (*tryzub*), on the other. The statue they beheaded was a monument to Joseph Stalin. On the following day, 29 December, Tryzub claimed responsibility for the action in Zaporizhia. The statement released by the organization read: "On 28 December an unidentified mobile group belonging to Stepan Bandera Tryzub in Zaporizhia successfully carried out a national defense action, liquidating the [statue of] Stalin-Dzhugashvili illegally erected on the territory of the Zaporizhia oblast committee of the CPU [Communist Party of Ukraine]." Although the communists denied that anything of that nature had befallen the monument, their bluff was soon called when a video appeared on YouTube documenting the decapitation. The young men from Tryzub had taped the whole procedure, which has now been viewed almost 60,000 times (including a few times by this author) (see *Ukraïns'ka pravda* 2010a–c; Youtube 2010b).

This chapter discusses the significance and broader implications of events that happened in Zaporizhia on the night of 28 December 2010 and in the days and months preceding and following the event. Its immediate goal is to answer a set of key questions on the nature of memory politics in Ukraine. Why was it the case that a monument to Stalin should have appeared, of all places, in Ukraine, a recent poster child for the Western democratic project in Eastern Europe? Why was this monument damaged by people associated with the name of Stepan Bandera, the leader of the most radical group of Ukrainian nationalists during World War II? And what does this tell us about political and memory wars in contemporary Ukraine? The essay's ultimate goal is to contribute to our understanding of the interrelation of politics and memory in post-communist societies.

A Post-Soviet Hero

Joseph Stalin's return to the public sphere in post-Soviet space began in Russia soon after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. It was championed by two political forces, the Russian communists and Russian nationalists, and came on the heels of the liberal anti-Stalin campaign that was a hallmark of Gorbachev's perestroika. Disillusioned with the liberal agenda in the first post-Soviet decade that witnessed economic collapse, political chaos and the loss of the Soviet empire and superpower status, a good part of Russian society embraced the values and symbols offered by communists and nationalists. According to polling data collected by the

Levada Center, only 10 percent of those polled in 1989 considered Stalin to be a great leader. That figure increased to 20 percent in 1994 and 35 percent in 2000. Stalin's popularity reached its peak during Vladimir Putin's first tenure as the president of Russia, crossing the 50 percent threshold in 2004, and hovering around 50 percent ever since.[1]

While most Russians condemn the terror and repressions of the Stalin era, many of them see in Stalin an effective economic manager and a great leader who won the war and turned his country into a superpower. As the Soviet victory in World War II developed in the key historical myth in post-Soviet Russia, the proponents of that myth began to give special prominence to Joseph Stalin, the person who, according to the Stalin cult developed during his life, was most responsible for the victory. Nostalgia for the lost Soviet past with its social stability and imperial grandeur helped to propel Stalin to a celebrated status in Russian media and society. Some observers believe that by embracing Stalin, the Russian public also embraced authoritarianism as the only effective way of governing their country.

While Joseph Stalin's return to prominence began in Russia, it did not stop at Russia's borders. Ukraine, a country that shares a great deal of Soviet past with Russia, went through the same kind of political and economic turmoil after the fall of the USSR, and on many levels remains part of the Moscow-centered informational space. Consequently, Ukraine also experienced the spillover effect of Stalin's partial rehabilitation in Russia. In Ukraine, however, the return of Stalin was modest at best. In 2010 only 28 percent of the population considered him to be a positive figure, while 64 percent had negative attitudes toward him. The level of Stalin's popularity differed significantly, however, from one region of Ukraine to another. In western parts of the country only 7 percent viewed Stalin positively, but in its eastern provinces, bordering on Russia, the number of those who viewed Stalin positively reached 44 percent, which was comparable with the Russian numbers (*TSN* 2010).

Whereas in Russia Stalin emerged as a hero shared by communists and nationalists alike, the same cannot be said of Ukraine. While Ukrainian communists, or some of their leaders, embraced Stalin, Ukrainian nationalists rejected him as a symbol of the suppression of Ukrainian statehood and culture and as a perpetrator of crimes against the Ukrainian nation. Consequently it should come as no surprise that the monument was erected by the communists in Eastern Ukraine, while the organization that destroyed the monument had its main backing in Western Ukraine.

A Warlord

The Zaporizhia communists officially unveiled the bust of Stalin on 5 May 2010, a few days before the 65th anniversary of VE Day. On 9 May, in the eastern Ukrainian city of Luhansk, a monument was unveiled to the victims of atrocities committed by the Bandera faction of the OUN during and after World War II. The two events were sponsored by the same political force—the Communist Party. They manifested the arrival of Stalin as a new resource in Ukraine's wartime memories and underlined the importance of the memories of World War II as a battleground between different political forces in Ukraine.

The Zaporizhia ceremony was attended by numerous Red Army veterans. Some of them, wearing military uniforms decorated with combat awards, formed an honor guard next to the monument. "We built the monument at the request of our veterans," stated Aleksei Baburin, the first secretary of the Zaporizhia regional committee of the CPU and a deputy of the Ukrainian parliament. The inscription on the monument identified Stalin not only as head of the Soviet state but also as a generalissimo. The depiction of Stalin in a marshal's uniform and epaulettes, along with the date of the ceremony, the uniforms of the honor guard, and the inscription on the monument left no doubt that the communists were seeking to legitimize this monument to a figure who is extremely controversial in Ukraine by linking him with the well-established Soviet narrative of the victory of the Soviet people in the Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945, as the Soviet–German segment of World War II was known in the USSR. The reference to Red Army veterans was a crucial element of that legitimization. "Only those who do not honor their grandfathers and fathers can get involved in a discussion of whether this is needed or not," Baburin asserted with regard to the monument. "We are carrying out the will of our veterans" (*Ukraïns'ka pravda* 2011; and YouTube 2010a).

One of the main speakers at the event was Ivan Shekhovtsov, who donated the largest sum for the construction of the monument: 50,000 hryvnias (close to US$7000) out of the total cost of 106,000 hryvnias. Shekhovtsov, a retired Soviet-era criminal prosecutor from Kharkiv, first made a name for himself in the late 1980s when he initiated his first lawsuit in defense of the honor and dignity of Joseph Stalin. Altogether Shekhovtsov has filed close to twenty suits defending his hero's reputation against attacks by such people as the Belarusian writer Ales

Adamovich. Even now, Shekhovtsov continues to claim that it was the Germans, not Stalin's NKVD, who executed the Polish officers in Katyn Forest, and that the Great Ukrainian Famine of 1932–1933 had nothing to do with the policies of Stalin and his associates. His advocacy of Stalin caused a breach in his family. Shekhovtsov's wife of many years and his two children, both lawyers, broke all relations with him over this issue, but he nevertheless continued his activities after the disintegration of the USSR.

In 2004 Shekhovtsov published a four-volume study entitled *The Case of Stalin the "Criminal" and His "Defender."* In order to publish the book he turned for money to his wealthy children, but they refused to support the project. Shekhovtsov eventually found a sponsor in Russia who was willing to lend him the funds to enable publication. It is not clear who the sponsor was or whether the loan was ever repaid. Later, in 2012, Shekhovtsov unexpectedly came up with 50,000 hryvnias for the construction of the Stalin monument. He claimed to have made the donation out of his pension. Given that the average pension in Ukraine does not exceed the equivalent of US$300 per month, an amount which is barely sufficient for covering basic grocery costs, Shekhovtsov's donation was nothing short of a miracle. But so was the installation of a monument to Stalin five years after the victory of the Orange Revolution (*Vremia* 2004).

Shekhovtsov welcomed those gathered at the ceremonial unveiling as citizens of the Soviet Union. He then praised Stalin as a great leader and military commander. He emphasized the link between Stalin and the Soviet-era myth of the Great Patriotic War by making reference to the heroism of Zoia Kosmodem'ianskaia, a member of the Communist Youth League who was sent by the NKVD to burn villages behind the German lines during the battle for Moscow in the winter of 1941. Russian peasants, who were not partial to the idea of dying in the open fields, captured Zoia and turned her over to the Germans, who executed the young saboteur. The Soviets, for their part, turned her into a war hero. According to the propaganda myth, before her execution Zoia allegedly exclaimed: "Stalin is with us! Stalin will come!" It was this myth of a life given up in sacrifice to Stalin that captured the imagination of the young Ivan Shekhovtsov, then a private in the Red Army. Addressing the Zaporizhia gathering, Shekhovtsov added another important element to the old myth: Stalin, it was said, had personally visited Zoia Kosmodem'ianskaia's grave. The reference to Stalin paying tribute to one

of his fallen soldiers reinforced the connection between the Stalin monument and the theme of the Great Patriotic War (YouTube 2010c).

This theme found its reflection in the comments that the Zaporizhia communists began to collect in June 2010 in a special visitors' book dedicated to the Stalin monument. At first, most of the visitors who left their comments in the book were from outside Ukraine. A certain Afinogenov, a retired major from the Arkhangel'sk region of Russia, concluded his laudatory comment on the brave Zaporozhians who had dared to put up a monument to Stalin with the war-era slogan "For the Motherland, for Stalin!" The retired Colonel A. Lugansky from Odesa wrote that without Stalin there would have been no victory in the war. He also concluded his comments with a war-era slogan: "Victory will be ours!" Aleksandr Belenky from Israel stressed Stalin's role in the construction of socialism and in winning the "Great Victory." He also wrote that his grandfather, a Red Army artillery soldier, had been killed in the "Great Patriotic War" ("Kniga otzyvov" n/d: 2, 4, 5).

Eventually, as locals were also invited to leave their comments in the book, they indicated victory in the war as Stalin's major achievement. The Rev. Vasilii, a retired archbishop of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate, thanked the regional committee of the Communist Party for keeping alive the memory of a "great person." He was especially moved by Stalin's alleged order to take an icon of the Kazan Mother of God into the skies over Moscow and Leningrad in order to entreat divine protection of the capitals from a German takeover. Many stressed in their comments that this was a monument to Generalissimo Stalin (ibid.: 11).

Stalin vs. Bandera

Not everyone in Zaporizhia was happy with the installation of the monument to Stalin or accepted the notion that anyone who respected the veterans of World War II had to put up with the monument. Among the most vocal opponents were members of Ukrainian nationalist organizations. Their members were not allowed to approach the monument at its unveiling, but they promised that the monument would not remain in place for long. On 28 December it looked as if they had delivered on their promise. But the communists put on a brave face. Instead of alerting the police that someone had destroyed the monument, which, incidentally, had been installed without proper permission from the state

authorities, who regulated the construction of monuments in public places, they placed the head back on the metal bust, claiming that the vandals had succeeded only in damaging part of the inscription of the monument. But the worst for the monument still lay ahead (*Ukraïns'ka pravda* 2010d, 2011).

Half an hour before midnight on 31 December 2010, a blast shook the environs of the communist headquarters in Zaporizhia. It was the time of night when people were opening bottles of champagne and setting off fireworks, but the sound that came from the compound had nothing to do with New Year's celebrations. This sound was generated by a blast that destroyed the Stalin bust that had been hastily repaired only a few days earlier. Although the base survived, the bust itself was blown to bits. The largest fragment was that of the generalissimo's left hand, holding a marshal's epaulette. The glass was blown out of the headquarters' windows, and the hammer and sickle above the entrance to the building had been shaken loose, and now hung at a crazy angle. Who had blown up the monument? The opinions of readers of the internet publication *Ukraïns'ka pravda*, known for its liberal nationalist views, were divided. It could have been the nationalists, come back to finish off the job; but then again it might also have been the authorities themselves, pursuing their own political agenda. "Whatever it is, it's a delight all the same! Happy New Year, gentlemen!" remarked a reader in the discussion column (*Ukraïns'ka pravda* 2011).

As had been the case a few days earlier, there was an organization prepared to claim responsibility for the attack. The difference was that no one had ever heard of the "Movement of January 1" that did so. The statement released in the name of that organization read:

> In honor of the 102nd anniversary of the birth of the Leader of the Ukrainian people, Stepan Bandera, a special combat unit of the Movement of January 1 has blown up a shrine to the butcher of Ukraine, Stalin (Dzhugashvili). This is only our first action to destroy the enemies of the Ukrainian nation. Our next targets will be anti-Ukrainian officials, policemen, bandits of the "SBU" [Security Service of Ukraine], prosecutors and judges who persecute Ukrainian patriots. We shall destroy all Zionists and their wretched synagogues on our sacred Ukrainian land; there will be no mercy for them! We call on all patriots to band together in autonomous combat units, undergo training, and study military science and explosive materials. Our time has come: the National Revolution is not far off! Liberty or death! (*Politiko* 2011)

Although the statement used some of the language employed by the radical Ukrainian nationalists, its calls for terrorist acts and anti-Semitism had no parallels or precedents in recent Ukrainian history. The authorities termed the demolition of the Stalin monument an act of terrorism without blaming it on any particular political force or group. The search for the perpetrators began. It did not take very long to find the members of Tryzub who had claimed responsibility for decapitating the monument—they were soon arrested, interrogated, and put behind bars—but it was much more difficult to pick up the trail of those who had blown up the monument a few days later and issued a statement calling for violence and ethnic hatred. Many in the nationalist and liberal camps believed that the task was impossible because the authorities themselves were behind the act, which could provide a pretext for a clampdown on the oppositional forces. Suspicions of that nature intensified as the authorities went on to arrest leaders of the largest nationalist party, Svoboda (Liberty), which had its power base in western Ukraine but had recently been gaining strength in the center and east of the country. A regional governor declared that the organization's leaders were preparing a coup d'état and planning to shoot down President Yanukovych's airplane. Many believed that the authorities had staged a provocation aimed at paving the way for a declaration of a state of emergency and postponement of the parliamentary elections, scheduled for the fall of 2012. No single member of "Movement of January 1," which turned out to be a fictitious organization, was ever found (*Halyts'kyi korespondent* 2011).

Whoever was behind the explosion that destroyed the Stalin monument in Zaporizhia, the fact that responsibility for its previous decapitation was claimed by an organization named after Stepan Bandera immediately placed the event firmly within the context of the Ukrainian memory wars, which, ever since the Orange Revolution, had pitted Red Army veterans against veterans of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, a World War II partisan formation led by members of the OUN. The statement of the "Movement of January 1" added to the debate the themes of anti-Semitism, which was perceived as hallmark of nationalist thinking and violence, and was considered to be its main modus operandi. The two competing narratives of World War II—the Soviet-era myth of the Great Patriotic War versus that of the Ukrainian nationalist underground's heroic resistance to both communists and Nazis—had once again come crashing into the Ukrainian public sphere. It was no coincidence

whatsoever that the first narrative was embodied by the figure of Stalin, and the second by that of Bandera.

According to a poll taken in the fall of 2010, Bandera was the second most unpopular figure in Ukraine after Stalin. If Stalin was viewed negatively by 64 percent of those polled, Bandera scored 51 percent. The numbers of those with a positive view on these historical figures were equal: 28 percent of those polled for both Stalin and Bandera. As in the case of Stalin, Bandera's supporters and opponents were divided along geographical lines. While Bandera was favored by 58 percent in the west, his support reached only 9 percent in the east of the country (*TSN* 2010).

The division of Ukrainian historical memory of World War II along the Stalin–Bandera fault-line found its most vivid representation in two developments that took place in January 2010, the last full month of President Yushchenko's tenure. On 13 January, a Kyiv court declared Stalin and other leading members of the communist regime in Russia and Ukraine guilty of the crime of genocide because they had created the conditions for the Great Ukrainian Famine of 1932–33. The court's ruling became law on 21 January. On the following day, in his speech marking the Day of Unity of Ukraine (22 January), President Yushchenko announced that he had a signed a decree bestowing the title of Hero of Ukraine on Stepan Bandera. In a period of less than ten days, formal judgments had been brought down on both of the pivotal figures in Ukrainian memory politics: Stalin had officially been pronounced a criminal, and Bandera a hero. With Yushchenko due to leave office within weeks, and Viktor Yanukovych of the Party of Regions, which enjoyed the support of communist voters, poised to take his place, everyone understood that these last official actions of Yushchenko would be challenged by the incoming administration (*Radio Svoboda* 2010).

The Zaporizhia monument to Stalin was in many ways a response to the erection of numerous monuments to Bandera in the western regions of the country during the previous decade. The largest of these, in the city of Lviv, was unveiled in 2007. After Yanukovych's victory in early 2010, the communists believed that they could now get away with a monument to their anti-Bandera, Stalin. They were not entirely alone in their desire to do so. Asked about the monument to Stalin, Vasyl Khara, a member of parliament from the ruling Party of Regions, called Bandera and the commander of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, Roman

Shukhevych, "enemies of our people, scoundrels and traitors who destroyed the people." He then asked a rhetorical question: "So how come they could put up monuments to those scoundrels, but there can be no monument to Stalin?" (Lukanov 2010).

The destruction of the Stalin monument on New Year's Eve 2010 led to a new escalation of memory wars in Ukraine and the partition of Ukrainian memory space along the Stalin–Bandera line. Petro Symonenko, the leader of the Communist Party of Ukraine, called on his cadres to "show solidarity and unite for struggle against neo-Nazi nationalist evil and oligarchs who sponsor fascist organizations and parties." He also called on President Yanukovych to revoke the awards bestowed on the wartime nationalist leaders by his predecessor. "Unless the most decisive measures are taken to end the terrorism of the Svobodaites, the Tryzubites, and other nationalist bands and formations, it may end in tragedy for the people of Ukraine," intoned Symonenko. "I call upon the president of Ukraine: cancel immediately the illegal decrees of your predecessor, Yushchenko, awarding the title of Hero of Ukraine to the traitors and Hitlerite lackeys Shukhevych and Bandera" (*Zaxid.net* 2011).

Symonenko was not the only communist to counterpose a good Stalin to an evil Bandera. Quite a few of the communists who wrote their comments in the visitors' book at the Stalin monument in Zaporizhia did likewise. One of them claimed in the summer of 2010 that Stalin was a true leader, not like Yushchenko, Tymoshenko, and Yatseniuk, then Ukraine's political leaders, who had allegedly betrayed their people, just as Bandera, Shukhevych, and the eighteenth-century Ukrainian hetman Ivan Mazepa, who raised a revolt against Peter I, had done before them.

The communist demands eventually found an audience in Kyiv. The blast created a political atmosphere that made it possible to take the award of Hero of Ukraine away from the nationalist leader. Eleven days after the destruction of the Stalin monument, the Yanukovych administration declared that the title of Hero of Ukraine awarded to Bandera had been officially rescinded. The Ukrainian courts did so on a technicality—by law, the award could not be given to a non-citizen of Ukraine, and Bandera, who was killed on KGB orders in October 1959 while in exile in West Germany, had been a citizen of Poland but never of Ukraine (*RT* 2010; Levy 2011; "Kniga otzyvov" n/d: 2).

The Liberal Dilemma

President Yushchenko's decree bestowing the title of Hero of Ukraine on Bandera took the Ukrainian liberal elite by surprise. For years its most prominent representatives had been associated in one way or another with the national-liberal camp in Ukrainian politics—the coalition of nationalist and liberal forces that brought about Ukrainian independence in 1991 and fueled the Orange Revolution of 2004 that brought Yushchenko to power. Yushchenko's Bandera decree sounded the final death-knell for that coalition. Yushchenko's decree was treated with understanding by intellectuals with nationalist leanings but rejected emphatically by their liberal counterparts.

For one, argued the liberals, Bandera was too controversial a figure to be treated as a national hero. He divided Ukraine instead of uniting it. Politically, the decree allowed the Russian leadership to claim that the Orange camp had pro-Nazi sympathies; it also alienated the Polish elites, which until then had been among the strongest supporters of Yushchenko's attempt to join the European Union. That was one reason for the liberal rejection of Yushchenko's effort to make a hero of Bandera. The radical nationalism of Bandera's ideology, as well as the xenophobic and anti-Semitic views of the OUN leadership, was equally important.[2]

While liberals had not welcomed Yushchenko's Bandera decree, many of them rejected the notion that the new president Yanukovych's revocation of Bandera's title of hero was the right way to proceed. As Yaroslav Hrytsak, one of the leading intellectuals of the national-liberal camp, explained in his blog in the Lviv internet publication Zaxid.net, while Yushchenko's decree had divided Ukraine, the revocation could not stitch it back up. Many in the national-liberal camp did not welcome the February 2010 resolution of the European Parliament that called on the new president of Ukraine to annul his predecessor's decree. The Ukrainian intellectuals were especially disappointed by the support for that resolution on the part of the Polish members of the European Parliament, who, they believed, failed to appreciate the complexities of the political situation in Ukraine and, by passing such a resolution, strengthened the hand of the new authoritarian leaders of Ukraine and their Russian backers. Hrytsak suggested that the ideal solution for Ukraine would be to agree on some form of historical amnesia. Not very optimistic about the prospects for such an agreement, he called on his

readers at least to accept a situation in which minorities had the right to their own historical narratives and heroes. Hrytsak cited the case of London, with its monuments both to Cromwell and to Charles I, as a possible model for the implementation of a memory politics of this kind.[3]

While anti-Semitism featured prominently in the statement of the non-existent "Movement of January 1," and both communists and liberals touched upon this issue in their debates on the participation of members of the Bandera faction of the OUN in the Holocaust, the subject remained marginal. The topic of anti-Semitism moved much closer to the center in the debate on Bandera's legacy that was provoked by the Yushchenko decree among students of Ukrainian history in North America. The debate split a group of scholars, formerly maintaining something of a consensus in their assessment of Ukrainian history, who were associated in one way or another with the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies at the University of Alberta. Most of those who took part in that debate during the first half of 2010 stressed the close relation between the ideological premises of the Bandera organization and European fascism, putting the emphasis on the anti-Semitic element of nationalist ideology and nationalist collaboration in the Holocaust. One of the participants in the debate, John-Paul Himka, referred particularly to the results of his recent study of the Jewish pogrom in Lviv immediately after the German takeover of the city in late June and early July 1941.[4]

Many of the contributions to the Canadian debate appeared in the same year in Ukrainian translation in a book compiled by Tarik Omar, Ihor Balynsky, and Yaroslav Hrytsak, but had limited impact on the discussion of Bandera's legacy in Ukraine. The very division of the memory camps in Ukraine along the Bandera–Stalin line made the Holocaust theme marginal at best.

Putting Stalin under Glass

The Zaporizhia communists felt it a matter of honor to restore the monument to Stalin. Indeed, on 7 November 2011, slightly more than ten months after the first monument was blown up by still unidentified perpetrators, they unveiled a bust of Stalin on the anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. This time they encountered more obstacles on the part of the civic authorities than they had in connection with

the original installation. The authorities in Kyiv and Zaporizhia alike were opposed to the monument, and the city council finally agreed to its installation only as an interior feature of the building that housed the local headquarters of the Communist Party.

The communists reached a kind of compromise solution by placing their new bust of Stalin in a bay window of their reconstructed building, where it was still visible from the street. There was another change as well. Along with Stalin, in the other wing of their building, the communists installed a monument to Zoia Kosmodem'ianskaia—the heroine of Ivan Shekhovtsov, the pensioner from Kharkiv who had donated 50,000 hryvnias to build the original monument. This time, apparently, Shekhovtsov had run out of funds but not out of ideas. He was not mentioned among the major donors to the reconstruction, but Kosmodem'ianskaia featured as prominently in the Zaporizhia pantheon as Stalin. The dictator's association with the history of the war and the legitimization of his cult through the wartime sacrifices of ordinary citizens were strengthened in the new version of the monument (*MIG* 2011).

With the perpetrators who had blown up the original monument still at large (the authorities eventually had to release the leaders of the nationalist Svoboda Party after it proved impossible to link them to the blast), and the Tryzub members who had cut off Stalin's head a few days previously behind bars, it would appear that no one dared launch another assault on the monument. The new attack on it came from unexpected quarters and was carried out in an unusual manner. Local journalists got together to produce and display on a downtown billboard a poster challenging the legitimacy of the Stalin monument in the context of the very same historical mythology that legitimized it—the mythology of World War II. The poster, which went on display in December 2011, depicted the figure of Adolf Hitler, his hands spread in apparent disappointment. The text read: "What makes me any worse than Stalin? Give me a monument as well." A line in smaller print at the bottom of the poster explained the reason for the action: "Let's rid the city of its shame!" The reference was of course to the Stalin monument (*Bagnet* 2011).

The communists challenged the display of the poster on legal grounds. Ukrainian laws prohibit propaganda of fascism, and the portrait of Hitler was interpreted as such. The Hitler poster was duly removed, but a new one, sponsored by the same group of journalists, soon took

its place. The new poster bore an image of Stalin. The text of the new poster read: "I killed millions of Ukrainians; what have *you* done to deserve a monument?" The line at the bottom in smaller print remained unchanged: "Let's rid the city of its shame!" This time the installation of the monument to Stalin was challenged on the basis of a different historical myth—that of the Great Famine of 1932–1933, which claimed the lives of up to four million Ukrainian citizens, and has been widely considered in Ukraine to be an act of genocide against the Ukrainian nation (*Novosti* 2012).

While the heroization of Bandera left the Ukrainian national-liberal intellectuals divided and disoriented, attempts to glorify Stalin by building him a monument in Zaporizhia offered grounds for solidarity across national-liberal lines. Comparing Stalin to Hitler and presenting him as a criminal responsible for the deaths of millions of Ukrainians during the Great Famine were two main themes on which liberals and nationalists agreed with one another. In November 2011, as a district court in Zaporizhia was deciding the fate of the Tryzub members accused of decapitating the Stalin monument, Valentyn Nalyvaichenko, the new leader of Viktor Yushchenko's party, Our Ukraine, was reported in the media to have "reminded both representatives of the procuracy and judges deciding the case that by decision of the Kyiv Appellate Court of 13 January 2010, Stalin and his henchmen were found guilty of organizing the famine-genocide of the Ukrainian people." Nalyvaichenko, himself a native of Zaporizhia, stated: "I remind all officials who tolerated the erection of a monument to Stalin in Zaporizhia that the criminality of the Stalin regime has been acknowledged by the parliamentary assemblies of the CSCE and the Council of Europe, and that their resolutions should be carried out by our state" (*Gazeta.ua* 2011).

On 12 December 2011, a court in Zaporizhia sentenced nine members of the Tryzub organization, most of them young men from eastern Ukraine, to prison terms ranging from one to three years. The sentences were suspended, and the men were released from custody after the court hearing. They were ordered to compensate the Communist Party for 106,000 hryvnias spent on the construction of the monument, 50,000 of them, as we remember, donated by Ivan Shekhovtsov. The sentenced appealed the court's decision, but in June 2012 the regional court of appeal left the sentence without change. The same court also ruled that the erection of the Stalin monument had itself been an illegal act. The Tryzub members were tried and sentenced for causing damage to

property that happened to belong to the Communist Party. In an interview given to media outlets after the court proceedings, the perpetrators showed no remorse for what they had done. They declared that with the Yanukovych administration's assumption of office, Ukraine had come under foreign occupation, and that the installation of the monument to Stalin was an insult to the Ukrainian nation. To the disappointment of many liberals, there was no trace of liberal ideology in the statements of those who had toppled the symbol of the liberals' main embodiment of evil—Joseph Stalin (*Pohliad* 2012).

The War that Failed to End

In Ukraine, the history of World War II continues to serve as a battleground dominated by two different versions of its past. The first is represented by the proponents of the well developed Soviet era myth of the Great Patriotic War, which after 1991 has been revised to let back in some form the original centerpiece of that myth—the image of Joseph Stalin as the war victor. The alternative offered to that old myth is the heroic image of the nationalist underground fighting on two fronts, against the Nazis and the Soviets. While World War II mythologies serve as a consolidating factor for all of Ukraine's neighbors, including Russia, Belarus and Poland, they continue to divide Ukrainian society along political and geographic lines. The myth of the Great Patriotic War with Stalin at its center unites Ukraine with Russia and Belarus when it comes to the memory of World War II. The myth of heroic nationalist resistance against communism brings Ukraine closer to the countries of East-Central Europe.

The struggle over the Stalin monument in Zaporizhia, which pitted against each other two diametrically opposed political forces and visions of history, communist and nationalist, left little space for any middle ground in the interpretation of the history of World War II in Ukraine. As shown by the analysis presented here, the debates over Stalin and Bandera, as well as over the Soviet and nationalist legacies, continue to divide Ukrainian society between two versions of the past.

There is little surprise in that regard that the mass protests at the Maidan Square in Kyiv in early 2014, followed by the Russian annexation of the Crimea and Moscow's covert intervention in the Donbas and other areas of Ukrainian east, brought about an open confrontation between the pro-Russian fighters, wearing the St George's ribbons that serve as a symbol of Soviet victory in the Great Patriotic War, and the

pro-Ukrainian forces, whose members sport the red-and-black colors of wartime nationalist underground. On a certain level, in Ukraine the World War II had never come to its end. People continue to die there under the colors and symbols of the long gone past.

Notes

1. On the formation and history of the Stalin cult, see Hochschild (2003); and Plamper (2012). On the polling data, see Levada (2000), 453–459; Mendelson and Gerber (2006); Levinson (2010); and *News RU* (2013).
2. See articles by Kost Bondarenko, Yaroslav Hrytsak, Mykola Riabchuk, Volodymyr Kulyk, and Andrii Portnov in Amar et al. (2010), 321–340.
3. See articles by Hrytsak in Amar et al. (2010), 340–345; 346–357.
4. See the articles by David Marples, Zenon Kohut, Timothy Snyder, Alexander Motyl, Per Anders Rudling, John-Paul Himka, and Moisei Fishbein in Amar et al. (2010), 129–309.

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CHAPTER 7

"We Should be Proud Not Sorry": Neo-Stalinist Literature in Contemporary Russia

Philipp Chapkovski

Located just a few hundred meters from the Kremlin, the *Moskva* bookstore on Tverskaia Street is one of the oldest and most popular bookstores in Moscow. The store is rather small. Its "Modern Russian History" section occupies just a single bookcase. Three of the bookcase's five shelves, however, are occupied exclusively by a very special kind of book. Mostly featuring lurid "pulp fiction"-style covers in black and red, these books share a common focus on the Stalinist period of Russian history. Their perspective and general tenor is clear from the titles alone, with typical examples including *Why Was Stalin Murdered?*; *1937: There Was a Conspiracy!*; *Zionists against Stalin*; and *Stalinist Repressions: The Great Lie of the Twentieth Century*.

Even a brief tour of the bookstores in any large or medium-sized Russian city will confirm the overwhelming presence of this kind of book on the shelves. These are books mainly written for a wide audience by amateur historians, aimed at revising the academic vision of the Stalinist period of Soviet history and frequently claiming that the truth about this period has been intentionally withheld from the public. The most

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remarkable fact about this neo-Stalinist literature is its immense popularity with readers—it is published by major publishing houses in large print-runs. Moreover, these books sit on the shelves of respectable bookstores side-by-side with academic books. For large sections of the public, this literature is considered a reliable source of knowledge on a par with the professional historiography on the subject. This fact alone makes the phenomenon of neo-Stalinist literature a topic worthy of our attention.

Despite its importance, the question of why this literature exists and what should be done about it remains on the periphery of public debates in contemporary Russia. This situation changed briefly in April 2011, when a group of Moscow liberal journalists organized a public campaign under the slogan "Stop the Publication of Stalinist Books!" In their public appeals the organizers complained that it was outrageous that the largest Russian publishing house *Eksmo* should simultaneously publish books by distinguished world-famous writers, such as the contemporary Russian novelist Liudmila Ulitskaya, on the one hand, and neo-Stalinist literature, on the other.[1] The goal of the campaign was to persuade both writers and readers to boycott *Eksmo*. But the campaign soon petered out without yielding any practical results, and the situation on the book market remained unchanged. The failed campaign was proof once again of the extent to which neo-Stalinist literature has been integrated into the mainstream public space of contemporary Russia, such that society at large does not see anything objectionable in its prominence.

In this chapter I argue that neo-Stalinist literature in contemporary Russia offers a useful prism for examining the post-traumatic syndromes of a post-totalitarian society. I begin by providing an overview of the phenomenon of neo-Stalinist literature in today's Russia, sketching out its basic topics, its authors, and its volume. Next, I put this literature in the context of the shifting Russian perceptions of the Stalin period over the past sixty or so years. Here I present some suggestions about the origins of pro-Stalinist feelings, and trace the evolution of public attitudes towards Stalin's crimes over time. In the concluding section, I analyze the reasons for the existence and popularity of neo-Stalinist literature in today's Russia. The crucial driving force behind this popularity is the public's aversion towards perestroika and subsequent liberal reforms which were accompanied by the wide-scale disclosure of Stalin's crimes. The disillusioned and nostalgic mass audience finds in the neo-Stalinist literature an efficient irritant for the liberal intelligentsia who were the

main authors of the anti-Stalin campaign in the 1980s and 1990s, and to which most academic historians still belong.

Neo-Stalinist Literature in Contemporary Russia: Defining the Boundaries of the Phenomenon

In order to define more precisely the boundaries of neo-Stalinist literature and the selection of books to be analyzed here I devised a method based on the study of "adjacent purchases." Online bookstores commonly use recommendation software linking every individual book record to similar books often bought together; the most well-known example is Amazon's "Customers Who Bought This Item Also Bought" function. In this way, books become linked together through common readerships, much as people are linked together in a social network. This tool allows us to identify clusters of books with common readerships.

For this study, I used the information available via the largest Russian online bookstore, Ozon.ru.[2] I began by searching for a neo-Stalinist book that might be considered representative of this genre. I settled upon Dmitrii Lyskov's book *Stalin's Repressions: The Great Lie of the Twentieth Century*. I then looked at the adjacent purchases, that is, the list of books which were most often bought together with my original book. From this list I selected books categorized under "Twentieth-Century History," and then repeated the process, identifying the adjacent purchases for each successive listing. In this way I gradually compiled a list of the preferences of a particular group of readers: the fans of neo-Stalinist literature. From this list I selected the titles with the largest print-run.

My analysis showed that the authors of neo-Stalinist literature are not large in number. The best-selling authors in the genre tend to be highly prolific and usually have several different publications on the topic. Table 7.1 lists the most popular authors of neo-Stalinist literature; the number of books on the topic by each author; the number of copies printed; and the profession of each author, which I identified using open-source information. Since these books are very popular and usually printed in multiple editions, I have also indicated the number of unique books (titles) by each author. It is also worth noting that the publishing market in Russia is rather non-transparent and the official print-run information is highly unreliable. For this reason, the figures on print-runs in Table 7.1 should be approached with caution and used only in

Table 7.1 Data on leading neo-Stalinist authors and their books

Author	*Number of books*	*Unique*	*Total print-run (in thousands)*	*Higher education*
Yurii Mukhin	117	60	871	Engineering
Sergei Kremlev	41	26	204	Engineering
Vladimir Bushin	49	21	167	Literature
Nikolai Starikov	74	21	361	Engineering
Arsen Martirosian	36	21	230	Military[a]
Aleksandr Diukov	18	17	71	History
Yelena Prudnikova	33	17	162	Journalism
Igor' Pykhalov	33	16	140	Engineering
Yurii Zhukov	17	9	75	History

[a] Some websites indicate that he graduated from the KGB Higher School, but reliable information on this does not seem to be available

order to gain a general sense of the relative popularity rankings of the authors listed.

As we can see from Table 7.1, nine authors have produced around 200 unique titles that were on the market in 2012. The most successful writer of neo-Stalinist literature is Yurii Mukhin.[3] The uniqueness of these books should not be exaggerated, however: the obvious commercial demand for this genre means that the dominant authors in the field produce dozens of books, but there is a very large degree of overlap in the content across each author's books. We can also see from Table 7.1 that even if neo-Stalinist authors call themselves historians,[4] they are in fact mainly engineers by profession (on which see more below).

My list of books also gives a sense of the authors' main topics of interest. These include the successes and the costs of Soviet modernization; the scale of mass repressions under Stalin, and whether or not these did in fact take place; the role of the USSR and other countries in World War II and sensitive episodes from the war such as the occupation of the Baltic States and the issue of the price of the Soviet victory; and, finally, the cause of Stalin's death. On all these topics, neo-Stalinist authors challenge facts and interpretations shared by the world academic community, defining the goal of their writings as the debunking of liberal lies. Their books are usually written in semi-fictionalized form, and so their arguments are only sometimes supported by scholarly references. Overall, although the authors identify as historians, they are writing

for a popular rather than academic audience. There are, however, some exceptions: Yurii Zhukov is a well-established historian working in the Russian Academy of Sciences with a long record of professional publications (most of them written before the 2000s) in academic journals, and Aleksandr Diukov, head of the pro-Kremlin "Historical Memory Foundation" and co-editor of the neo-Stalinist book *The Great War Slandered-2: Nothing for Us to Repent!* (Diukov and Pykhalov 2008) has one publication in a respectable semi-academic journal *Rodina* (Diukov 2015) and has worked intensively in state archives both in Russia and the Baltic countries (before he became persona non grata in Latvia and Lithuania in 2012).

The main objective of neo-Stalinist writers is the rectification of injustice and restoration of Stalin's good name: the authors accuse academic historians of denigrating the Stalinist period of Soviet history. For example, in the introduction to his five-volume work *200 Myths about Stalin*, Arsen Martirosian writes: "The deadly fight of anti-Stalinists against the 'dead lion' still goes on. They try to kill him over and over again, fabricating all kinds of myths defaming his name, or simply concocting blatant falsifications" (Martirosian 2016: 1). Neo-Stalinist books also often contain elements of conspiracy theories: the authors either state that "hostile external forces" were influencing events in Stalinist Russia, and/or that such forces are currently influencing the ways in that historical period is now perceived. Finally, the books' titles are also distinctive: never neutral, and always highly indicative of the book's general thrust and tenor. I have taken one such title—*We Should Be Proud, Not Sorry* (Zhukov 2011)—as the title of this chapter.

The Roots of Neo-Stalinist Literature: Perceptions of the Stalin Period in the USSR and Russia from the 1950s to the 1990s

In order to understand the causes and significance of the popularity of neo-Stalinist literature in today's Russia we need first to trace the history of the perceptions of Stalin's epoch over time. During Stalin's rule, as in any totalitarian regime, the popularity of the leader was very high. But an important point to note here is that in the Soviet case pro-Stalin feelings were tightly intertwined with Russian nationalism. As David Brandenberger has shown, Stalin's turn back to traditional Russian

symbols and heroes around 1934, after the Bolsheviks' initial emphasis on the de-nationalized international communist ideals of the revolution, was a crucial moment. This trend developed further over the course of the 1930s and culminated during the Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945 (Brandenberger 2002). After Stalin's death in 1953, his successor Nikita Khrushchev launched a campaign to denounce Stalin's personality cult, accusing him of the mass repression of innocent people. Part of society acclaimed this move, enthusiastically perceiving Khrushchev's actions as marking an end to the unjust totalitarian period. Another part viewed this as a betrayal of national interests. During this period, neo-Stalinists formed a semi-official grouping which Nikolai Mitrokhin has called the "Russian party" (Mitrokhin 2003): it included pro-Stalinist party members, some village prose writers, monarchist dissidents, and some radical anti-Semitic Orthodox clergy. Consequently, it is not surprising that neo-Stalinism came to the fore after Khrushchev's removal from power in 1964, when Leonid Brezhnev came to power and the state pursued the politics of inclusion, attempting to co-opt Russian nationalism into official Marxist discourse (Brudny 2000: 94–132). During the Brezhnev era Stalin's name was banned and disappeared from the official public discourse, but neo-Stalinist ideology was conspicuously present in the writings of the members of the "Russian party" in the 1960s and 1970s (ibid.: 12). The open praising of Stalin was not allowed in the late-Soviet period, and this led to a situation in which doing so was even perceived as a peculiar form of popular protest against the authorities. One Soviet dissident, Viktor Nekipelov noted that there was a thriving blackmarket trade in portraits of Stalin during this period (Nekipelov 1979). Even if some features of neo-Stalinism did become part of Soviet ideology in the Brezhnev period, its genuine adherents still remained in disgrace. These anti-Soviet Stalinist Russian nationalists formed another stream of the Soviet dissident movement of the 1970s, opposed to the liberal pro-Western Soviet dissidents, whose main ideology was the defense of human rights. This "wing" of the dissident movement also had its own uncensored underground literature which glorified Stalin and the Russian nation and called for fighting "Jewish domination," said to be aimed at destroying "the flower of Russia" (Joo 2004).

After the end of Brezhnev's period of stagnation the pendulum swung from Stalinism back to its critics, now much more strongly than in Khrushchev's time. In the late 1980s during Gorbachev's perestroika, the exposure of Stalin's crimes was an important part of public debates

(Smith 1996; Baron 1997; O'Connor 2008). The neo-Stalinists who, like the anti-Stalinists, had gained freedom of speech, now tried to answer anti-Stalinist accusations. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 Stalin's crimes seemed to be "beyond reasonable doubt."

The public exposure of Stalin's crimes, however, had shaken the whole fragile house of beliefs of the ex-Soviet population: it challenged the whole Soviet project, leaving people profoundly disoriented. Life in the new weakened country in difficult financial circumstances made many people nostalgic for the Soviet past. As Serguei Oushakine put it, "people tried to restore their feeling of belonging once Soviet power and the Soviet motherland were gone" (Oushakine 2009: 2). As a result, neo-Stalinism began to regain its popularity. Under the second Russian president Vladimir Putin, Russia became more powerful again but the official narrative of the Soviet past continued to be characterized by evasiveness. While scholars continue to study Stalin's crimes and the authorities remain largely silent on this topic, neo-Stalinist authors are becoming more and more popular among a wide audience and are competing with academics for the role of public intellectuals, appropriating their authority to make influential statements about the past.

Neo-Stalinist Literature: Causes and Commonality with Other Social Phenomena

The most obvious reason for the popularity of neo-Stalinist literature in contemporary Russia is nostalgia for the glorious Soviet past and the "order" of Soviet times, guaranteed by the rule of the "iron fist." This nostalgia is also intensified by the difficulties which people faced in adapting to the new conditions after the sudden collapse of the USSR. In neo-Stalinist books, these feelings tend to be expressed via a set of key strategies which have parallels in other social fields and in other countries as well, namely: "alternative history"; denialist literature, mainly focused on the Holocaust; conspiracy theories; and nationalistic (and anti-Semitic) literature. These discourses overlap and are tightly interconnected. Neo-Stalinist authors usually open their books with the announcement that the existing academic historiography on Stalin's Russia is completely unreliable, and that hence an alternative history is required in order to set the record straight. The neo-Stalinist authors refuse to acknowledge that Stalin's crimes took place, and here there are

similarities with the strategies employed in Holocaust denial literature. Neo-Stalinist literature also draws widely upon conspiracy theories. For example, the explanations offered for the alleged "disinformation" and "deception" that supposedly permeates the scholarly historiography of Stalinism frequently rest upon claims about the existence of an ongoing plot waged by anti-Soviet and anti-Russian forces. The agents of this plot include Western governments and "the Jews," who have always been bent on harming the Russian nation, and here the neo-Stalinist literature draws upon nationalist and anti-Semitic discourses.

A comparison of neo-Stalinist literature with other examples of "alternative history" seems productive here, since alternative history more broadly is generally very popular in contemporary Russia. The most famous example of alternative history in Russia is Anatolii Fomenko's "new chronology." A professional Soviet and Russian mathematician, Fomenko began to develop his theory of a biased chronology in the early 1980s (Laruelle 2012). He uses mathematical data in an effort to revise the standard historical chronology and to support his claim that many historical events do not correspond mathematically with the dates when they are traditionally held to have occurred. Despite the fact that Fomenko's books have been decisively and repeatedly exposed by the academic community as pseudo-history, they remain extremely popular with a wide audience. Konstantin Sheiko has suggested that Fomenko's version of history appeals to the Russian reading public because of their "disillusionment with Communism and promises of consumer capitalism" (Sheiko 2004: 13). Sergei Ivanov and Viktor Zhivov argue that there are two main reasons for the popularity of Fomenko's "new chronology." First, the general reader tends to find the "official" academic history dull, whereas the "revisionist literature" is much more entertaining to read. Second, people in Russia suffer from an inferiority complex, especially after the collapse of the Soviet Union when their country ceased to be one of the two supreme superpowers in a bipolar world. Consequently they often welcome the news that the entirety of world history is an invention and that Europe is less ancient than it claims to be, for example; this provides reassuring evidence that Russia is "no worse" than other countries (Ivanov and Zhivov 2000).

All these observations also hold true when it comes to the appeal of neo-Stalinist literature. First it is important to note that the neo-Stalinist authors are mainly engineers by training, while Fomenko is a mathematician; hence we might suggest that those who study the exact sciences are

more inclined to dispute common knowledge held within the humanities, and in the field of history in particular. Another important factor is the relatively undeveloped state of the non-fiction publishing market in Russia, such that readers who are bored by serious academic historical writing tend, as Ivanov and Zhivov have noted, to turn instead to alternative history books, including neo-Stalinist ones, in their search for entertaining historical reading dealing with the recent past. The compensatory function played by this literature with regard to the Russian national inferiority complex is also crucial here: in trying to prove that Stalin was not a criminal but a world-class statesman, neo-Stalinist authors (and their readers) wish to convince themselves that Russia (and/or the USSR) is no worse than other European countries. Another important feature of the alternative history exemplified by Fomenko and the neo-Stalinist literature alike is its focus not so much on creating new historical knowledge as discrediting the existing body of accepted knowledge. Neo-Stalinist literature largely defines itself through its opposition to the statements of conventional historians: its main ideas are based on the refutation of existing theories, not the creation of new ones.

One of the central features of neo-Stalinist literature is the tendency to deny, downplay, or justify Stalinist crimes. The authors use strategies that are highly similar to those used by deniers of the Holocaust, the Armenian genocide, or war crimes in ex-Yugoslavia. Historian Tony Taylor provides a good description of the strategies employed by denialists:

> They adopt a common set of techniques, including falsely claiming scholarly or technical expertise; using straw-man reasoning (the attributing of false assertions to others to distract argument); … accepting evidence as proved or corroborated even when there is neither valid proof nor corroboration; misrepresenting the views of opponents; … and telling lies. (Taylor 2009: XV)

The famous Swiss Holocaust denialist writer Jurgen Graf who in 1998 fled (as it happens, to Russia) to avoid imprisonment for his statements on the Holocaust, later said in an interview with a Russian-language Estonian newspaper: "I am afraid the number of victims of Stalinism is also exaggerated" (Graf 2002)—a statement that highlights the proximity of these two fields. There are, however, certain characteristics that are specific to the neo-Stalinist brand of denialism. First, neo-Stalinist

authors are more likely than Holocaust deniers to use the technique of declaring widely accepted evidence as a falsification. Any documents that contradict their theories are routinely dismissed as forgeries. This applies especially to the documents used by Nikita Khrushchev during his de-Stalinization campaign. For instance, neo-Stalinist author Yelena Prudnikova has claimed that "after July 1951 there is no single reliable document one can trust" (Prudnikova 2008: 135). Another technique frequently employed by neo-Stalinist authors is to base their arguments on evidence drawn from highly questionable primary sources. For example, these accounts often take at face value the interrogation protocols of the Moscow show trials of 1936–1938 in which the accused confessed to having committed various outlandish and nonsensical crimes. Thus, Nikolai Starikov writes that "the facts of treason and apostasy were PROVED. Almost all of the accused admitted their guilt" (Starikov 2013: 138) (original emphasis). Likewise, Soviet official documents and Soviet propaganda are also treated unquestioningly as reliable historical evidence. For example, in order to support his claim about the lack of mistreatment of Estonians arrested after the Soviet annexation of 1940 by the Soviet army (contrary to the accounts given in the academic studies on the subject) Aleksandr Diukov refers to Soviet secret police instructions according to which the trains which transported the prisoners were to be fully equipped by medical personnel and hospital wagons in case "any deportees fell ill on the journey" (Diukov 2007: 39, 47). In another book the same author claims that the caption under a Soviet propaganda photo: "Children give flowers to the Red Army soldiers at the Parade of Liberation in Kishinev, 3 July 1940" proves that there were no Soviet repressions in Bessarabia (Diukov 2009: 158).

When it comes to the social context of neo-Stalinist literature in comparison with the Holocaust denial literature, it should be noted that there is a significant structural difference between the two cases. The public consensus over the Holocaust in Western societies is so strong that almost no one dares to glorify the Nazis' crimes. Thus, the only way left to the Nazi sympathizers is to deny or belittle the historicity of the Shoah. Unlike the neo-Stalinist writers, they do not have the option of praising the mass atrocities. The situation with Stalin's crimes in Russia is different. Here, there is no public pressure holding neo-Stalinists back from expressing their views. If anything, neo-Stalinist authors tend to argue that the repressions were not harsh enough. Pykhalov, for example, writes that Stalin was "too kind and that was his only fault" (Pykhalov

2011: 395). Regret that the repressions were not taken even further is often expressed in these works; Prudnikova, for example, writes that "had article 58–10 of the Penal Code [against counter-revolutionary activity] been used as it should have" the "fifth column" of Soviet intelligentsia would have "ceased to exist at all" (Prudnikova 2008: 138).

In some cases, neo-Stalinist authors focus not on denial of the facts but rather their reinterpretation. Thus unlike the Holocaust deniers, for whom the crucial point is to prove that there were no gas chambers in Auschwitz, some neo-Stalinist authors acknowledge that Stalin's mass repressions took place, but offer a very different evaluation of this fact. To use Tony Taylor's terminology, they are "projectionists": "If the denialist case is concerned with rejecting accusations of mass murder, the projectionist position will argue that the victims of the mass murder committed murder on the same or similar scale or were so provocative that they brought the punitive killings upon themselves" (Taylor 2009: 13). Thus, for example, Pykhalov claims that the repressions were "harsh and unpopular but at the same time necessary measures" enabling the continuation of peaceful life in the future (Pykhalov 2010: 9).

What also unites neo-Stalinist literature with Holocaust denial literature is their shared sense of a world conspiracy, whether against the Germans or the Russians. Almost all neo-Stalinist books feature an "Enemy" who fought against Stalin while he was alive and smeared his name after his death. In this connection, there are grounds for classifying neo-Stalinist literature as a sub-genre of conspiracy theory literature. The wide popularity of conspiracy theories in post-Soviet space has yet to be studied in depth and its importance is often underestimated (Ortmann and Heathershaw 2012). As Mark Fenster has noted of conspiracy theorists: "Every historical event they investigate and every piece of evidence they identify inevitably means the exact same thing" (Fenster 1999: 101). This description fits neo-Stalinist literature very well: neo-Stalinist authors also consistently produce the same basic narrative in all their texts. Indeed an important feature of the neo-Stalinist narrative is that the main protagonists remain essentially the same, no matter what period the author is discussing. Neo-Stalinist authors consider those historians who study Stalin's crimes today to be the same "Trotskyists" who fought against Stalin during his lifetime—just in a new guise. When contemporary anti-Stalinist historians lie about the past, the neo-Stalinist line has it, what they are trying to do is to hide the traces of crimes committed by enemies, crimes such as the murder of Stalin, for example; and

in this sense these anti-Stalinist historians are the accomplices of Russia's enemies.

Marlene Laruelle has noted that almost all of the Russian alternative history texts use the conspirological framework and that the "conjunction between conspiracy theory and the rewriting of history makes up one of the main instruments for disseminating nationalist theories in today's Russia" (Laruelle 2012: Abstract). This observation also holds true for neo-Stalinist literature. These books use pro-Stalin statements to "promote" the Russian nation: as we have seen, the notion of Stalin as the restorer of Russian national identity after its symbolic revolutionary destruction has often been used a symbol of Russian nationalism. Nationalistic discourse is also characteristic of nostalgic writing about the Soviet past in general. Serguei Oushakine in his analysis of post-Soviet ethnographic studies notes that they tend to interpret the Soviet past from an ethnic point of view: "In the obituaries for the vanished country and dying nation authors of the Russian tragedy exposed the underlying attempt to reshape Russia's recent history in ethnic terms. Ethnic mapping was called upon to reformat a past that had suddenly become incoherent and incomprehensible" (Oushakine 2009: 81).

In neo-Stalinist literature Stalin is always represented as a defender of the Russian nation (even if he was Georgian himself), while all his enemies are represented as non-Russians and destroyers of the Russian nation. There is one curious feature of the literature here. One might reasonably expect that the main enemies of the Russian nation during Stalin's time would be considered to be the Germans, especially given the fact that the victory over fascism is a constituting myth for the post-Soviet identity (Dubin 2004). Nevertheless, somewhat counterintuitively, the Germans often feature in neo-Stalinist literature not as the main enemies but rather as Russia's friends. Two popular neo-Stalinist books, *Who Made Hitler Attack Stalin*? (Starikov 2011) and *Russia and Germany: Separately or Together*? (Kremlev 2003), claim that Germany was a friendly nation to the USSR but that the intrigues of the Western allies set the two countries against each other, triggering World War II. Thus, the main enemies of the Russian nation are either the West or "the world government" run by Jews. As Nikolai Mitrokhin has noted, since at least the 1970s there has been a tendency among Russian nationalists to make the somewhat convoluted claim that "the Victory [in the war] saved the Russian nation from annihilation by the Jews"

(Mitrokhin 2003: 475) (because the war prompted a turn away from "cosmopolitanism" and back to nationalism).

In Eastern European memory, Hitler's and Stalin's repressions compete for the dominant position: underestimating the significance of the former means increasing the role of the latter, making the population victims, not accomplices of the crime (Droit 2007). For example in Lithuania a tendency to emphasize communist crimes has for years been one of the strategies employed in order to deny Lithuanian complicity in the Holocaust, while in Ukraine, orthodox Ukrainian nationalists blame Judeo-Bolshevism for organizing the 1932–1933 Famine (former Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko did however propose a law criminalizing denial of both the Holodomor and the Holocaust).[5] In Russian neo-Stalinist literature, however, this "zero-sum game" is replaced by a cooperative game: the notion of "Stalin's repressions" is part of the same hoax as the Holocaust, and they both have the same author—the Jewry. In other countries of the ex-Soviet bloc the State uses the narrative about the Gulag (or Stalinist repressions in general) at the expense of memory about Holocaust (Emmanuel Droit (2007) writes about exactly this curious "balance-like" structure: it seems as though you cannot have both Gulag- and Holocaust-driven public memory. The more you focus on one, the less you focus on another.) However, in neo-Stalinist discourse there is no such trade-off. Neo-Stalinists believe that both the Holocaust and the Gulag were first invented and then demonized by an external evil force. The fact that they both deny and celebrate repressions simultaneously is an aspect of what I call the "suicidal paradox" inherent in the denial of history: these authors deny what they secretly admire.

Conclusion

Any denial of history contains a suicidal paradox: it aims to undermine its own foundation by negating the facts that reflect the core of the founding ideology. This explains the inconsistency and logical flaws common to all deniers, neo-Stalinists included. Vidal-Naquet, in his book on denial of the Holocaust, compares this kind of logic with Freudian kettle logic (Vidal-Naquet 1992). Sigmund Freud writes about the case of person A. who borrowed a kettle from person B. and then returned the kettle with a hole in it, explaining: "First, I never borrowed a kettle from B. at all; secondly, the kettle had a hole in it already when I got it from

him; and thirdly, I gave him back the kettle undamaged" (Freud 1953: 119–120). In a similar manner, neo-Stalinist authors claim that Stalin's repressions never occurred; that the victims were traitors who deserved such treatment; and that repression of innocents was a necessary price for the future. This irrationality may be resolved by looking deeper into the forces driving neo-Stalinist authors and their audience.

The state ideology in contemporary Russia broadly uses the Great Victory myth as the only point of consensus in modern Russia: Victory Day is the main national holiday, and the topic of the Victory is sacred. However this discourse elides the role of Stalin in Russian history. It exploits the benefits of Stalin's military victory without condemning the moral values of his regime. From this point of view neo-Stalinist literature may be read as merely following the state discourse through to its logical conclusion. In the situation of the crisis of Russian national identity and of important public institutions such as historical studies as well as the ambiguity of state ideology, neo-Stalinist literature satisfies the demands of a wide audience in contemporary Russia.

Coda: Neo-Stalinism After Crimea

Finally, let us look briefly at how things have changed in the wake of the Euromaidan and the conflict in Ukraine. How have these events affected the consumers (readers) and producers (authors) of apologetic literature about Stalinism in Russia?

Igor' Pykhalov has been involved personally in the Donbas conflict, fighting on the side of the "Donetsk People's Republic" as a grenade launcher operator (Nakanune 2014). He has stated that he expects that the Crimean annexation and the further development of the conflict in the Donbas will decrease the popularity of the Stalin theme among his readers because they have "more current [*aktual'nye*] topics to discuss".[6] Indeed since 2014 only one book has been published under his name, and this was a reprint of his earlier book, *Why People were Arrested in Stalin's Time. How They Lie to Us about "Stalin's Repressions"* (2015, originally published by Yauza in 2011). His colleague Yelena Prudnikova has also remained mostly inactive since 2014, only republishing her previous work on the Katyn massacre, *Katyn: The Lie which became History* (2015, co-authored with Ivan Chigirin, originally published by Olma-Press in 2011).

While some neo-Stalinist authors actively participated in the conflict in the east of Ukraine, others suffered as a result of the increasing severity of the Russian regime as it became more and more intolerant towards any kind of grassroots activism, even when formally aligned with the regime's policies and ideological attitudes. The most impressive example here was the arrest of the leading Stalinist writer Yurii Mukhin in July 2015. He was accused of "organizing the activity of an extremist community" (article 282.2 of the Russian Penal Code), spent about two months in Butyrka detention center, and was released under home detention where he remained at the time of writing (2016). Between 2014 and 2016, only two books on Stalinist topics were published under his name: *The Katyn Detective Story* and *Stalin*, both reprints of his earlier texts).

In the same period, several new authors have appeared. In contrast to the previous leaders such as Pykhalov and Mukhin, they mostly have right-leaning political views. Ivan Chigirin (who works with Yelena Prudnikova) publishes his works (such as the recently published luxurious volume *Stalin: Illness and Death* 2016) with "Dostoinstvo" publishing house, which specializes mostly in apologetic books about the last Russian tsar Nicholas II. Aleksandr Yeliseev (*1937: Don't Believe the Lies about "Stalin's Repressions"!* 2015), is editor-in-chief of the right-wing website Pravaya.ru. Sergei Tsyrkun (*Stalin against the Lubianka: The Bloody Nights of 1937*, Eksmo 2014) was a deputy prosecutor of one of Moscow districts who led the trial of the National Bolshevik Party in 2004.

The most obvious explanation for this shift is the change of generations: a shift from hardcore orthodox leftists such as Yurii Mukhin, who succeeded Nina Andreeva's generation, to a new generation of young (Yeliseev was born in 1972, Sergei Tsyrkun in 1973) right-wing imperialists, who are generally much less scrupulous in their ideological preferences. We might also suspect that the tectonic changes produced by the Ukrainian events all along both the left- and right-wing flanks of the Russian political scene have swept away the fragile world of Russian neo-Stalinist writers and readers, suggesting that neo-Stalinism may have been just a temporarily trendy topic among those nostalgic for the grandeur of the Soviet Empire. Moreover the topic of repressions, so crucial for neo-Stalinists, has been pushed into the background by the more dominant theme of the Great Patriotic War which is said to be

continuing right now against the hordes of Ukrainian "fascists" intent on conquering the Russian Donbas. This change in discourse has made all the furious denials of the Great Terror seem somewhat futile and outdated.

So was the phenomenon just temporary? Despite all the recent changes that we have witnessed there is one thing that remains stable: the deeply embedded ahistoricism of this kind of literature. In most of the texts analyzed above, the struggle between the Good (Stalin) and the Evil (the West) did not end with Stalin's death (our authors would say, his "murder"); it is continuing right now, in the ongoing attempts by liberal cliques to defame Stalin's memory. In a similar manner the repressions of the 1930s are explained and justified as a successful counterplot by Stalin in order to prevent mass privatization of the country by red commissars. Consider, for example, the title of Sergei Tsyrkun's recent book, *Stalin against the Red Oligarchs* (2013)—it is unclear whether the reference to "oligarchs" is a conscious or unconscious anachronism, but the effect is to blend together the periods of perestroika and privatization and the Great Terror. That makes this neo-Stalinist literature an exemplary modernist literature, as defined by Joseph Frank: "History becomes ahistorical. Time is no longer felt as an objective, causal progression with clearly marked differences between periods; now it has become a continuum in which distinctions between past and present are wiped out." (Frank 1963: 59). The way in which these texts (and through its medium, their audience) are detached from the historical concept of time is crucial not only for understanding their logic but, more importantly, for predicting the further development of the Russian political situation. An illustration of the consequences of this ahistorical temporal perception and how it can be transferred from the semi-imaginary world of pseudo-non-fiction to real life is the Donbas conflict. As Nikolai Mitrokhin (2015: 234) has shown, many of the top leaders of the Donetsk People's Republic (including its Defense Minister Igor' Strelkov) were so-called historical re-enactors—they acted out the battles against Napoleon and Hitler in the fields of Moscow suburbs until the opportunity came to re-enact history as part of a real war. The fact that ahistoricism of nostalgic minds can be converted into real actions, with real bloodshed, both horrifies and dumbfounds, and makes this kind of literature an even more important subject for future studies.

Notes

1. See the Facebook group "Stop publishing Stalinist books" for additional information: https://www.facebook.com/StopPublishingStalinistBooks. (This group was created in December 2011, and had 609 members. The last post was published in December 2013.) This debate was discussed by oppositionists in detail at the round table held by Radio Liberty in June 2011: http://www.svobodanews.ru/content/transcript/9505198.html.
2. The adjacent purchases feature was available at the time of the research, in March 2012; since then the design of the site has changed. In 2012 the product pages for books on the Ozon.ru website featured a section "Customers Who Bought This Item Also Bought." This made it possible to obtain information about the joint preferences of a specific audience. In 2013 the name of this section was changed to "We also recommend for purchase" but the procedure for this recommendation remains unclear. It seems likely that the Ozon.ru administration simply changed the name of the section.
3. On Yurii Mukhin and fellow neo-Stalinist author Vladimir Bushin's personalities see the brilliant essays by Oleg Kashin (2008).
4. See for example an interview with Veligzhanina (2011) and a text by Pykhalov (2008).
5. On Holocaust memory in Ukraine, see Chap. 12.
6. Author's interview with Igor' Pykhalov, 27 December 2014.

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PART III

New Agents and Communities of Memory

CHAPTER 8

Successors to the Great Victory: Afghan Veterans in Post-Soviet Belarus

Felix Ackermann

The Republic of Belarus is something of a special case within the field of East European memory. While Eastern Europe as a whole might be conceptualized as an open battleground for clashing interpretations of contested pasts,[1] the same cannot be said of Belarus. With a very limited public sphere and few actors unconnected to state-run institutions, Belarus is not so much a battleground as a playground for a more circumscribed remembering of the past, involving the ongoing re-invention, updating, localization and appropriation of standard Soviet narratives in a host of competing ways.[2] In this chapter I explore the shifting evolution and public negotiation of the meaning of Belarusian war memory, through a study of two post-Soviet memorials in Belarus: the Island of Tears, a memorial to the Soviet war in Afghanistan (1979–1989), officially opened in central Minsk in 1996, and the Stalin Line, a memorial to the Great Patriotic War (1941–1945), opened on the western outskirts of Minsk in 2006. My analysis traces the multiple ways in

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which these two memorials connect and reconstitute the memories of these two wars in new and sometimes unexpected ways.

Both of these sites originated in civil society initiatives which found support in different periods of Aliaksandr Lukashenka's rule as authoritarian leader within the Republic of Belarus that emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. The memorials represent two different modes of localizing Soviet narratives. They also point to changing social strategies for making sense of the twentieth century in post-Soviet Belarus. I use the phrase "localizing Soviet narratives" here to refer to discursive practices involving the transformation of existing general post-Soviet narrative elements and their combination with newly invented and highly specific visions of the past as a means of updating the Soviet legacy in the context of sovereign and formally national statehood. This strategy is aimed at legitimizing the post-1991 independent statehood of the Republic of Belarus: thus, the 1996 Afghanistan memorial emphasizes the meaning of Belarusian nationhood, while the 2006 Stalin Line memorial complex strengthens the legitimacy of authoritarian leadership.

I have chosen these two exemplary cases in order to show the differences between the national interpretation of the Soviet war in Afghanistan as it developed in the early 1990s and the twenty-first-century neo-Stalinist interpretation of World War II. The Island of Tears (*Ostrov Slez*) (see Fig. 8.1) was the outcome of an initiative by mothers of fallen soldiers from the Soviet war in Afghanistan dating back to the late 1980s and approved by the Belarusian parliament prior to the election of Aliaksandr Lukashenka as president in 1994.[3] This memorial established a national interpretation of the Soviet military deaths in Afghanistan, which were now redefined in the new post-Soviet context as the deaths of Belarusian victims. My analysis of this site and its public reception explores the question of how it came about that a specific national interpretation of a major Soviet geopolitical defeat was incorporated into the public space of central Minsk, the capital of the newly established Republic of Belarus. The second public memory site, the Stalin Line (in Russian *Kul'turno-Istoricheskii kompleks Liniia Stalina*) was chosen because it is a prominent example of how specific *memory communities* and state actors work hand in hand with a view to updating the narrative of the Victory in the Great Patriotic War in a changed twenty-first-century setting. The memorial is formally devoted to the defense of Minsk on the eve of the German–Soviet war in 1941. Located on the western outskirts of Minsk, the complex was built on the initiative



Fig. 8.1 Island of Tears in winter, Minsk. Author's photograph

of a group of veterans of the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. It merges the pre-existing public memory of World War II with the newly gained self-confidence of certain organized circles of veterans of the Soviet war in Afghanistan. The memorial exemplifies a shift in the evolution of post-Soviet Belarusian memory whereby new linkages are being forged between these two wars. Instead of continuing to commemorate the victims of the failed Soviet attempt to bring stability to Afghanistan in the 1980s, these veterans' networks are publicly making a bid to take over the legacy of the Great Soviet Victory in World War II, precisely at the moment when the last World War II veterans are about to pass away.

Both cases allow us to trace the discursive setting in which these new memorials emerged, to describe and analyze the actors involved, and to interpret the shape they give to particular narrative structures. Finally, they make it possible to analyze how these memorials are used today as places of limited but nevertheless existing public debate over the meaning of Belarus's contested twentieth-century history. The character of

this debate differs from that of neighboring countries, not because there are no other voices in Belarus today, but because the resources available in order to make these voices heard are much more limited here than in neighboring Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Ukraine, and also (at least at the time of writing) in Russia (Ackermann and Galbas 2015).

What links both sites and makes them relevant also in the regional context are the ways in which they reflect and enact a transformation of the position occupied by the *afgantsy*, to use the common shorthand term for veterans of the Soviet war in Afghanistan. The *afgantsy* came into being as a loosely organized *community of memory* during the war. In the Gorbachev period, myriad Afghan veterans' associations were formed. In the 1990s, the struggle for supremacy between these groups eventually resulted in victory for a much narrower but more powerful lobby, which finally became a pillar of Lukashenka's regime. It is this lobby that has come to play a dominant role in shaping official remembrance of twentieth-century wars in twenty-first-century Belarus. In the late 1980s and early 1990s the ground-breaking public expression of personal and family grief for soldiers killed in Afghanistan and the concomitant critical assessment of the Soviet Afghan war were important elements of the search for new forms of collective memory and the struggle for political reform throughout the Soviet Union. As an outcome of these processes personal grief was legitimately presented in public, for example by the first Soviet soldiers' mothers committees (Elkner 2004). Then, after 1991, the collective traumas triggered by the casualties sustained in Afghanistan among soldiers from the Belarusian Socialist Soviet Republic (BSSR) were reframed as a national trauma, introducing Christian symbolic language into public space in Minsk.

Subsequently, this memory has become more institutionalized, monopolized by a few actors such as the *Pamiat' Afgana* (Afghan Memory)[4] veterans' association, and politically instrumentalized by Lukashenka's administration. The transformation of the semi-official Minsk-based commemorative culture has gone hand in hand with the evolution of the Belarusian regime. From the early post-Soviet nation-victim narrative, which links the public appearance of suffering men representing martyrdom in the context of the Afghan–Soviet war, the story has moved to the newly reinvented—but at the same time rather fragmented and internally inconsistent—triumphalist narrative, with Stalin smuggled in as a public symbol of the Great Victory. This victory

is today a major foundation of state ideology, implicitly legitimizing Belarusian authoritarianism.[5]

In this chapter I combine an analysis of the emergence of public commemorations of Belarusian victims of the Soviet war in Afghanistan with an examination of the recent changes in the popular re-enactment of World War II in Lukashenka's Belarus.[6] I want to show that there is a specific generational bond connecting men who served in Afghanistan between 1979 and 1989 and who are today part of Aliaksandr Lukashenka's "power vertical" running the state on a top-down principle. Their common war experience provides an important basis for trust and solidarity within this rather narrow group of people close to the power center. Significantly, this is also a group that tends to view the dissolution of the Soviet Union as closely and directly interlinked with the emergence of critical positions on the Soviet war in Afghanistan (Ackermann and Galbas 2015). Finally, I want to explore why it is that precisely sixty years after the end of World War II, the official narrative came to include Stalin as a wise leader who won the war against fascist Germany. My hypothesis is linked to the imagination of generations taking on a certain kind of public responsibility. Until recently it was the older generation of Soviet war veterans and increasingly, the *children of war* generation born shortly before and during World War II who inherited the legitimacy drawn from the Great Victory. Since around the beginning of the twenty-first century the convergence of two processes has served to foster this shift: the last non-civilian participants of World War II are passing away and at the same time, the older generation of those who served in the Soviet army in Afghanistan are starting to retire from their regular army or political careers.

My analysis is informed by and draws upon Maurice Halbwachs's seminal insight that the individual's self-imagination and its narrative structure are always framed in a social way. In this sense individual memories such as those expressed by the *afgantsy* veterans in the BSSR and collective memories as represented at public memorial sites are by definition not detached from one another (Halbwachs 2008: 20–22ff). Subjectivity in Halbwachs's thinking is not linked to the individuum, but is in itself a product of social interaction, which takes place in certain publicly framed processes. I am interested here, on the one hand, in the strategies employed by individuals contributing to the creation of publicly meaningful sites of memory, and in the social frame which endows these individual narrative strategies with meaning, on the other.

Monuments are relevant here because they have a double function. In a very material sense they are the product of a process of social interaction; in a symbolic sense they function rather as a metaphorical point of reference for social discussions about the political meaning of the memorial in question (Koselleck 1979; Koselleck and Jeismann 1994). The crucial question in recent memory studies concerns the ways in which individual experiences and individually constructed memories become part of a shared memory of a social group. The communities of *afgantsy* veterans provide a good example here. They do not represent all veterans, but they do provide a certain framework for the communicative perforation of individual experiences. Since memory is itself part of a communicative process, I do not interpret memorials as ready-made forms, but rather as triggers of social communication (Welzer 2002). Memorial sites provide a frame for recurring situations of social interaction, which create a public space for memory communities such as the *afgantsy* and their families. At the same time, they also provide points of reference for state-organized activities such as compulsory excursions for Belarusian high school pupils and university students.

My research is based on published sources such as books, articles and documents which are analyzed here as self-representations of official Belarusian institutions such as the Presidential Administration and the Ministry of Culture, at the state level, and the society *Pamiat' Afgana* at the NGO level. In addition, I also draw upon open narrative interviews that I conducted with some former Soviet combatants and other actors of public memory in Belarus.[7] Among other sources I use the field notes from my own visits to both the Island of Tears memorial in the heart of Minsk, and the offices of the *Pamiat' Afgana* foundation, and my participant observation at the Stalin Line memorial complex.[8] I will limit my analysis here to a rather small group of Afghan war veterans, who express their interpretation of both World War II and the Soviet war in Afghanistan in public. I have chosen to focus on this group because they possess the social capital and organizational capacities that allow them to promote their views to a broader audience in the state-controlled Belarusian public sphere. Formally founded as an NGO in 2002, the *Pamiat' Afgana* foundation is uniquely well-placed for raising public symbolic, practical and financial capital, and this enabled it to successfully promote the Stalin Line as a national memorial and to introduce it into school and university curricula in Minsk and nationwide ("O fonde" n/d). At the same time those actors who argue against the creation of a

new *afgantsy* myth have very limited access to public resources and are hence almost entirely absent in state-controlled Belarusian public space.[9]

The Many Returns of the Afghan Coffin

Together with the deep structural problems of the Soviet planned economy, the Soviet war in Afghanistan was one of a series of late-Soviet catastrophes which contributed to the unexpected collapse of the Soviet Empire. It has already been shown that the radioactive fallout of Chernobyl and the Soviet government's disastrous handling of this crisis on various levels gave significant impetus for the spread of mistrust in the Communist Party and Soviet administration and led to the rise of civil activity across the borders of the different Soviet republics (Sahm 1999). The Soviet war in Afghanistan (1979–1989) was a drawn-out event which had long-term and far-reaching effects on the inner stability of Soviet society (Maley 2009: 171 ff). Brezhnev's decision to intervene in the ongoing Afghan civil war led to the involvement of about 100,000 Soviet soldiers annually, from all over the Soviet Union. Within ten years not only had tens of thousands of Afghans died in the conflict and millions of refugees left the embattled country, but at least 14,000 Soviet soldiers had been killed on this last battlefield of the Cold War.[10]

The arrival of zinc coffins bearing the remains of young Soviet soldiers from Afghanistan over a period of almost ten years was initially restricted to the level of individual family tragedy. But as soon as glasnost' was introduced in the mid-1980s, in the midst of the Afghan experience, private grief erupted into a public discussion questioning the rationale and validity of the Soviet engagement in Afghanistan. A milestone in the critical assessment of the war and also of its long-term psychological and social effect on Soviet society was Svetlana Alexievich's documentary novel *Zinc Boys* (*Tsinkovye mal'chiki)*, published first in the Moscow-based magazine *Druzhba narodov* in early 1990, with selected extracts also published in parallel in the newspaper *Komsomol'skaia pravda* (Alekseevich 1990a, 1990b, 1991).

Alexievich, a Belarusian writer who was already well-known in the Soviet Union and who would later go on to win the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2015, had developed a specific way of transforming oral history testimonies into a distinctive type of documentary literature recording traumatic memories. After finishing her thick description of women's World War II memoirs published under the title *War's Unwomanly Face*

(1985), in *Zinc Boys* Alexievich turned to the still ongoing Afghan war. The public reaction to the publication of the first extracts from *Zinc Boys* was one of outrage. Some of those who protested against Alexievich's perspective felt that her documentary approach would permit doubts in the general rationale for this war and that this would in turn undermine the value of the human losses on the Soviet side. In 1990 Alexievich was even sued by Inna S. Golovneva, the mother of a fallen soldier from Minsk, for allegedly falsifying quotes from interviews in *Zinc Boys* (Molochko 1993). Golovneva would later launch an initiative to erect a memorial to commemorate the fallen Afghan soldiers on behalf of the Minsk branch of the Afghanistan Committee of Afghan Mothers during the perestroika years.

Alexievich's work had two significant outcomes. On the one hand, this marked the first time that the Soviet experience in Afghanistan had been described in Soviet media in detail, in all its brutality and irrationality. This played an important role in contributing to the spread of a public sense of alienation and doubt in the legitimacy of this *Afghan adventure* throughout the Soviet Union. Those who subscribed to and sometimes benefited from the official narrative of the war as governed by the motto of *internationalist duty and brotherly assistance* bitterly opposed Alexievich's attempt to show the dark side of the war (Aleksievich, quoted in Kovalenko and Tychina 1994).

In Alexievich's work and in the widespread recognition she gained both within and beyond the Soviet Union there is a crucial link between World War II and Afghanistan—she shows the tragedy of the senseless deaths of young men in wars as something universal. But there is also another link in regard to the official memory policy. It was only relatively recently, after all, that the final narrative of the victory in the Great Patriotic War had been created. It was under Brezhnev in the 1970s that the official commemorative culture focusing on the narrative of the Great Patriotic War was fully institutionalized and became a central part of the state ideology (see for example Brezhnev 1965). Now, with the return of the dead bodies of young Soviet men, the experience of war had become much less distant. This connection also helps to explain the fierce resistance that arose in response to Alexievich's documentary prose. Her book posed a threat not just to the legitimacy of the ongoing Soviet war in Afghanistan, but also to the Soviet "Victory" cult more broadly. She exposed the notion of "victory" as nothing more than an imaginative construct aimed at legitimating human losses and trauma.

Svetlana Alexievich not only gave a public voice to those who paid the price for the intervention on the Soviet side. Her work also showed that the late-Soviet society was pregnant with the contradiction which eventually led to the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991: the Communist party continued to guard its monopoly on legitimacy and power and began at the same time to call for more freedom of speech (Braithwaite 2011: 323–324). Gorbachev changed the setting for public communication and created an atmosphere in which it became possible to publish these chronicles. Alexievich's literature itself can be read as an outcome of this dualism. She did not have to publicly criticize the Communist party in her documentary literature—all readers trained in Soviet *reading between the lines* understood her critique.

At the same time, the late-Soviet public sphere was also a space for those who fought to uphold the official picture that glorified Soviet soldiers fulfilling their *duty* in Kabul, Kunduz and Kandahar. These two interpretations—one based on the notion of glory, the other on that of doubt—were opposed to each other, because while the latter could not find any sense in the Soviet intervention, the former found good arguments in the official Soviet narrative of an internationalist duty to help the Afghan people. They shared at least full empathy with the victims of this war, whose deaths were perceived as a collective loss.

Island of Tears: Christian-National Reinterpretations of the Memory of the Soviet War in Afghanistan

The same woman who filed a law suit against Svetlana Alexievich was among those mothers of fallen soldiers who fought a long and ultimately successful campaign to erect a central monument to the *afgantsy* in Minsk (Khamitsevich 1996). The mothers achieved their first success in this struggle while the Soviet war in Afghanistan was still underway. The first public memorial site was inaugurated in Minsk in 1990 when a cornerstone was installed not far from the site of the future Island of Tears. Among the informal and formal organizations of so-called *afgantsy* in Belarus at the time, one of the most active was an association bringing together the mothers of Soviet soldiers fallen in Afghanistan.[11] They used the new freedom of expression to create a centrally located space for the commemoration of those who had lost their lives in Afghanistan.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union put the open struggle over the interpretations of the Afghan war in a new context. Although the Soviet military campaign had involved soldiers and casualties from across all the republics, it was now reinterpreted in a newly established national context (Wilson and Bachkatov 1992: 5, 92). The issue of how many soldiers died from each republic now became increasingly meaningful. And the 711 soldiers from the Belarusian Socialist Soviet Republic (BSSR) who had returned as anonymous Soviet *zinc boys* now became Belarusian victims ("Poklonimsia" 2006).

Organizations such as the Association of Afghan Mothers managed in the early years of Belarusian independence to insert the Afghan experience into a narrative of national victimhood. The most prominent representation of this reinterpretation is the Island of Tears memorial complex in central Minsk.[12] The plaque at the cornerstone of the Island (see Fig. 8.2) shows an image of the Mother of God and a text: "Dedicated to those



Fig. 8.2 Cornerstone at entrance to Island of Tears, Minsk. Author's photograph

sons who lost their lives in Afghanistan. *This church is erected on behalf of Belarusian mothers, who do not wish evil to prevail either outside of Belarus or within*" (Kokhanovskii 2011) (emphasis added—FA). The project to build an artificial island in the very heart of historical Minsk was supported by a group from the Minsk branch of the Committee of Afghan Mothers and the newly elected parliament long before Aliaksandr Lukashenka came to power (Kokhanovskii 2011). After 1991 the memory of fallen Afghan soldiers was not a high priority for the Belarusian government, and so it took more than five years to finish the construction works. It is remarkable that the memorial was opened only in 1996—two years after the first and last democratic election of Aliaksandr Lukashenka as president.

The Island contains a central building reminiscent of a Christian-Orthodox chapel. Elements are borrowed from a Polatsk building dating to the Kievan Rus' period, with four white domes situated around a central apsis. This chapel is surrounded by sculptures of standing women mourning for their sons (see Fig. 8.2). Some of them hold candles, while others cover their faces with their hands in an expression of sorrow. The figure of the standing mother creates a link between the Soviet iconography of World War II with the *mother homeland* as a central motif of heroism and Christian motifs with Mary mourning her son. This Christian association is strengthened by icon-like portraits held by two of the mothers. On one of these portraits a young man—probably the woman's son—is visible, while on another Jesus of Nazareth is recognizable. This parallel usage of private images and Christian iconography gives voice to the central idea of the memorial, that the sons of Belarus died abroad as martyrs and in fact sacrificed themselves for the nation. This idea of a suffering nation is paralleled by the image of Jesus, who died for all mankind.

The creation of a new national context for victimhood is a very important cultural shift in the Belarusian public sphere. Until 1991 the sacrifice of lives within the Soviet Union was legitimized as *fulfilling a soldier's duty,* indirectly framing the imperial dimension of the war. With the collapse of the Soviet Union this explanation for the deaths of hundreds of young men lost its value and there was a need for reframing in order to create a new meaning for this loss. The newly established narrative of the nation as a suffering collective was able to include not only Soviet occupation, Stalinist repressions, and German atrocities during World War II, but also the Soviet war in Afghanistan as challenges and trials endured by the Belarusian nation. The strong Christian context

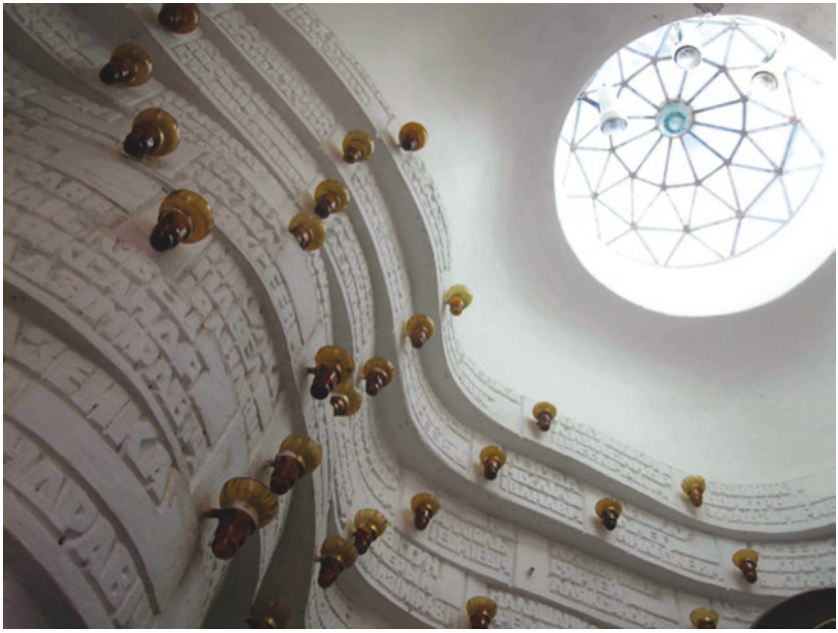


Fig. 8.3 Names, candles, and lights from above. Island of Tears, Minsk. Author's photograph

of the related narrative of *victimhood* provided an almost ready-made iconography and narrative elements which were ideally suited for combination with late-Soviet symbols such as the mourning mothers on the Island of Tears.

There is a rather radical shift in this arrangement from Soviet heroism as something strong, male and victorious towards a different form of victimhood, which is represented much more in female form, and which emphasizes humility and suffering. The contrast between the memorial's initial Belarusian and the more recent Russian titles enacts this difference. The Belarusian version refers to the "Memorial to those sons of the fatherland, who lost their life abroad."[13] The Russian version, "Island of Courage and Sorrow" (*Ostrov Muzhestva i Skorbi*) points to the *Internationalist-Warriors*, who stayed loyal to their military oath and fulfilled their *military duty.*

At the time of its opening in August 1996 the complex did not contain a single symbol of heroism. Inside the chapel the names of 711 fallen soldiers from the BSSR are engraved on the walls, and there are several niches for candles (see Fig. 8.3). The inner face of each of the four arches is decorated with Christian images and inscriptions. In one of the arches one can see the image of Euphrosyne of Polatsk, a twelfth-century female saint who is claimed as a protector of the Belarusian people. Here she raises her hands to protect those soldiers at war. In terms of gender relations this epitaph is rather strictly divided, with males under threat depicted at the bottom of the composition and females praying for and mourning them in the upper part (see Fig. 8.4). It is worth noting that the threat to the soldiers is not clearly linked to Afghanistan, but is rather represented in the blurred notion of *abroad*. And the images of the foreign soldiers fighting the sons of the Belarusian nation bear a marked resemblance to German soldiers from World War II.

Another relief on one of the altars puts a dead Soviet soldier in the position of Jesus Christ on the cross, linking Christian martyrdom to the fate of Belarusian soldiers in Afghanistan even more clearly (see Fig. 8.5). The third epitaph explains the core idea of this Christian-National setting: A mother with her arms outstretched is protecting young soldiers from external harm. A caption in Belarusian explains that this is the *Mother of Holy Belarus*. This illustrates precisely the transformation of the Soviet memory of the Afghanistan experience in a newly created national context.

This change does not oppose or negate the Soviet public commemoration of the Soviet losses during World War II. Sculptures of *mother homeland* (*Rodina Mat'*) were numerous and highly present in the Soviet public sphere. The authors of the memorial complex picked up the form and reinterpreted its meaning, now in national rather than Soviet terms. As an outcome it is now the Belarusian nation itself that is symbolically taking over this function. But with the parallel Christianization of this interpretation the function changes as well: the Island of Tears, as it is known in popular everyday Minsk culture, is a place that for the first time expresses suffering, humiliation and death in a way that includes gestures of public mourning for those who were killed. Even more important: the Island provides a public space for private mourning of friends, relatives and the veterans themselves.[14] This is in sharp contrast to the Soviet mode of commemorating World War II, which provided



Fig. 8.4 A female saint protecting the Belarusian people. Island of Tears, Minsk. Author's photograph

mainly public spaces for public commemorations and little privacy. At the same time there are strong continuities between the Soviet mode of public mourning and this newly contextualized form. Most visibly, or to be more precise, most invisibly, on the island soldiers' mothers play a central symbolic role, while fathers are entirely absent. Only young male soldiers and their mothers are represented here. The sculptures outside the chapel include a few children. But even here most of the figures depicted seem to be female. This strengthens the symbolic divide between the War as an external male activity and mourning as an internal female activity.



Fig. 8.5 Christian symbolism: a fallen soldier taken from the cross. Island of Tears, Minsk. Author's photograph

One important element of the memorial is a statue of a crying angel (see Figs. 8.6 and 8.7). This takes the form of a fountain with real water flowing from the angel's eyes. The angel seems to look at the mourning women surrounding the chapel, while at the same time lowering his head and covering his eyes with his hands. An orientation map at the entrance dating back to 1996 explains the meaning of the sculpture: *For those who died from their psychological and physical injuries.* This public attention to the psychological impact of war on those who came back is something extraordinary in the broader post-Soviet context.[15] In a metaphorical sense the angel is watching the mourning women from afar and crying himself. This can be read as a representation of the soldier's soul, which in this Christian-national constellation has a good chance of making its way to heaven (Blokhina 2014: 14).

It is also perhaps noteworthy that the project itself, while fostered by local actors and legitimated by a parliamentary decision, was mainly

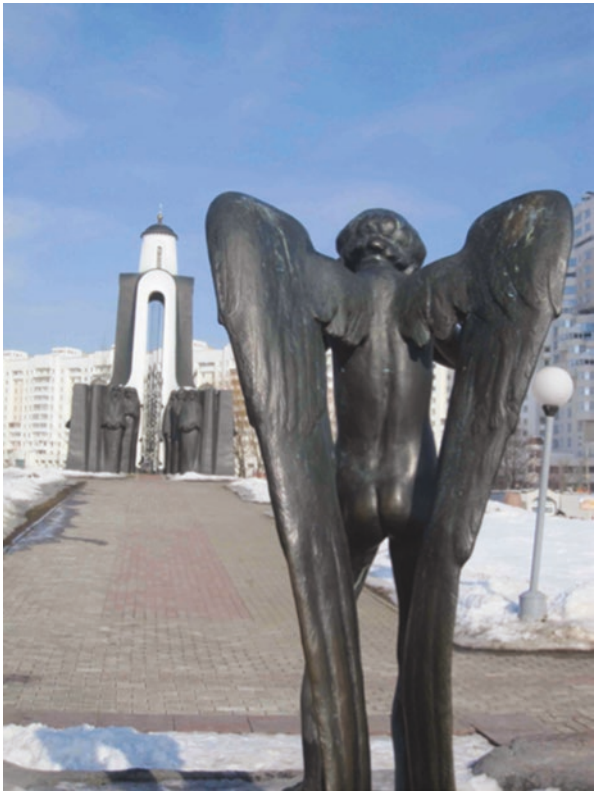


Fig. 8.6 Angel statue. Island of Tears, Minsk. Author's photograph

created by Ukrainian artists (see further Kokhanovskii 2011). The family of Yurii, Halina and Aleh Paulov was responsible for the sculptures and the architecture. The drawings inside the chapel were done by their relatives, Tat'iana and Nikolai Karaleu—all from Dnipropetrovsk (Smyk 2008). Only the engineering part of the architecture was prepared by the local memorials specialist Valerii Laptsevich, who thirty years earlier was responsible for the erection of the largest *Kurhan Slavy*—a combination of Soviet public memory in the regional pagan tradition—in the BSSR near the outskirts of Minsk ("MK" 2011). The outcome of their work is the symbolic blending of different Christian traditions. On the



Fig. 8.7 A popular spot in central Minsk. Island of Tears, Minsk. Author's photograph

Island of Tears this is especially the case in the interpretation of female saints taking care of male figures, reminiscent of a strongly Catholic vision of Jesus Christ and his close relationship with St Mary in order to symbolize the protection of fallen *internationalist* soldiers. One of the sculptures in the chapel shows *The Prayer of the 14 Saints,* that is, the 14 saints from the region who are recognized by both Orthodox and Catholic churches. This symbolizes the attempt to make the monument resellable to believers of the Orthodox and Catholic Christian faiths alike.[16] This fusion of Eastern and Western Christian references and

their merging with a national rhetoric dates back to the second half of the 1980s, when *Adradzhennie—Renaissance* made the combination of National and Christian elements into a public narrative. The foundation stone of the Island of Tears dates back to this period in the very late 1980s. Later the symbolic architecture representing Lukashenka's regime interpreted the nation in increasingly civic and less Christian terms. It did not ban Christian symbols and it publicly underlined the importance of the Orthodox Church, but it also detached *Christian identity* from state symbols and marginalized the public representation of Catholicism as an inherent part of Belarusian history and society (Skinner 2009).

The Minsk Island of Tears is a highly successful project. It is popular among both the population of Minsk and the *vertikal'shchiki* who are in constant need of legitimized ritual sites. It has also provided the prototype for a whole range of similar projects all over Belarus. Similar forms with a cupola can be found not only in Bereza, Kobryn, Lubensky (Migalayte 2013) and Mogilev, but also in Russia, in Krasnoiarsk, and in Kaliningrad. At most of these other sites, however, the connotation is linked much more strongly to Orthodox Christianity. In Mogilev the cupola is modeled closely on the Minsk memorial, but it also includes some sculptures of soldiers seeking protection from the mother, who also represents the nation here ("Pamiatnik" 2012a). In Bereza a non-Christian monument dating back to the 1990s became part of a newly erected church compound and a cupola was erected almost ten years after the first monument including the older monument ("Pamiatnik" 2012b).

The semiotic strategy of blending the vocabulary of the Victory in the Great Patriotic War with the experience of Soviet soldiers in Afghanistan has been taken up enthusiastically by local initiatives and today it is common practice to remember the *glory* of their Afghanistan experience ("Muzhestvo" 2010). In the regional town of Mogilev in the east of Belarus the regional authorities were approached by the local branch of the Belarusian Association of Internationalist-Warriors with a formal request that a "Museum of Martial Glory" be established in the town. According to the account provided by the regional government website, it would appear that the head of the regional executive, Piotr Rudnik, leapt at this opportunity and immediately moved to instruct the local official responsible for ideology, culture and youth in his administration to begin the necessary preparations. This took place during Rudnik's meeting with internationalist-warriors on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2014 ("V

Mogileve" 2014). From 2005 onwards, what previously was connected to the veterans of World War II became available for the *afgantsy*. A possible explanation would be the high degree of public attention paid in 2005 to the 60th anniversary of the victory in the Great Patriotic War, after which new projects may have become possible. Thus, for example, in 2010 in the town of Kobryn a Square of War Glory was erected—not dedicated to the Great Patriotic War, but to the Soviet war in Afghanistan. And instead of the obligatory T-34 tank, a Soviet helicopter from the 1980s is exhibited in the Square of Glory as a quasi-monument ("Pamiatnik" 2012c).

The most surprising of my findings is that the central motif of the dome—as a reference to both Christian-Orthodox architecture and the Minsk memorial on the "Island of Courage and Sorrow"—does not refer to Afghanistan at all.[17] It represents the creation of a new temple, which by re-contextualizing the figure of the mourning mother from a Soviet to a national context shows why the nation itself is needed: to protect its sons from external harm. The chapel is one of the most remarkable public buildings of the early 1990s erected in the Republic of Belarus. It was opened under Aliaksandr Lukashenka in August 1996 and after the official retreat from ethno-nationalist symbols in the 1995 referendum. This shows that there is some continuity between the post-1991 attempts to nationalize the Belarusian past and Lukashenka's still ongoing project aimed at strengthening the Soviet dimension of this past.[18] The Island of Tears demonstrates that the strong Christian references attached to the idea of the motherhood of the nation are capable of incorporating some Soviet elements. Among the continuities is the focus on the figure of the mourning woman and the almost complete absence of mourning male figures.

Secular References to Afghanistan: Popular Interpretations and Everyday Usage

While at first glance the Island of Tears is about the symbolic link between Christianity and the Nation, some more peripheral parts refer to the Soviet Afghan experience itself. The cupola of the central chapel is painted with motifs from the life and death of Jesus Christ and his family. Soviet soldiers are depicted in the act of taking him down from the cross in what is clearly an Afghan geographical setting. The most recognizable



Fig. 8.8 A reference to Kabul, Island of Tears, Minsk. Author's photograph

sign in this scene is the combination of a rugged mountain landscape and Soviet helicopters above it. The appearance of helicopters refers to the constant transports, the constant danger, and the presence of Soviet rescue units in a landscape where tanks were not always the most appropriate weapon system ("Pamiatnik" 2012c).

In a more remote part of the island a stone garden refers explicitly to the geography of Afghanistan. Boulders are marked in a Pashtun-like typography with the names of Afghan towns, where Soviet soldiers fought and died.[19] These include the regions of Kabul, Kandahar, Kundus, Ghazni, Lashkar Gah, and Shindand (see Fig. 8.8). Relatives and former comrades of killed soldiers use this part of the island to

commemorate individuals or whole units of the 40th Army, stationed in specific parts of Afghanistan. Usually members of a particular army unit or less formalized memory communities bring flowers to a specific stone representing a particular region or town and light a candle in memory of their fallen son or comrade inside the chapel, where the names of all the fallen soldiers from the BSSR are inscribed on the walls.

Next to this representation of the Soviet geography of the Soviet war in Afghanistan, a large horizontal steel platform is reserved for soldiers to mourn their comrades in their own way (see Fig. 8.9). The platform is painted in camouflage colors and creates an open space for the informal practices of former combatants. While reminding the visitor of a platform for a tank, it is intended to provide a space for remembering shared struggles and personal losses with some food and some glasses of vodka—a Christian-Orthodox ritual usually carried out directly at cemeteries.

Memorial practices associated with the Island are strictly limited. These may only be carried out by military persons and relatives on official days of remembrance. Among such occasions is 15 February, the anniversary of the final withdrawal of Soviet troops in 1989 (Grinevitskii et al. 2008). After official delegations from Belarusian state institutions such as the Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Interior, KGB and reservist organizations lay flowers in front of the chapel, the semi-official part of the proceedings begins. It is then officially permitted to drink alcohol on the soldiers' platform, a practice which is strictly prohibited on an everyday basis and controlled by a special police control point at the entry to the island.[20] A security pavilion next to the bridge connecting the island with central Minsk is strongly reminiscent of a World War II-era bunker. This pavilion houses police tasked with maintaining public order; without their presence, the platform of memory would turn into a regular hotspot of public drinking. It is precisely for this reason that the Island is closed every day at 10:00 pm—the site has simply proved to be too popular.

As we have seen, the female sculptures around the central dome echo some features of Soviet memorials. The way in which official ceremonies are organized today displays even stronger continuity with Soviet practices. The practical and symbolic usage of large wreaths, military escorts, official speeches and Soviet military music is not unique to the post-Soviet East of Europe, but in Belarus the ways in which these rituals are organized in what is still a highly centralized society have not changed



Fig. 8.9 Platform reserved for veterans, Island of Tears, Minsk. Author's photograph

much since 1991. The Afghan experience was reinterpreted over the early post-Soviet years in Christian-National terms. This interpretation is still visible on the Island of Tears, but in public discourse the Christian and National notions are becoming less and less relevant.

The central features of the dominant post-Soviet interpretation of the War in Afghanistan are reminiscent of the commemoration of the Great Patriotic War in the late Soviet Union. These include the official celebration of values prescribed by the Red Army and the KGB as central features of a Soviet man: fulfilling one's *duty*, *heroism* and *comradeship*.[21] Likewise, we might draw a parallel here with the desire on the part of

official actors of the 1980s to ban public critique of the Soviet leadership, its strategy, and the everyday experience of the soldiers. It is obvious that veterans of Afghanistan faced serious social problems in the 1990s and in many cases continue to do so today, but those problems are not generally named in an outspoken way.

The legitimacy gained from the successful fight against Hitler's Germany that brought an end to German aggression as a central motif of the Great Patriotic War is transferred indirectly to the Afghan experience by the adoption of certain practices, formal features and rhetoric associated with the Great Patriotic War. Even if Soviet legitimacy is perceived to be rather blurred in the case of the war in Afghanistan, it is important that those soldiers fulfilled their *military duty*. And they were acting as *comrades* promoting internal solidarity. The last aspect includes symbolic and practical solidarity—a central feature of the activities of Afghan veterans' organizations today, both in Belarus and beyond its borders (Nalivaiko 2004: 5–8). This is a contemporary strategy aimed at underlining the horizontal link between Soviet soldiers of different origins and different ranks.[22]

This is one reason why Svetlana Alexievich's publication is to this day perceived by many as a perfidious betrayal—it is not just the fact that she described the dark side of the Soviet experience and war in general that critics find objectionable, but rather the fact that she did so in public. This response to Alexievich's work is refracted through an urban myth that circulates among local inhabitants of the central Minsk district surrounding the location of the Island of Tears. Locals say that the artificial creation of the island at this site is a kind of symbolic revenge for Svetlana Alexievich's book, since the author is known to live in the large Soviet-era apartment block nearby.[23] These rumors contain the idea that the inner contradictions presented in *Zinc Boys* are in sharp contrast to the monument itself. This is slightly irrational, given that the monument does express at least sorrow for the individual pain and loss created by war.

Given that the first steps towards building a monument in central Minsk were taken in 1990, this is clearly an urban legend, because it was only in 1991 that Alexievich published her work as a separate book. But the mere fact that the rumor is still making its way around the block and that there is some public knowledge about a supposed link between Alexievich's book *Zinc Boys* and the Island of Tears indicates that there is no single version commonly accepted by Belarusian society as to how

to commemorate the Afghan experience and that there is some popular knowledge about the critique of this last Soviet war.

At the same time, the Island of Tears with its central location, its park-like arrangement and its rather vague and general symbolism has become a highly popular spot in Minsk everyday urban life.[24] Over the course of the past two decades it has become a place where young mothers walk with their children and where young men like to hang out together. A special sign of popularity is a new rite for young couples to visit the Island right after their wedding ceremony.[25] This new ritual is a substitute for the old Soviet tradition of taking wedding pictures in front of the Lenin statue. One should not misinterpret this as reflecting a deep integration of the Christian-national narrative into the lives of young Belarusians. This is instead an ordinary way to pay tribute to the architecture with an emphasis on the combination of a *nice* chapel and a *sweet* angel. Until recently there were also very few non-Soviet public spaces in central Minsk. Thus, to take pictures in front of the angel became a major motif in professional Minsk wedding photography. The popular Minsk belief that the bride should touch the angel's penis in order to give birth to healthy children shows that there is little connection to post-Soviet memories of Afghanistan in the everyday use of the island by most inhabitants of Minsk.[26] These everyday practices (including touching the genitals of a Christian symbol of sorrow for dead Soviet soldiers) also show that the formal Christian-national setting with its embracing of the idea of a victim for the nation does not prevent young inhabitants of Minsk from making use of it for their own private fortune. This gives some hint that large parts of Belarusian society treat post-Soviet memorials, and not only the old Soviet ones, in a rather pragmatic way, adapting them to their own needs, ideas, and practices (Fig. 8.7).

Internationalist-Warriors Building Lukashenka's Belarus: Setting up a Generational Bond

As shown above, some of the official practices of commemoration are recent quotes from the Brezhnev era when the Great Patriotic War started to be considered a major source of the glorious birth of the victorious Soviet people (Weiner 1996, 2001: 32, 237ff). The Afghan experience and the collapse of the Soviet Union were closely tied to each other. Many soldiers perceived the experience of a lost war in a remote location as a personal trauma. The period when they returned to their families

and had to make their way back into ordinary life was followed by the dissolution of the general frame of their rather existential Afghan experience—the Soviet Union itself. There were quite different strategies for dealing with this double trauma. And in the 1990s a whole variety of new organizations and actors emerged, also representing different strategies and approaches, also expressed in different political terms. In the long run what turned out to be decisive was the extent to which those veterans' organizations were ready and able to deal with state structures on all levels, from the presidential level through to the regional oblast' administration and the local community level. Today the closest organization to the state is de jure an NGO, but de facto run by the state itself. It is called the "Belarusian Union of Veterans of the War in Afghanistan," its offices are usually located in regional or local administrative buildings, and it cooperates closely with the local power structures, for example, to organize official events and activities for veterans. The close link with the state is also guaranteed by the head of the organization, Vitalii Haidukevich, a high-ranking national security adviser of Aliaksandr Lukashenka ("Obshchestvennoe ob"edinenie" n/d).

Some alternative groups are today still registered as NGOs, but increasingly perceived as oppositional, because they openly criticize the social policies of the Lukashenka administration ("Afgantsy" 2013). This became particularly challenging in 2007 when a new law was issued canceling all forms of special social welfare for Afghan veterans (Smirnov 2008: 3–4). The most prominent protesters organized themselves in the Republican Social Organization of Veterans of the War in Afghanistan "Defenders of the Fatherland" led by Aleh Volchak and Aliaksandr Kamarouskii ("Veterans of War" 2013). Today this organization is continuing its public campaign to restore social benefits for Belarusian participants of the Soviet war in Afghanistan (Komarovskii 2014). In 2009 the founders publicly returned the medals they had been awarded by the Belarusian state on the 20th anniversary of the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan as an act of protest ("V Belorussii" 2014). But despite oppositional media channels such as internet portals, this NGO has almost no resources to organize public activities beyond the ultra local level. The Belarusian Organization of Veterans Disabled by War, registered in 1993, was once active in the struggle for social benefits, but today it has almost entirely disappeared from the public sphere, because of the oppositional spirit of its founders and the harsh crackdown by the Lukashenka administration on such organizations ("Aleksandr

Lukashenko" 2012). Despite their highly varied relationships with the dictatorship, these very different organizations have one feature in common: they all proclaim a generational experience, thus giving the individual victim and trauma some collective meaning. It took a couple of years to create a collective memory of the *afgantsy*, as former Soviet soldiers from the war in Afghanistan call themselves. This reinterpretation of a horizontal link among *comrades* in the case of some organizations was linked to a nostalgic reinterpretation of the Soviet Union as a major source of legitimacy and glory for today (Nalivaiko 2004: 290–300). But in the early 1990s this was not a *natural state of mind* in Belarus. There were also other narratives and strategies formulated by Afghanistan veterans. In a certain sense there was not just a variety, but also some public competition among different options. It took more than a decade to give rise to the neo-Soviet option. As part of the public glorification of the Soviet past, Lukashenka's official state ideology includes such values as *legitimacy*, *glory,* and *pride* ("Boevoe internatsional'noe bratstvo" 2006: 15ff). This might be interpreted as an attempt to overcome the shortcomings of the 1990s which were perceived by many veterans as a period of public neglect of their social status. One veteran, who is not affiliated with any formal NGO, explains it this way:

> We came back in 1993 after the withdrawal of troops from East Germany, and there was no recognition at all. Some benefits modeled on the subsidies for World War II veterans were introduced only as a result of constant public struggle by a few of us. But the takeover of our memory by a few careerists shows that this is some kind of business, you can make money for yourself. This is what this group of people learned during the early 1990s.[27]

There is a core aspect of how veterans from Afghanistan were *reintegrated* into the society, which helps us to understand some Belarusian specifics here. In Russia and other post-Soviet republics some Afghan veterans set up criminal structures, but in Belarus numerous members of this social group were included in the process of the creation of the Lukashenka regime. While in Russia a certain political and economic stabilization occurred only from the late 1990s, after Putin came to power, in Belarus some former Soviet networks deriving from student days and military service, particularly among those who served in Afghanistan, were involved in the remaking of state structures at a much earlier stage

from the mid-1990s, when Lukashenka was elected president. Building his power vertically, Lukashenka trusted only his closest circles. Much of this trust appears to be based on a generational link between those who studied together at Mogilev State University, as in the case of the former minister of education Aleksandr Radkov, who is now deputy head of the presidential administration. Aliaksandr Lukashenka did not serve in Afghanistan, but some of his high-ranking officials did (Seroshtan 2005: 43, 58, 143, 158). And they have their own network based on mutual trust and a generational bond strengthened by common experiences as *internationalists*. We should not overexaggerate the importance of this network, or present it as a conspiracy—this is rather a matter of an informal bond, a kind of military form of kinship, which functions without a high degree of formalization. A perfect example of such a network and the very close ties that enable certain actors today to realize their own projects is the Stalin Line outdoor museum on the outskirts of Minsk.[28]

Having Fun with Stalin: Transforming the Afghan Experience into the Memory of World War II

In 2006, just outside the Belarusian capital of Minsk, the Stalin Line (*Liniia Stalina*) outdoor museum was opened by high-ranking Belarusian state officials ("IKK 'Liniia Stalina'" n/d). At first glance the new memorial, which comprises a combination of some (partially) original bunkers dating back to the early 1930s with a newly created commemorative landscape, pays homage to those who prepared pre-World War II Belarus for the struggle against German troops.[29] An overwhelmingly comprehensive exhibition of German and Soviet tanks, artillery and other weaponry is presented as a fetish (Metla 2006: 124–128). At second glance, this was a crucial moment in the official comeback of Stalin as a great statesman and military leader into the state-controlled public sphere of post-Soviet Belarus. And only at third glance does it become evident that the whole project was set up in order to blend the official narrative of the Great Patriotic War with the memory of the Soviet war in Afghanistan dating back to 1979–1989.[30]

An important feature of the Stalin Line memorial complex, the *Grove of the Successors of Victory*, was opened in 2006. It contains trees planted by former soldiers on the occasion of public events. The trees are intended to symbolize the Soviet victory in the Great Patriotic War

and the takeover of its legacy by a new generation. The original idea for the garden and the initial set-up was provided by Afghan veterans, members of the generation of men born after World War II, who so far had no opportunity to contribute to the *Great Victory* during the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II. This took place as part of a transnational event titled "We are Heirs to the Victory!" ("Mezhdunarodnaia aktsiia" 2006; Shurochkin 2006). Moreover, their own war experience was far from triumphant, as the Soviet war in Afghanistan ended with a withdrawal from a war which was clearly not going to be won. These men are united by their public commitment to the official ideology of civic post-Soviet patriotism, which recycles and updates *duty*, *honor*, and *comradeship* as key words for the education of today's new generations (Danilova 2005b: 149–161). And they have decided to take over the symbolic capital of this entire Soviet legacy. Until recently *duty*, *honor*, and *comradeship* were in public linked mainly to those who fought at the fronts of World War II. Among the "successors of the Victory" who came to participate in the official ceremony of planting a symbolic tree were many prominent veterans of the Soviet war in Afghanistan. One of the most prominent persons in this network was Viktor Sheiman, for many years Secretary of the Security Council of Belarus and Minister of Internal Affairs, Prosecutor General of Belarus and now Assistant to the President for Special Commissions, the right-hand man of President Aliaksandr Lukashenka, who also took part in the official ceremony on 8 May 2006, when both the Stalin Line compound and the Grove of the Successors of the Victory were inaugurated. On this day Lukashenka himself made clear that this was the moment for the internationalist-warriors, the *afgantsy*, to take up the memory of the Great Victory in World War II (Metla 2006: 101). Aleksandr Metla put it this way: "The internationalist warriors feel themselves to be a crucial link in the chain of generations, tasked with handing down the spirit of bravery, heroism, courage, and endurance" (ibid.: 7).

The foundation *Pamiat' Afgana* was created only in 2002, after marginalized veteran organizations such as the Belarusian Organization of Veterans Disabled by War had been driven out of public space by both the state authorities and popular media. As its name suggests, the NGO is devoted to the memory of the Soviet soldiers who served in Afghanistan. The social work of the foundation is based on personal links between leading figures in Belarusian state-run business today. The goals of the new organization included providing assistance and social support

to elderly veterans, commemorating the Soviet war in Afghanistan in a positive way, and facilitating patriotic education. It was this latter concern with the patriotic education of the young generation that in 2004 led to the idea of creating a new type of outdoor museum—the Stalin Line. The idea was that the museum would be based on the remnants of a former defense complex built prior to World War II on the western outskirts of Minsk.[31]

The founding director of the museum, Aleksandr Metla, himself envisaged the importance of such a place for the education of new generations. Born into a peasant family, he was educated in Soviet schools and went to Afghanistan as a political commissar. In his personal case two aspects are important. On the one hand, for him the early and mid-1990s were rather hard times, when he had to trade used cars from Germany in order to make a living in Belarus. On the other hand, he served in the Kandahar brigade, where the leading general was Victor V. Sheiman (Kharkavyi 2008: 156 ff). It is precisely this personal bond that enables him to formally run the foundation *Pamiat' Afgana*, which is the owner of the Stalin Line, without regular financial state support. In Russian the neoliberal term for this business model is *samokupaemost'*. In other words, Metla is effectively running the Stalin Line as a private enterprise while it is formally registered as a non-profit NGO. But whenever Metla needs symbolic, material or personal support, he calls on his old friends in the ministries, the president's chancellery or state-owned companies—the Afghan connection.

In this way, at the very beginning of the construction work a whole engineering brigade of the Belarusian army helped to build the compound near Minsk (Metla 2006: 96). They fully reshaped the area and helped to restore pillboxes aimed at stopping German tanks immediately behind the Polish–Soviet border. Metla could also count on substantial help from state companies. In a country where more than 75 percent of the economy is run by the state, it can be helpful to have close links with state actors (Connolly 2012: 140–154). Formally this is civil activity supported by private enterprises, but in fact this is a specific practice to make public money work for the purpose of the small Afghan foundation. Given that the foundation's goal is to make an impact on public opinion regarding the Great Patriotic War in general and the first days and weeks of the German–Soviet war in particular, this construction is a very rational choice. The foundation *Pamiat' Afgana* is a political entrepreneur in the state-run business of the Belarusian memory of World War II.

The idea to create a new site of patriotic education goes back to the preparations for the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II in 2005. The dynamic of public policy making operating here was a highly specific one. This was the initiative of a few individuals, which led to the creation of a spontaneously shaped compound. There was no master plan, no general concept underlying the construction works: just a brigade of Belarusian soldiers on the spot and the imagination of the few Afghan veterans involved. For Metla himself this was a great opportunity to use all the capacities as a former *politruk*—a person responsible for political agitation within the army—he had developed during his service in Afghanistan. The new project gave him the opportunity to find a way into mainstream Belarusian politics, where there had been no cozy space for him and many comrades during the early 1990s (Nalivaiko 2003: 65–108). The Stalin Line represents first and foremost a perspective on history expressed by Metla and a rather narrow group of his veteran followers, together with an even narrower group of historians. They stress the long-term impact of the preparation of defensive infrastructure on the eve of World War II, when civic and military forces built a whole line of fortified command posts along the Soviet Western border. The fact that this line was of little use, because the border then shifted about 200 km to the west due to the Soviet occupation of Eastern Poland in 1939, and that German tanks faced little resistance on their way to Minsk and later to Moscow, is not fully ignored or denied here. But in a strange state of oblivion it is not contextualized at all. In the museum, there is no mention of the background of the 1930s Stalinist industrialization and collectivization, of the Great Terror and the purges within the Red Army on the eve of World War II. And thus, the defense of Soviet Belarus in this complex is blended with the narrative of the Great Victory. One could also argue that this represents a relocation of the Myth of the heroic defense of the Brest Fortress to a Minsk setting (see Ganzer 2011: 138–145). This might be interpreted as an active attempt to produce some new legitimacy for the Lukashenka regime which goes beyond the Soviet narratives and the major sites of collective memorialization. But on the ground at the Stalin Line, this connection is made in a rather simplistic way. The *defense of the motherland*, the Soviet victory and the so-called *heroic work of the people at the rear* are linked in one narrative. Moreover, the museum's strong focus on Soviet war technologies and warfare, and the fascination with Soviet tanks in particular, goes far beyond the end of World War II. Since there is plenty of space

available, the whole Soviet arsenal of rockets, airplanes, tanks, artillery, and other war-related technologies is on display. And this is precisely where the Afghan experience is introduced in a smooth way and without detaching it from the other eras of Soviet warfare: a few tanks are mixed in here with the others and a sign indicates that they were used in Afghanistan (Metla 2006: 106–152).

If you book a guided tour around the compound, you will be guided by a young woman fluent in Russian and Belarusian, and dressed as a Red Army female combatant with special details such as the long blond topknots, and the *shapka-ushanka* with red star and hammer-and-sickle. And her jacket is a so-called *afganka*—a yellow uniform used in the Soviet war in Afghanistan. All these details contribute to a touristic, adventure-like atmosphere and in doing so they create something new, expressing a new local interpretation of World War II as something not just heroic, but also fancy (see Oushakine 2011: 209–233). Visitors are offered an opportunity to do some practical work in a partisan wood village or to spend some time in a trench recalling the real-life experience of the soldiers. And there is a special place where visitors are given the opportunity to do some real shooting. After these outdoor activities visitors are invited to a re-enactment restaurant, which is supposed to look like a partisan tent.[32] You are invited to buy vodka from the Brest distillery, which has created a special Stalin Line brand with a label featuring an image of the Soviet dictator and generalissimo. There is even a special edition *Kalashnikov* bottle. The main course here is soldiers' porridge (*soldatskaia kasha*) which consists of buckwheat with some conserved meat and pieces of carrot.[33] All this adds some popular flavor to the outdoor museum. And many visitors see it just like this. It is a site where patriotic links with the War are made in a relaxing setting. The loss of millions of Soviet soldiers, the wrong decisions of the Soviet leadership on the eve of World War II and the cruelty of German occupation policies are not part of this leisure-focused narrative. Nor are the complex settings of Stalinist policies throughout the 1930s in the BSSR part of this narrative. And the problematic link drawn here between World War II and the Soviet war in Afghanistan is not articulated or conceptualized. In the few exhibition stands there is no direct explanation of why the museum was set up by veterans of the Soviet war in Afghanistan.

The popular enactment setting has two underlying assumptions: (1) the army and its soldiers are at the very heart of society; and (2) the victory in World War II was possible only thanks to Stalin's leadership and

the support of the Soviet people (Metla 2006: 102–103). This is precisely the point where the Stalin Line provides some legitimacy and a narrative for making sense of today's authoritarianism in Belarus (and beyond). It is publicly claiming that times were hard and that you always have to pay a certain price, but that in the end the stronghold of a leading figure is needed to overcome obstacles (which are indirectly presented as coming from the West). But this is no direct message at the Stalin Line. It is rather the reintroduction of Stalin's sculpture in the public space itself which creates the foundation for such an interpretation with the indirect support and the acceptance of the Belarusian state under Lukashenka's supervision. This is not the only memorial of Stalin in Belarus, but it is the most prominent one.[34]

When the Stalin Line was built in early 2005 ahead of the opening planned for 2006, a broad public debate started in Belarus over the legitimacy of Stalin as a leading figure in World War II (Sobolevskii 2005). Two main positions were clearly demarcated: state-owned media and actors close to the Lukashenka administration made the argument that, even if not all his decisions had been right, it is necessary to remember Stalin, because he is a part of *our great history* (Danilov 2006: 4; Mikhailov 2006: 15). At the same time oppositional circles argued that commemoration of Stalin as a military and state leader would justify the repressions and state violence for which he is seen as responsible ("Lukashenko" 2005).[35] What both positions have in common is the assumption that the violence of World War II was nothing intrinsic and local, but was rather brought to Belarus from the outside. For those taking the former position, Stalin is a symbol of the evil Soviet regime and detached from the Belarusian national movement, while for those adhering to the latter view he is the incarnation of the Great Victory, the moment of the birth of the Soviet people, which is linked with the great success of the contemporary Belarusian people.[36]

But it is precisely this political statement which today many Belarusians do not accept and reject in a more or less active way. Some of them try to avoid sending their children to the Stalin Line, holding them back from obligatory class trips in high school. Others discourage their family members and friends from visiting the site. People detach this reintroduction of Soviet narratives from their lives in a passive way. Even if they are able to read the statue of Stalin at the road from Minsk to Molodechna as a public sign of relegitimization of Stalinist rule and are privately strongly opposed, they do not protest in public against it,

partly because in their perception there is no public sphere in Belarus. A mother raised in the 1980s in the BSSR and living nearby on the road from Minsk to Molodechna tells me: "Why are you going there?—you shouldn't. It's terrible to have Stalin on the street again, we don't go there."[37] An Afghanistan veteran puts it even more harshly: "I will never let my children go to such a place, this is a place of untruth and we need to stick to the truth."[38] But at the same time, there are many young Belarusians raised in the 1990s for whom the reintroduction of Stalin into the public space is no taboo, because they never lived in Soviet times and are not familiar with inner Soviet discourses about the destructive impact of Stalin's rule. Many of them visit the Stalin Line outdoor museum *just for fun*, as others might visit a regional amateur military technique outdoor museum.[39]

Transnational Links: Symbolically Regaining an Imperial Narrative

The Stalin Line was initiated as a transnational project re-establishing partially lost links with veterans in Kazakhstan, Russia and beyond.[40] In particular the event "We are the Successors of the Great Victory!" was an international project, initiated during the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II in 2005 ("Memorial'nye znaki" 2013). In the commemoration of the Great Patriotic War as initiated by Afghan veterans in independent Belarus a strong transnational link between the practices of memory politics in different post-Soviet republics becomes visible. The process of the public recollection of Soviet warfare in regard to both Stalin and the Soviet war in Afghanistan has the effect of putting a post-imperial interpretation of history on the public agenda.[41] This explains both the reintroduction of Stalin as Generalissimus, understood as a legitimate reaction to his symbolic disappearance in the 1960s, and the questioning of his role as Soviet leader that started in the 1980s and developed in the 1990s (Vujacic 2009). It also explains the blending of World War II narratives and the Soviet war experience in Afghanistan in order to transfer some of the symbolic legacy and legitimacy of the Soviet victory in World War II to the disasters of the lost Soviet war in Afghanistan. This public support by CIS state figures is aimed at raising legitimacy.[42] By definition the introduction of this post-Soviet narrative is a means of symbolically regaining some of the strength of the Soviet Union; as such it is not based on national

narratives in the sense of ethno-nationalist approaches as were partly introduced in the early 1990s in Belarus, Ukraine, and other former Soviet republics.[43] The reinternationalization of the internationalist-warriors, as the Afghanistan veterans refer to themselves, is formalized in organizations such as the International Union "Battle Brotherhood" which brings together high-ranking officials from various former Soviet Republics. On the other hand, the image of discontinuity in the transnationalization of the war is misleading. The first unionwide meeting was organized as early as 1987 during the Soviet war in Afghanistan. In 1990 this all-union event took place in Minsk.[44] Some of the links created during the war and in its direct aftermath had to be re-established, but the network created in the 1980s was still in existence. Its function changed during the 1990s, and it was only in the twenty-first century that political responsibility for the patriotic education of youth was placed upon formal organizations.

The Stalin Line's official publication—a high-quality glossy color book with large pictures and patriotic texts—has a preface by the Russian politician Pavel Borodin, head of a formally existing Belarusian–Russian Union state. Even if this state had little real impact on the deepening of transnational links, Borodin is clearly perceived to be a relevant figure in regard to the commemoration of the Stalin Line.[45] His statement makes clear that the experience itself is perceived in general Soviet terms: "Our Belarusian friends have shown once again that the memory of the Great Patriotic War is meaningful for them. With their heroic work they commemorate our shared victory" (Metla 2006: 4). The visitors' book shows that since 2005 the Stalin Line has become part of the official visiting program of so-called *siloviki* from Russia, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and other post-Soviet countries.[46] Thus, government representatives express in Russian their deep gratitude to the initiators and make clear that the suggested narrative offered up by the Stalin Line is close to their own understanding of World War II. A recurring motif here is the proof of an active *regaining* of a formerly shared history through a joint effort. This assumes that a general process is underway whereby historical narratives that were lost in the aftermath of the Soviet collapse of 1991 are now being recaptured.

These transnational bonds and their everyday practice in the Stalin Line exhibition, welcoming private tourists but also high-ranking delegations of politicians from Russia, Kazakhstan and until late 2013 also

Ukraine, is providing a symbolic space for the reunification of separated post-Soviet national perspectives on World War II, in order to recreate the spirit of a joint victory in the Great Patriotic War. On 9 May 2010 the Belarusian minister of defense wrote in the guest book: "Visiting this historical monument we got in touch with our heroic past again. The Stalin Line is a symbol of the patriotism, heroism and courage of the Soviet soldiers, who saved us from fascism… We should secure the memory about our great past, about our great victory and the great Soviet people for future generations".[47] These sentences read as though they have been cut and pasted from the visitor books of earlier decades. To a certain extent they are like a stamp collection, rearranged in a slightly new order and then revisited from time to time. The inner logic and goal of this continuous exercise is made clear by L. Maltsev, the Belarusian minister of defense, in his last sentence: "We feel a deep gratitude to the Belarusian people for its … contribution to peace, stability and security."[48] The last three points are at the core of the post-Soviet narrative developed by state actors or those who are in close relationships with them: the adoration of a virtual Soviet people will secure stability in challenging times.

Conclusion

The analysis of both the Minsk Island of Tears commemorating the victims of the Soviet war in Afghanistan and the Stalin Line re-enactment complex on the outskirts of Minsk shows a twofold dynamic in the popular expression of dealing with the legacy of the twentieth century after Belarusian independence. It started in the early 1990s with a national reinterpretation of the Soviet past, publicly expressing Christian victimhood and the capability to suffer and mourn as core values of the soon-to-be nationally defined republic. This vision was included into everyday culture in Minsk and transformed the memorial complex into a popular park zone. As a result much of the Soviet–Afghan symbolic legacy was incorporated into everyday life, but its relevance and context faded away in public awareness at the same time. The example of the Stalin Line as a semi-private re-enactment complex shows how, in 2005, a small group of Afghan veterans successfully raised material and political support in order to turn a landscape of rather useless defense sites into a symbolic landscape, claiming in May 2006 the *succession of the Great Victory.* Reintroducing Stalin into the public sphere as a

legitimate historical figure and combining a wide variety of war armaments with the narrative of the Great Patriotic War, the complex represents a reinterpretation of the Soviet past as shaped by the Great Victory, claiming *heroism*, *comradeship*, and *patriotism* as key figures in the political education of the Belarusian masses. The specific setting of the Stalin Line shows how a small group of veterans aims to take over some of the legitimacy created by the Soviet victory in World War II and project it onto their own Soviet war in Afghanistan. While officially this rather small group of veterans claim to support the patriotic education of young Belarusians, they are creating a monument that ensures them a niche in the pantheon of those who served the nation and were victorious. This is happening precisely at a time when the last participants of World War II are passing away and most of the former Soviet combatants in Afghanistan are turning to their pension and have some spare time and energy left to ensure their own place in Belarusian history. This very special case shows that even in Lukashenka's Belarus there is an interaction of private initiative, some form of civil engagement and state-run institutions. What is specific about Belarus is the tight network of former Soviet soldiers who set up special links with the presidential administration and other *vertikal'shchiki*—members of the vertically organized power structures—strengthening the top-down way of running the state. Taking this special link between a formal civil society and high-ranking state representatives into consideration, it becomes clear that the Stalin Line is actually a privately outsourced project, slightly reconfiguring the official narrative of World War II. Its aim is to create a virtual continuity between the Great Victory of 1945 and the Soviet–Afghan experience, lending some of the newly claimed legitimacy of Stalin's warfare to the rather disastrous outcome of the war in Afghanistan. While this strategy leaves the Soviet experience in Afghanistan out of the game, it assigns the role of the successors of the Great Victory to a small group of former combatants. The veterans organized in *Pamiat' Afgana* have merged their own experience as soldiers in the Soviet war in Afghanistan with the memory of World War II in Belarus in order to get respect and social acceptability, and also to gain a certain discursive power via resources which are provided by the Belarusian state itself.

Notes

1. Most prominently the practice of describing sharp public debates over contested pasts as "memory wars" was fostered by a collaborative project initiated by Alexander Etkind at Cambridge University focusing on the dynamics of *Memory at War* in Poland, Russia and Ukraine: http://www.memoryatwar.org (2010–13). Obviously there are highly politicized public debates in all three of these countries, but the case of Belarus calls into question the general logic that the relocation of newly emerging nation-states in the post-socialist realm coincides with open struggles about contested pasts.
2. Here I follow Serguei Oushakine's observation that in a post-colonial reading of these processes, place and in a more narrow sense memory sites became more recently focal points for the transformation of the public self-understanding in post-socialist societies (Oushakine 2011: 209–233).
3. As late as 1996, one of the site's initiators Inna S. Golovneva presented the project as a major success story in the struggle against bureaucracy and an obstructionist state. This should not be mistaken for an oppositional anti-Lukashenka discourse. On the contrary, this anti-bureaucratic discourse was the main political discourse through which Lukashenka won the presidential elections back in 1994 (Khamitsevich 1996).
4. Literally, "The Afgan Veteran's Memory."
5. When viewed in a regional context, this development does not appear extraordinary (Danilova 2005a; Marples 2014).
6. On the latter, see further Marples (2012a, b).
7. The aim was to give my interview partners' stories a voice and to create a frame for the later analysis of those narratives as a whole, not detaching the Afghanistan experience from the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the subsequent uncertainty.
8. The official website for the complex can be found at: http://www.stalin-line.by. The foundation *Pamiat' Afgana* also has an official website, available at: http://fondafgana.by (last accessed 1 April 2013).
9. They include Nikolai Avtukhovich, an Afghanistan veteran, who created an oppositional network of *afgantsy* called "Defenders of the Fatherland" and who was imprisoned in 2009 for the second time, after publicly protesting against a new law limiting social guarantees for veterans (Shcherbakov 2014).
10. The Soviet combatants in Afghanistan also included some World War II veterans (Kalinovsky 2011: 23–24).
11. In the late 1980s they were part of a Coordinating Council of Association of Families of Soldiers Fallen in Afghanistan.

12. Later similar memorials were erected all over Belarus (*Afgan* n/d).
13. An official version of the memorial's history is online at the site of the Minsk municipality ("Ostrov" n/d).
14. On mourning and remembrance, see Winter (1998: 78–116).
15. In Vilnius a monument erected on behalf of a Lithuanian association of *afgantsy* also mentions the consequences of physical and psychological harm, indirectly pointing to post-traumatic stress disorder (a term not yet widely known but already recognized as a clinical disease at the time) and suicides committed after the withdrawal (Frolova 2014).
16. For amateur documentation see Negoriui (2009).
17. On the contrary, it represents all major Belarusian towns.
18. It later became part of the Minsk-based Republican Museum of the Great Patriotic War ("MK" 2011).
19. Nataliia A. Kuleshovoi, *Ostrov Muzhestva i Skorbi*. Retrieved on 3 April 2013 from http://phrupk2.minsk.edu.by/ru/main.aspx?guid=3001. This URL is no longer active, but a copy of the images can be foundat http://www.ekskursii.by/css/picview_exkurs.php?a=1162&b=3.
20. Unofficial interview with an anonymous representative of Belarusian state militia at the Island of Tears, 26 February 2013.
21. Making duty the core of the Afghanistan experience and its significance for today's society is generally accepted, but since the 1980s and still today there are other voices—in particular on the internet—who doubt whether the duty fulfilled by the Soviet soldiers in Afghanistan was politically right or worth the loss of life. As an example you might consider the website "We Remember Them All," created by the mother of a fallen soldier, G.K. Sidorenko and strongly arguing against the glorification of the Soviet losses: http://pomnimvse.com/dolg.html.
22. The ongoing fight to regain social guarantees, waged by activists and former Soviet soldiers in Afghanistan, is a good example. It is quite prominent, and their status as *afgantsy* is constantly invoked in this struggle ("Afgantsy" 2013).
23. Interview with a lecturer from the Linguistic University, Minsk, 26 February 2013.
24. For an ordinary private description of the Island see Bocharov (2013).
25. http://img-fotki.yandex.ru/get/21/kadmy.0/0_9342_f8dfb072_L.jpg.
26. A similar view is expressed even in an officially confirmed guided tour, which states that touching the angel would ensure that the boy would not have to fight abroad. Here you can find a non-official copy of this tour: http://www.ronl.ru/referaty/sport/298091/ (last retrieved 10 November 2014).
27. Interview with an anonymous former Soviet soldier formerly stationed in both Afghanistan and the GDR, 10 April 2013.

28. The Stalin Line complex's own official materials mention a broad range of persons supporting the new institution (Metla 2006).
29. For a more specialized contextualization of the 1930s defence system that would later be called "Liniia Stalina" see Short (2008) and Wetzig (2005).
30. My initial observations on the link between the *afgantsy* and the memory of the Great Patriotic War were first published in *Neue Züricher Zeitung* (Ackermann 2016).
31. Author's interview with Aleksandr Metla, Minsk, 27 February 2013.
32. The official slogan for this enactment is "Voenno-polevaia zhizn'"—the idea being to recreate some of the spirit of everyday life in wartime (Metla 2006: 114).
33. If you visit the site, you will see that these services are also proposed for corporate events: http://www.stalin-line.by/corporate.shtml (last retrieved 1 March 2013).
34. In Svislach—in the part of Belarus which was occupied by the Soviet Union only in September 1939—a Stalin monument was re-erected in 2000. As the official national Belarusian tourism agency claims, this was not done to honor Stalin, "a highly debatable personality," but for cultural studies purposes, whereby Stalin is placed in a line with Lenin and others. The decisive detail in this local story is to legitimize the reintroduction of Stalin into the public space of Svislach the local branch of the Association of Veterans of World War II formally asked the local government to re-erect his sculpture. In other words, the legitimacy of the veterans was needed to make sure that local protest could be silenced—many local inhabitants suffered from the Soviet takeovers in 1939 and 1944 (Nesterov 2013).
35. There were also actors who were not outspokenly oppositional but likewise warned that the Stalin Line was introducing a new vision which would divide Belarusian citizens (Barashko 2006).
36. A more recent example is the film *Liniia Stalina, Hanba ci honar?* presented in September 2008 in Minsk and shown on the oppositional TV channel *Belsat* (available at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tSTxC_0zhms).
37. Interview with an inhabitant of the western outskirts of Minsk, 20 December 2012.
38. Interview with an anonymous former Soviet soldier stationed in both Afghanistan and GDR, 10 April 2013.
39. If you follow the official fan page at Vkontakte.ru you will find a broad range of popular contextualizations of the Stalin Line: "Liniia Stalina" Tourism and relax, http://vk.com/club24517972 (last retrieved 1 May 2013).

40. http://ms-bb.ru/content/obshchestvennoe-obedinenie-belorusskoy-soyuz-veteranov-voyny-v-afganistane.
41. This is also due to the double meaning of internationalist duty in Afghanistan. The Soviet experience often itself created a strong transrepublican inner Soviet bond among those who fought in Afghanistan, and this bond remained intact after the collapse of the Union. See for example the visitors' book of the battalion in which Viktor V. Sheiman served, available at: http://ogorin.ru/-gostevaya-.html (last retrieved 1 May 2013).
42. This transnational link with Kazakhstan and Russia in particular seems to parallel the ongoing process of the creation of a Eurasian Union; see the website of the CIS Committee for the Affairs of Internationalist-Warriors under the Council of the Heads of Governments of CIS States-Participants, available at http://komitet92.com.
43. As an example: the Ukrainian Association of former Afghanistan veterans has posted an overview of post-Soviet memorials from various republics, highlighting the Minsk memorial complex ("Pamiatniki" n/d).
44. http://ms-bb.ru/content/obedinenie-voinov-veteranov-internacionalistov-uzbekistana-veteran (retrived 1 June 2014).
45. And the book itself also underlines the transnational context of the establishment of the Stalin Line.
46. The visitors' book is separated into a general one and a V.I.P. section. This entry is taken from the Archive of the Stalin Line re-enactment complex, Minsk, 27 February 2013.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid. Maltsev was a well-known guest at the Stalin Line, and he often brought his official visitors from abroad to the new attraction—among them Hugo Chavez ("Chaves" 2006).

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CHAPTER 9

Generational Memory and the Post-Soviet Welfare State: Institutionalizing the "Children of War" in Post-Soviet Russia

Tatiana Zhurzhenko

In post-Soviet Russia, repeated public exhortations to "remember the war" point to the underlying anxiety linked to a dramatic social rupture. Watching the last few war veterans in their old age gathering on 9 May, one cannot help but think that the Soviet era is actually ending only now, more than twenty years after 1991, as "the greatest generation"[1] finally departs. As the Soviet war veterans pass away, the next generation, those who experienced the war as children and adolescents, inevitably receive more public attention. The "children of war," long in the shadow of their fathers, have become increasingly prominent in recent years as the last bearers of the memory of the central historical event which continues to shape collective identities in the post-Soviet space.

To use Jan Assmann's concepts (2008), World War II is currently in the process of shifting from the realm of communicative to cultural memory. Communicative memory is located within a generation of

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contemporaries who witnessed a certain event and pass their emotional connection to it on to their children and grandchildren. Communicative memory thus has a limited temporal horizon which cannot extend more than eighty years or so. Entering old age, this generation seeks to institutionalize their memories, whether as books, films and archives, or through public rituals, reinvented traditions and commemorative landscapes. Assmann termed this institutionalized memory "cultural memory" (*das kulturelle Gedächtnis*). The shift from communicative to cultural memory is obvious in present-day post-Cold War Europe, where the "children of war" generation has gained a lot of public attention. For example, in Germany in recent years one can observe a steady flow of memoir literature, fiction and oral history projects devoted to "Kriegskinder."[2]

In the post-Soviet countries, this generational change overlaps with a transition "from triumph to trauma" (Giesen 2005), giving voice to non-heroic everyday experiences of war: hunger, bombing and displacement, the brutal fight for survival, the banality of everyday encounters with the enemy. In one sense, an emphasis on children's experience of the war is not new. In the Soviet official commemorative culture, children and adolescents—young partisans, little soldiers adopted by Soviet army units, helpers of the underground resistance—were used as icons of heroic sacrifice and patriotism. The names of the young pioneer and Komsomol heroes were the first to be learned by children at school (cf. Kucherenko 2011). At the same time, children's perspective on the war was rather under-represented. With some notable exceptions (such as the world-famous diary of Tania Savicheva from besieged Leningrad), the subject of children's suffering and everyday fight for survival was very much in the shadow of the official heroic narrative in the Soviet period.[3] It was only from the late 1980s, when some ideological taboos were broken with the new glasnost' politics, that broad public interest in "everyday" non-heroic war childhood arose.

While the current Russian authorities routinely reproduce the traditional heroic narrative of the Great Patriotic War, the everyday memories of Nazi occupation, mass evacuation, and life and work at the rear have also been entering local museums and appearing on internet sites in recent years. Several biographical research and oral history projects have also been published.[4] In 2012 *Astrel* republished a collection of short stories by the famous Russian writer Liudmila Ulitskaya under the title *Childhood-49* (first edition 2003). Simultaneously with the book's

publication, Ulitskaya also initiated an open public competition for biographical essays devoted to post-war childhood. Six hundred responses were received, and a selection of these were compiled and edited by Ulitskaya and published as a book in 2013 under the title *Childhood 45–53*.[5] Projects aimed at creating local memorials to the "children of war" have emerged in many Russian cities, including Saint Petersburg, Krasnoiarsk, Ul'ianovsk, Staryi Oskol, Yekaterinburg, Nizhnii Novgorod and Riazan'.[6] "The War Childhood" museum in Monchegorsk, a small industrial town in Murmansk oblast', appeared in 2004 as a community initiative; the initial exhibition was created by local pupils who interviewed their grandparents and wrote essays based on their family histories. Similar exhibitions have been created by other museums; an interactive guided tour "War Childhood" is offered, for example, by the Museum of Moscow. "Children of Wartime Stalingrad," "Children of Frontline *[Prifrontovogo]* Murmansk," "Children of Fallen Defenders of the Motherland," "Wartime Childhood," and many other associations and clubs of this kind have been created over the last two decades in Russia. Similar organizations have also emerged during this period in Ukraine, Latvia, Kazakhstan, and other former Soviet republics. "Children of War," the song by Tamara Gverdtsiteli, the "Russian Édith Piaf," has become the unofficial anthem of what amounts to a new mass movement:

> Children of war
> We've grown older than our own memory.
> May our sons,
> Who didn't see that terrible war,
> Be happy people!

The pathos and sentimentality inherent to the mainstream discourse on the "children of war" reflects recent transformations of Russia's national memory—the emphasis on the child as a victim can be read as the latest step towards a Manichean vision of the Great Patriotic War in which the Soviet side features as completely innocent and pure.

At the same time, the "children of war" generation is the last truly Soviet generation[7] as far as values and mentality are concerned. In addition, this is the generation which not only experienced the hardships of war as children but also suffered the political and economic shock of the Soviet collapse. Many of them live in poverty today and consider

themselves losers of the post-Soviet transition since it was generally harder for them to adapt due to their age. The "children of war," today in their seventies and eighties, are interested not only in public recognition of their generational memory, but also (or maybe first and foremost) in social welfare. Encouraged by populist politicians, associations of the "children of war" make claims for material compensation referring not only to childhood sufferings, but to economic and social deprivation caused by market reforms and the trauma of the Soviet collapse. Claiming social privileges similar to those granted to war veterans in the late-Soviet era, they appeal to a particular notion of social justice which runs against the current trend of the neoliberal welfare reform. The appeal to the generational memory and the link to the symbolic capital of Victory over the Nazis serve to legitimize these claims.

This chapter addresses the growing prominence of the "children of war" in contemporary Russia and investigates how this generation is constructed at the crossroads of discourses on World War II memory and national identity, on moral values in the Russian society and on principles of social policy in a market economy. More precisely, I analyze the bottom-up social initiatives and top-down strategies of the political elites in Russia aimed at the institutionalization of a special status for the "children of war." Debates and political fights around the "children of war" are illustrative of both the populism of post-Soviet politics and the limits of the Russian welfare state. I will also show how the initiatives aimed at forging intergenerational solidarity and strengthening the public consensus on war memory often create new social hierarchies and lead to competition between different status groups. In the first section the relevance of the concept of the generational memory in relation to the "children of war" will be discussed. I will argue that the generation of the "children of war" is a recent construct not only reflecting the shift from communicative to cultural memory in relation to World War II but also symptomatic of Russia's troubled post-Soviet transition. The second section addresses discourses of war childhood and their uses by grassroots social actors and politicians. The controversial politics of institutionalization of the "children of war" status will be discussed in the third section. I will show how different conceptualizations and legal definitions of this group run against the notions of the "common memory," solidarity, and historical justice which serve to legitimize the political campaign aimed at the institutionalization of the "children of war" status. The last section brings together issues of generational memory, social justice and

neoliberal welfare reform in post-Soviet Russia. This chapter is based on research conducted by the author in 2012–2013 in Murmansk, Velikii Novgorod, and Belgorod, and at the Aleksanteri Institute in Helsinki where the *Integrum* database provides access to a rich collection of Russian regional media.

"Children of War": A Generational Memory?

In the late-Soviet and post-Soviet decades various "communities of memory"[8] based on particular experiences of World War II have gained public recognition: in addition to Soviet war veterans, these have included Holocaust survivors, *blokadniki*,[9] *ostarbeiter*,[10] former prisoners of Nazi concentration camps and victims of Stalinist repressions. In contrast to all of these groups, the "children of war" have entered public space not as a particular social group but as a "generation." The public discourse on the "children of war," with its key motif of "a childhood burnt by war," emphasizes their collective fate despite differences in family circumstances, personal experience, age, and gender, and despite different life paths in the post-war decades. The totality of the war and the mass experience of post-war hardships to some extent justify this generational identity on the part of those born shortly before and during World War II. Legal definitions of this group are also based on the concept of generation: the most recent draft law submitted by the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF) to the parliament defines as "children of war" those born between 22 June 1928 and 4 September 1945.[11]

The idea of generational memory is widely invoked by historians and sociologists. It goes back to Karl Mannheim (1928), who argued that social and political events encountered in early adulthood shape the values, world outlook and political attitudes of generations. Drawing on Mannheim, the US sociologists Schuman and Scott proved empirically that "memories of the important political events and social changes are structured by age" and that "adolescence and early adulthood is the primary period for generational imprinting in the sense of political memories" (1989: 377). The idea of generational memory and the related concept of "political generation" were widely employed in the German debates on coming to terms with the Nazi past as the protests of the "1968 generation" were partly driven by accusations against the *Väter-Täter* (fathers-perpetrators). "Political generation," according to Wulf Kansteiner, is defined by a relational void, or in opposition to a given

generation's predecessors (ancestors): "both the Hitler Youth and the generation of 1968 were first and foremost defined by what they were not, i.e. they were not responsible for Nazism and the Holocaust" (2012: 112). Last, but not least, in Holocaust studies the growing interest in the second generation of Holocaust survivors was inspired by psychoanalysis and literary criticism (Suleiman 2002; Hirsch 2008). In general, while the positivist approach to generation as a cohort shaped by the same social events and sharing similar political attitudes is still popular in sociology, in the multidisciplinary field of memory studies generation is seen today rather as a social construct, an "imagined community" (Kansteiner 2012), and as a symbolic form and a cultural pattern for constructing history (Weigel 2002).

Discussions on mechanisms of trans-generational transmission of traumatic experience and on the moral economy of guilt and debt (Weigel 2002) can help to understand how the generation of the "children of war" is constructed in post-Soviet Russia.[12] Marianne Hirsch suggested the controversial notion of "postmemory" which describes "the relationship of the second generation to powerful, often traumatic, experiences that preceded their birth but that were nevertheless transmitted to them so deeply as to seem to constitute memories in their own right" (2008: 103). In her words, postmemory "is not an identity position"; it is "more than a temporal delay and more than a location in aftermath." Rather, it is a "structure of inter- and trans-generational transmission of traumatic knowledge and experience" (106). Even more relevant to our topic, Susan Rubin Suleiman introduced the concept of the "1.5 generation" to capture the particular position of the "child survivors of the Holocaust, too young to have had an adult understanding of what was happening to them, but old enough to have *been there* during the Nazi persecution of Jews" (Suleiman 2002: 277). Seeking to define the boundaries of this social group, she finds more differences than commonalities among the grown-up child survivors—a fact that complicates the prevalent Mannheimian definition of generation. Moreover, according to Suleiman, the generational identity of a child survivor is a new phenomenon. These children "did not grow up identifying themselves as part of a specific generation-unit"; this identity developed "much later, when the term 'child survivor of the Holocaust' entered into common usage," such that "individuals who until then may not have considered their childhood traumas as anything other than personal (if they considered them at all) could see them in a new light: as part of a collective experience" (286).

Finally, Sigrid Weigel (2002) addresses the issue of "trans-generational traumatization" of descendants of Nazi perpetrators and discusses the "return of the guilt" in the second generation caused by the fathers' failure to repent and to mourn. Discussing the genealogy of the term "generation" Weigel reminds us of the "biblical idea of the relationship between generations as a relationship of debt" (267). The dialectic of guilt and debt is central for her understanding of "generation as a symbolic form, that is, as a cultural pattern for constructing history" (265). Not unimportant for the topic of this chapter, she discusses the role of money in the moral economy of guilt and debt (269).

Drawing on these theoretical insights from Holocaust memory studies, how can we understand the "children of war" generation which came to the fore in the post-Soviet decades? Even more than the child survivors of the Holocaust, the category of the "children of war" in post-Soviet Russia is a recent construct uniting people with different experiences and life paths. While for some of them losing their parents in the war and spending their early years in an orphanage were certainly formative experiences, others have never thought about themselves as the "children of war" and even feel uncomfortable with this label today. At the same time, we are certainly dealing with a form of postmemory or "inherited memory" (Reading 2002) deeply rooted in family stories, recollections of parents' post-war everyday life, family photos and objects serving as mementos of the war years. Marianne Hirsch (2008) considered the family to be the main site of the trans-generational transmission of memory; in our case one can reasonably assume a greater role for the Soviet school system, official propaganda and the Komsomol, which offered rather rigid ideological frames for conceiving personal and family war experiences. The formative years for the "children of war" were the late Stalin and early Khrushchev periods, and their system of values and political attitudes (including towards the meaning of the Great Patriotic War and the Victory in 1945) was a product of the post-war Soviet system (Tumarkin 1994).

Schuman and Scott in their 1989 study of the American generational memory observed that "characterisations of World War II as a 'good war' and a 'victorious war' come less from the World War II generation itself than from the later Vietnam generation now in its 30s and early 40s." They concluded that "the attribution of some larger political meaning to the event is more likely to be made by those who did not experience it at all, or at least did not experience it during their

adolescence or early adulthood" (1989: 378). In a similar way, the Soviet "children of war" generation might be said to have internalized the official Soviet paradigm of political memory and the metanarrative of the Great Patriotic War. The "children of war" are thus not a "political generation" in the sense discussed above—they are defined not in opposition to their fathers who fought in the war but rather through identification with them. According to the dominant public discourse, the "children of war" resemble their fathers in every respect except the fact that they happened to be too young to fight (although some did). Those who speak on behalf of the "children of war" present them as the last bearers of the *true* memory of the war, as a generation which rebuilt the country after the war was over and as those who represent "the necessary link between the Soviet Union and the new Russia" (Vashkau 2010: 76). In the face of the dramatic social rupture caused by the Soviet collapse their mission seems to be to provide coherence and continuity of collective memory.

Through this social mission, the "children of war" are integrated into the post-Soviet moral economy of guilt and debt, which radically differs from the German one described by Weigel (2002). As will be shown below the "children of war" see themselves as transmitters of the moral values tested in the Great Patriotic War, proved by the Victory over the enemy and needed in today's capitalist Russia more than ever. While the "debt to the fallen," understood as the readiness for personal sacrifice for the sake of the Soviet state, was at the center of the Soviet moral economy, in the post-Soviet system of moral exchange the "children of war" are the generation which fully paid its debt to the state, and which rebuilt the great country, but whose contribution has not been properly recognized and rewarded, and was even devalued by the Soviet collapse and the arrival of capitalism.

Triumph and Trauma: From the Quest for Recognition to Political Instrumentalization

In her study of memory politics under democratic pluralism in the Baltic states Eva-Clarita Onken (2010) has suggested differentiating among several levels of interaction between the societal world (social memory) and the world of politics (national or political memory)—from recognition to representation to participation and finally, complicity. At the

first level (recognition), a rather unorganized group of societal actors who share particular memories of the past strives for public recognition, which does not necessarily imply any direct political consequence or obligation. "Due to their low organizational level and weak memory consciousness" (Onken 2010: 282), both the articulation of a particular group memory and the possibility of mobilization are limited. The second level of interaction, representation, "is characterized by an effort of the societal 'memory actors' to find someone from the political world that can represent their interests and thus include their particular experiences and the memory of them into the political memory of the state" (283). In this case societal actors have greater organizational capacity to generate a strong social memory and sense of identity through common institutions and established means of communication. This, in turn, encourages them to seek greater representation in the democratic institutions and even material compensation or social benefits.

Since the mid-2000s the "children of war" in Russia have moved from the first level (recognition) to the second (representation) and have become a mass social movement. One can say that they now represent a social group with its own self-awareness, collective identity and political agency. At the same time, the "children of war," who constitute millions of active and disciplined voters, have also been courted and paraded by various political forces. In Russia, some attempts to instrumentalize this issue were made by United Russia and Just Russia alike, but ultimately it was the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (the KPRF) which in 2011–2012 succeeded in creating the all-Russian network of local and regional associations and started to lobby for a special federal law.[13] In recent years the KPRF submitted several draft laws on the "children of war" (the latest at the time of writing was in March 2015) to the Russian Duma, but none of them got through. On 26 February 2012 the founding congress of the all-Russian movement "Children of War" took place near Moscow; it adopted an official statement and elected a steering committee.[14] These activities took place one week before the presidential elections and were part of the KPRF electoral campaign.

The campaign aimed at institutionalizing the "children of war" as a social movement and a group with special legal status should be seen as a result of both bottom-up social initiatives and top-down strategies of the political elites. The discourses on the "children of war" generated by the

local representatives of the movement, on the one hand, and the KPRF, on the other, while they often overlap, differ on some important points. While they always refer to a particular war experience of children and adolescents, the ways this experience is related to the "political memory" of Russia can be different, resulting in contrasting narratives emphasizing either passive suffering or heroic contribution to the Victory. Moreover, these discourses address and re-evaluate not only the war experience and war memory, but also (and often in the first place) the meaning of the post-war Soviet period and of the post-Soviet decades.

Obviously, the "children of war" claim to a special legal status is fundamentally based on a discourse of suffering. This can be seen, for example, in the public appeal issued in September 2009 by one such organization, the local association of the children of war in Briansk, on the occasion of the anniversary of the city's liberation from the Nazis:

> It was not the children of war who smashed the fascists: this was done by their fathers and mothers, older brothers and sisters, many of whom gave their lives for the happy future of their children and grandchildren. We as children of war became orphans, we had no childhood, no youth, we have not seen parental care and love—all this was taken by the war. The children of war carried the heavy burden of war suffering, fascist occupation, the hardships and deprivation of the post-war years. All our forces and our health we gave to the reconstruction of industry and agriculture, to the rebuilding of our cities and towns. However, even today the children of war are outcasts in Russia, inferior people; our rulers and law-makers prefer not to notice such a category of citizens.[15]

As this quote illustrates, the symbolic link with the fathers' generation and the children's contribution to the Victory is important for the discourse of local activists, but the emphasis is placed on the collective trauma of the war childhood. At the same time, the narrative of collective suffering is often combined with the quest for recognition of this generation's great contribution to the post-war reconstruction and to the economic development of the Soviet era. The economic achievements of the Soviet Union are an important source of collective self-esteem and pride for this generation, whose retirement coincided with the turbulent decades of transition. Thus, the "children of war" often present themselves as double victims—deprived of a childhood and traumatized by war, on the one hand, and written off in their older years, neglected by the post-Soviet-Russian state, on the other.

The KPRF, which claims to represent the "children of war" in Russian politics, generally reproduces this discourse, but also modifies it in some important ways. Unlike the local "children of war" activists who stress the collective experience of suffering, Communists return to the heroic narrative of the Great Patriotic War and refer to the traditional Soviet cliché of children's heroism. Nikolai Aref'ev, member of the KPRF Central Committee, argued at the founding congress of the Russia-wide "Children of War" association:

> In those difficult times Soviet children demonstrated an unprecedented feat. It was they who, using all possible means, strove to break through to the frontline and entered the trenches alongside the soldiers. It was they who led partisan units through impassable woods, blew up fascist ammunition depots and derailed German trains. It was their frail shoulders that carried half of the cares at the rear of the war's vast fronts. Therefore a substantial part of the Great Victory belongs to them, [as does] a modest share of gratitude for their sacrificed childhood, for lost laughter and premature grey hairs.[16]

One can say that in the political rhetoric of the KPRF, children's war experiences have been reduced to "heroic contribution to the Victory," de-personalized and integrated into the highly ideological triumphalist narrative of the Great Patriotic War. In addition, referring to the current situation of the "children of war," the Communists present them as victims of the contemporary Russian oligarchic regime and instrumentalize the social and economic problems of pensioners for their own political aims. Juxtaposition of the "criminal" Putin regime and the Soviet Union as the "true homeland" of the war generation can be found in Gennadii Ziuganov's speech during the abovementioned congress:

> We all owe an immeasurable debt to this generation whose childhood was stolen by Hitler and war. However, today this generation whose childhood was burnt by the war has been humiliated and insulted, because thieves, crooks and oligarchs have stolen even a dignified old age from the most hardworking and brave generation. We will get back the Motherland that has been stolen from us![17]

In their critique of Russia's "oligarchic regime" the Communists even draw parallels with the Nazi occupation: "Today the children of war must unite in the fight for their rights against those who harmed

our country more than Hitler's aggression."[18] The emotions they try to mobilize are not only nostalgia for the Soviet past but also collective shame for contemporary Russia, for the deprivation and moral suffering of the older generation. Referring to some anonymous "experts," Communist media claim that the "children of war" in today's Russia live worse than German war prisoners did during and after the war: an average Russian pensioner can afford less bread, meat and vegetables than the German prisoners were allocated according to a mythical "NKVD order" on food rationing.[19] According to the Communists, Germany has long paid its moral debts to the victims of the Nazi crimes, to the former occupied nations as well as to its own soldiers, while post-Soviet Russia, the ancestor of the triumphant Soviet Union, neglects those who made such significant contribution to the Victory and the post-war reconstruction: "It's a disgrace that the people of the country that won the war now live worse than those they defeated!"[20]

Germany, the former defeated enemy and now a prosperous welfare state which sets the model for the politics of restitution, serves as an important point of reference for both the "children of war" and the Communists. However, it is not Germany's critical attitude to its own past, but rather its generous pensions, and high standards of health care and social services for the elderly that are usually invoked in this context. Another example often cited in the KPRF commentary on this topic is Ukraine, where a special law on the "children of war" was initiated by the Socialist Party led by Oleksandr Moroz. The law, adopted in the wake of the 2004 presidential elections, gave this social group a number of benefits including a 30% pension bonus, and became a bone of contention in post-Orange Ukrainian politics. Here the case of Ukraine, often criticized in Russia for its alleged rehabilitation of nationalism, historical revisionism or even "falsification" of World War II history is used by the KPRF for "shaming" the Russian government:

> Excuses that the country has not enough money look lame against the backdrop of corruption and bribery and do not stand the test of facts. Let's take, for example, Ukraine. In 2009 it was among the poorest countries in Europe. Even Moldova managed to get higher than Ukraine on the ranking list. And yet, Ukraine adopted a law which provides the children of war with a lot of privileges.[21]

In sum, the "children of war" and the KPRF which now claims the right to speak on their behalf both appeal to the Russian state and the

Russian society demanding social and historical justice and invoking powerful notions of collective guilt and moral debt to the older generation. While these notions draw on some Soviet patterns (the young generation's debt to Soviet war veterans) and even traditionalist values (children's debt to their parents), in the contemporary Russian political context they are embedded in the moral critique of post-Soviet oligarchic capitalism, with its social inequality and corruption. Constructing the "children of war" as the main losers of the post-Soviet transition, this discourse blends the heroic narrative of the Great Patriotic War and Soviet nostalgia together with moral concerns about the decay of traditional values (respect for the older generation) and the leftist anti-capitalist critique. On the one hand, the "children of war" present themselves as a victim group and claim compensation for their past suffering; on the other, they see themselves as the last bearers of the true memory, as descendants of their heroic fathers, and demand recognition of their special merits and their contribution to the Victory and to the post-war reconstruction. Therefore, the "children of war" find themselves at the crossroads of the old and new commemorative cultures, at the very heart of the transition "from triumph to trauma."

(Inter)Generational Solidarity vs. Group Competition

In this section I address another internal tension characteristic of the "children of war" movement: the tension between the notion of a generation as an "imagined community," on the one hand, and various group interests shaped by a particular shared experience, on the other. We find some conflict here between the principle of (inter)generational solidarity and the reality of emerging social hierarchies, competition and different regional policies. Several examples discussed below demonstrate how both the external boundaries of the "children of war" as a social group and the internal hierarchies within that group have been renegotiated in the public discussion on the subject of a special status and social provisions for the "children of war."

Initially, local "children of war" grassroots initiatives united people sharing similar childhood experiences. These included associations of children of Soviet soldiers and officers fallen in World War II. Such groups justify their claims by the suffering and hardships their members experienced as orphans or half-orphans during the post-war years and by the great sacrifice their parents made for the country. They constitute the

core of the movement and the legitimacy of their claims is usually widely accepted. At the same time, even this group is far from homogeneous—if some families of fallen heroes enjoyed special privileges and benefits already in the Soviet era, others whose fathers went missing in action (and were implicitly suspected of capitulation and collaboration with the enemy) have no access to these benefits even today. A round table organized in May 2012 by the newspaper *Vecherniaia Moskva* (Evening Moscow) came to the conclusion that in order to restore historical justice this last category should have priority when it came to granting special privileges.[22]

Russian local media often publish interviews with and letters by elderly people which call into question the already rather broad definition of the "children of war" as the generation born just before or during the war. For example, one pensioner born after 1945 into a war veteran's family, who lost his father to war wounds early in his childhood, claims that his fate was no different from those older children who lost their fathers in combat.[23] Some "children of war" activists address what they perceive as an unjust policy whereby material compensation given to different victim groups does not correspond, in their opinion, to the level of suffering. One particular category—former forced laborers (*ostarbeiter*), most of whom were deported to Nazi Germany as teenagers and young people—often become an object of envy as they have received relatively generous compensation from the German state (see Chap. 10). Even more controversial in this context is the special status of children whose parents fell victim to Stalinist political repressions. They are entitled to the same privileges as their parents and are thus better provided for than some categories of "children of war."[24] These last two examples demonstrate that the "children of war" discourse is still tightly connected to the Soviet myth of the Great Patriotic War which glorifies the heroic sacrifice of the Soviet people and excludes alleged "collaborators" and "enemies" from this community.

Many local "children of war" associations have been founded according to the territorial principle, which reflects the local dimension of war memory. These include, for example, the Children of Besieged Leningrad, the Children of Wartime Stalingrad, and the Children of Front-zone Murmansk. Such organizations striving for recognition of their particular (local) narrative of war memory usually lobby for special legal status and/or social privileges for their membership. Regional authorities often support such local initiatives in various ways. As a result,

different legal provisions for the "children of war" status and different legal definitions of "children of war" can be found in various regions of Russia. Thus, for example, while in Ul'ianovsk oblast' all citizens born between 1932 and 1945 are entitled to special benefits, in Novosibirsk only those who lost parents during the war are eligible, and in Tula special support is provided to those citizens who were put in orphanages as children during 1941–1945.[25] Other regions have introduced extra privileges for disabled persons wounded as children during the war, or for former teenaged members of partisan units. Such a diversity of regional approaches is also a result of federal Russian government policy which delegates this issue to the regional level (and regional budgets).[26] In response to numerous appeals to introduce a special federal status for the category of "children of war" the Russian authorities usually argue that this category is too vague. They point out that it would be unfair to give the same status and the same compensation to those who spent their childhood in the frontline zone and lost their homes and family members, on the one hand, and those born far away from the front line, in Siberia or the Urals, on the other. As a result, various regional laws in 18 regions of Russia define "children of war" differently and provide them with different sets of social privileges, while in the remaining regions no special status has been introduced for this category of citizens.[27] The absence of a federal law on the "children of war" has been criticized in the Communist media as undermining the generational solidarity of the "children of war" and thus also the continuity of society across the generations.[28]

There have also been frequent conflicts between the "children of war" and the Soviet war veterans whose special status was institutionalized back in the Soviet era (Edele 2008). Organizationally the "children of war" are usually affiliated with local veterans' councils, where Soviet World War II veterans have the highest status (also compared to the veterans of the wars in Afghanistan and Chechnya).[29] The "children of war" declare their adherence to intergenerational solidarity; they see themselves as a link between the vanishing generation of war veterans and the young generation, as bearers of the "true" historical memory and patriotic values. The declared unity of the veterans' movement, however, often does not match the reality. In 2011–2012 several conflicts between Soviet war veterans and "children of war" emerged in the Russian regions, including Ivanovo and Vladivostok.[30] The cause of the conflict was competition for public attention and financial resources. War

veterans sometimes did not recognize the legitimacy of the "children of war" claims and saw the new group as unwanted competitors. These tensions were amplified by party politics in the wake of the 2011 Duma elections. While Soviet war veterans' associations in most cases seem to be loyal to United Russia and well integrated with the local "party of power," "children of war" in most regions tend to support the Communist Party which presents itself as the lobbyist of their interests in the Russian Duma and at the local level.

To conclude this section, one of the declared goals of the "children of war" movement is the consolidation of a public consensus on the memory of World War II and the strengthening of generational and intergenerational solidarity in the Russian society. In reality, however, the institutionalization of the "children of war" as a mass movement creates new social hierarchies and leads to competition and conflicts between different groups.

Generational Memory, Social Justice and the Post-Soviet Welfare State

As mentioned above, the rhetoric of solidarity and the notion of the generational memory of the "children of war" have been quite successfully monopolized by the KPRF, which makes frequent reference to the moral debt still to be paid by Russian society to the "children of war" generation. The lack of coherent policy towards the "children of war" on the federal level is blamed on the "oligarchic government" which according to the Communists does not represent the interests of "ordinary people." The government is accused of cynicism and of leaving elderly people "to celebrate Victory Day in poverty." The Communists call for "fulfilling historical justice" by recognizing the suffering and heroic sacrifice of the "children of war" and their special destiny as a generation. The draft law "On the Children of War," submitted by the KPRF to the Russian Duma in March 2015, proposed the introduction of a single Russia-wide status of "child of war" for all Russian citizens born between 22 June 1928 and 4 September 1945 (that is, those who were under 14 on the day of Hitler's attack on the Soviet Union and those born during the war). Social privileges granted to "children of war" under this draft law would have included monthly benefits, free public transport, and priority medical services. Monthly benefits were to be paid from the

federal budget. In this way, the status of the "children of war" was to be raised so as to acknowledge their contribution to the Soviet victory and simultaneously to solve the problem of their unequal provision in different regions.[31]

The Communist Party refers to the heroic myth of the Great Patriotic War in order to legitimize the claim to a special legal status for the "children of war," together with related social privileges and benefits. It is clear, however, that the history and memory of the war, crucial as it is for constructing this generation as a community, is only part of the narrative here. Even more important, the destiny of this generation is about the meaning of the Soviet era, the assessment of the Soviet post-war achievements and their social costs, and the legacy of Soviet socialism. Despite the recent anti-Western turn in Russian politics, the prevailing attitude towards the meaning of the Soviet era, unlike the Soviet Victory in World War II, remains rather ambivalent. The "children of war" are the last truly Soviet generation who lived their active lives during the Soviet post-war decades and whose retirement coincided with the collapse of the USSR. Were they heroes who sacrificed their energy and often their health for building the great country, or slaves of a system which left them no choice? The Communists capitalize on widespread Soviet nostalgia by contrasting the "radiant past" to the ugly present day capitalism and the "people" to the "cynical oligarchic government." Moreover, the "children of war" generation, the last one united by the common destiny of the "Soviet people" appears from this perspective as an unattainable moral ideal for the contemporary Russian society. Therefore, the Communists who see this generation as their core electorate, call upon them to resist the state policies that divide the "children of war" into different categories and provoke conflicts among them. In the face of growing social polarization the utopia of social equality which was never achieved in the Soviet era is projected onto this most Soviet generation:

> By no means should the children of war be divided into those who are entitled to social privileges and those who are not. A marshal's daughter or a kolkhoz worker's daughter—we are all children of the war, we lived through a lot. So at least after seventy years let's have a decent law which shows that we are remembered and taken care of, so that we don't become unwanted people.[32]

The Russian government, however, has been very reluctant concerning the institutionalization of the "children of war" as a privileged group. The memory of mass protests caused by the 2004 monetarization reform which converted in-kind benefits into cash is still fresh. Some categories of *l'gotniki* (privileged groups) partly lost their privileges as a result of this monetarization, which was conducted in the name of more efficient and targeted social policy. This is one of the reasons why the Russian government supported by the United Russia party in the parliament delegated this issue to regional legislatures (and regional budgets). As will be illustrated below, the "children of war" are seen by the federal government as a problem of insufficient social protection for some categories of the population, and not as a problem of restitution to a particular group based on the notion of historical justice. For the federal government, the priority group is those pensioners who do not belong to one of the privileged groups (such as war veterans, the disabled, "workers of the rear," and former child prisoners of concentration camps) and thus are not entitled to any social privileges. According to the Russian Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, around 13 million Russian citizens were born between 22 June 1928 and 4 September 1945, and of these, 2.3 million have no social privileges and live on their pensions only.[33]

In 2013, commenting on this topic, Andrei Isaev, the head of the Duma Committee on Labor, Social Policy and Veterans' Issues, argued that, "if we are talking about supporting the whole generation, the simplest way would be to raise pensions."[34] His suggestion was to grant privileged status only to those "children of war" who lost their parents during the war and were not entitled to other social benefits. A similar position is represented by Valerii Riazanskii, head of both the Federation Council Committee on Social Policy and the Union of Pensioners of Russia, who in 2012 suggested monitoring this category of the population in order to identify the most disadvantaged groups with a view to focusing the limited financial resources available on the most needy.[35] He also proposed carrying out a thorough assessment of the "moral and psychological damage" caused to this category by the war. Here it was important, he noted, to differentiate based on where the children of war had experienced these dramatic years—in the Black Earth regions affected by numerous battles, for example, or in faraway Novosibirsk and Tashkent. This is why, according to both officials, the best solution was to leave this issue to the regions. According to Andrei Isaev, the "children of war" could not be given the same status as war veterans whose

social benefits are financed by the federal budget. The most numerous privileged category, "workers of the rear" who actively contributed to the Victory through their hard work, are still supported by the regional budgets. The "children of war" who did not contribute in the same way cannot claim the higher status and better provision.[36]

As we can see from this debate, the social policy approach represented by state officials and the United Russia party inevitably divides the "children of war" generation into a hierarchy of categories and creates an order of priority according to formal criteria. Neoliberal notions of efficiency, targeted support and the "principle of one privilege" (the norm of the Russian legislation which does not allow one person to receive more than one type of benefit) run against the ideas of "moral debt" and intergenerational solidarity as well as traditionalist values of respect for the elderly. A particular moral notion of social justice which emphasizes equality and assumes responsibility for the generation who turned out to be the losers of the market reforms contradicts the principles of the contemporary welfare state with pensions based on career performance and social assistance aimed at those in need.

Conclusion

As the last Soviet war veterans pass away, the generation of the "children of war," today in their seventies and eighties, are becoming the last bearers of the collective memory of World War II, a historical event which is used increasingly intensively in contemporary Russia's quest for national identity. Deprived of their childhood by war hardships, the "children of war" embody the high price the country paid for the victory over Nazi Germany. Moreover, having lived their lives in the post-war Soviet Union and entered their "twilight years" in the new capitalist Russia, they represent the troubled link between Soviet and post-Soviet history in a society where traditional values of respect for the elderly are disintegrating. In the post-Soviet moral economy of guilt and debt, this is a generation who gave everything to their country and contributed to the great socialist achievements, but whose lives were devalued by the Soviet collapse and the arrival of the market economy. More than any other socially vulnerable group, the "children of war" found themselves at the very heart of the moral conflict emerging from Russia's post-communist transition and are thus especially receptive to the Communists' paternalist rhetoric.

It seems however that the Russian political regime is not interested in giving the "children of war" a special symbolic status on the federal level. The government sees this issue in terms of social policy priorities rather than historical justice. Moreover, if the regime was reluctant to adopt such a decision during the "fat years" of high oil revenues, it is even less likely to do so now when the economic crisis has intensified. Probably more importantly, there is no need to buy the political loyalty of a social group which belongs to the core of the new pro-Putin consensus in any case. The annexation of Crimea reconfigured Russia's moral economy once again, as the debt to the older generation was paid "in kind" by restoring Russia's "greatness" and "historical justice."

Notes

1. "The greatest generation" is the term coined by the US journalist Tom Brokaw. It refers to the generation of Americans which grew up during the Great Depression, went on to fight in World War II and after the war rebuilt America into a superpower. The Russian equivalent, which is widely used in the official discourse,—*pokolenie pobeditelei* (the generation of winners)—is seen by many as a mockery after the collapse of the Soviet state.
2. For example, Sabine Bode's book *The Forgotten Generation: Children of War Speak Up* has been reprinted 27 times. See also the website http://www.kriegskind.de and "The Childhood in War" Project at Munich University http://www.warchildhood.net/html/_wir_kriegskinder_.html.
3. In the post-war communicative memory, however, the wartime childhood was of course omnipresent. One telling example is the Radio Maiak program "Naiti cheloveka" (To find a person) which was initiated in 1964 by the Russian children's writer Agnia Barto. Her poem "Zvenigorod" devoted to an orphanage near Moscow made her "an expert" in the eyes of many families separated by war. Thousands of letters with war childhood memories read by Agnia Barto during nine years on Radio Maiak helped people to find their relatives. In this case, however, childhood memories played an applied role, but did not have special value as such.
4. Rozhkov (2010), Pobol' and Polian (2010). The multimedia collection "The War Childhood" was released in 2011 in Novosibirsk.
5. Maia Kucherskaia, "Vozvrashchenie lits," *Vedomosti*, 31 July 2013, https://www.vedomosti.ru/newspaper/articles/2013/07/31/vozvraschenie-lic.
6. For a collection of images of these, see Alia-Rukodel'nitsa, "Neobychnye pamiatniki (detiam voiny) Chast' 150/1", blog post, 10 February 2015, http://www.liveinternet.ru/users/4085298/post353010874/.

7. Alexei Yurchak (2005) defines "the last Soviet generation" as "people who were born between the 1950s and early 1970s and came of age between the 1970s and the mid-1980s" (31). He is interested in the complex and ambivalent relationship these people had with the Soviet system and Soviet ideology which paradoxically made them prepared for the unexpected end of this system: "Having grown up entirely during Brezhnev's period, they had not experienced any major transformations of the Soviet system and way of life until perestroika and became particularly skilled, from the early years in school, in the performative reproduction of the forms of authoritative discourse. At the same time, they also became actively engaged in creating various new pursuits, identities and forms of living that were enabled by authoritative discourse but not necessary defined by it" (32). My definition of the "children of war" as the "last *truly* Soviet generation" emphasizes the fact that these people were socialized in the post-war Soviet Union and lived all their active lives in "late socialism"; for most of them the collapse of the Soviet system came as a shock.
8. According to Irwin-Zarecka (1994) "communities of memory" are formed "by individuals with not only common experience but a shared sense of its meaning and relevance" (54).
9. *Blokadniki* are civilian survivors of the Siege of Leningrad by the German Army which lasted from 8 September 1941 to 27 January 1944.
10. *Ostarbeiter* (Germ.) was the official definition for the forced laborers from the Nazi-occupied territories of Eastern Europe, mainly Ukrainians, Poles, Belarusians, and Russians.
11. In comparison, according to the Law of Ukraine "On Social Protection of Children of War" (2005) a "child of war" is defined as a person who had not reached the age of eighteen years on 2 September 1945.
12. While some recent studies in social anthropology and oral history focus on the post-war Soviet generations (Yurchak 2005; Raleigh 2011) there is no comparable research on the generation of "children of war" in Russia.
13. Especially active was the KPRF representative from Volgograd in the State Duma, A. Aparina, who leads one of the mass women's organizations "Nadezhda Rossii" (given the overrepresentation of women in the older generation of the Russian population, the gender dimension seems very important).
14. "Deti voiny, ob"edinaites!", KPRF official site, 26 February 2012, http://kprf.ru/rus_soc/103166.html.
15. "Ne imevshie detstva, obezdolennye v starosti," *Brianskaia Pravda* (Briansk), 11 September 2009.
16. "Deti voiny, ob'ediniaites'!"
17. Ibid.

18. “Detiam voiny—status veteranov trudovogo fronta,” *Kol’skii Maiak* (Murmansk), 6 June 2012.
19. Ibid.
20. “Khraniteli istoricheskoi pamiati i zhiznennogo opyta,” *Utro Rossii* (Vladivostok), 24 March 2011.
21. Ibid.
22. Yana Maevskaia, “L’goty dlia detei voiny—eto sotsial’naia politika ili blagotvoritel’nost’?,” *Vecherniaia Moskva*, 2 May 2012, http://vm.ru/news/lgoti-dlya-detei-voini--eto-socialnaya-politika-ili-blagotvoritelnost1335958160.html?print=true&isajax=true.
23. “Deti Voiny—izdevatel’skie l’goty dlia starikov,” *Ul’ianovskaia Pravda*, 27 December 2011.
24. N. Litvinov, “Kto oni—deti voiny?,” *Tikhookeanskaia Zvezda* (Khabarovsk), 1 February 2012.
25. A. Abrosimov, “V oblastnoi Dume obsudili status sakhalinskikh detei voiny,” *Sakhalin-Kurily – Novosti*, 4 May 2012.
26. Especially intriguing is the situation in Crimea, where until spring 2014 “children of war” had special status and additional provisions according to the Ukrainian legislation but lost them after the Russian annexation. Cf. “Deputaty prosiat dat’ l’goty detiam voiny v Krymu,” *Izvestiia*, 2 September 2014, http://izvestia.ru/news/576046.
27. “V Gosdumu snova vnesen zakonoproekt ‘O detiakh voiny,’” *Regnum*, 20 March 2015.
28. “O bor’be Kompartii za priniatie federal’nogo zakona ‘O detiakh voiny,”’ KPRF official website, 21 January 2016, http://kprf.ru/party-live/cknews/150851.html.
29. See further Galbas (2015).
30. “Oskorblenie detiam voiny,” *Slovo Pravdy* (Ivanovo), 17 November 2011; “My—deti voiny,” *Veteran* (Vladivostok), 23 October 2012.
31. See note 27.
32. “Nuzhno srochno prinimat’ zakon ‘O detiakh voiny’!,” *Golos naroda* (Kursk), 28 November 2012.
33. See note 25.
34. Andrei Isaev, “Deti Voiny,” *Vzgliad*, 6 November 2013, http://www.vz.ru/opinions/2013/11/6/658336.html.
35. Valerii Riazanskii, “K ‘detiam voiny’ mogut byt’ otneseny okolo 16 mil rossiian,” *Yedinaia Rossiia* official website, 2 June 2012, http://er.ru/news/85247/.
36. See note 29.

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CHAPTER 10

Ostarbeiters of the Third Reich in Ukrainian and European Public Discourses: Restitution, Recognition, Commemoration

Gelinada Grinchenko

During World War II, 8.4 million civilians from Western and Eastern European countries were recruited for industrial and agricultural work in the Third Reich. Together with prisoners of war and concentration camp inmates they constituted a huge army of some 13.5 million foreign laborers serving the needs of the German war economy (von Plato et al. 2010: 3–4). This labor army was organized into a complex multilayered system based on racial criteria, from well-paid guest workers from Germany's allies or neutral countries to slave laborers from the occupied Soviet territories of Ukraine, Russia and Belarus. As of 30 September 1944, nearly 2.5 million of the civilian workers in the Third Reich were citizens of the Soviet Union, the so-called "Eastern workers," or Ostarbeiters (Spoerer 2001: 222–223). Those who were employed

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in industry and at construction sites lived in camps behind barbed wire and under guard; they were severely exploited and often treated as slaves. The majority of Ukrainian researchers agree that compared to other categories of foreign workers, the share of women was relatively high among Ostarbeiters (around 50 percent) because in the Nazi-occupied Soviet territories men had been either drafted to the Red Army or evacuated to the rear as skilled labor. Due to the sheer size of the occupied territory of Soviet Ukraine, Ukrainians formed the largest subgroup among the Ostarbeiters. Recruitment of Ukrainian workers to the Third Reich started in early 1942 in the big Ukrainian cities such as Kyiv and Kharkiv and was initially voluntary. However, facing a shortage of labor, the Nazis could not rely on propaganda alone and started the forced recruitment of Ukrainian civilians, increasingly targeting young people from 12–14 years old. During the war years, millions of Ukrainian families were divided by Nazi deportations. Thousands of young people died in Germany and in occupied Europe from exhausting work and starvation or were killed by Allied airstrikes; many stayed in the West, fearing repression if they returned home. Most Ukrainian Ostarbeiters, however, returned to Ukraine after the end of the war and subsequently often faced suspicion from their countrymen and mistreatment by the Soviet authorities.

In the post-war decades the experience of the Ukrainian Ostarbeiters, while not completely silenced, remained on the periphery of Soviet collective memory. Their ambiguous stories of victimhood and survival did not easily fit into the official heroic narrative of the Great Patriotic War. With the end of the Soviet era the Ostarbeiters' perspective on World War II gained new public interest. With the discussion about Stalinism and the human costs of the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany reopened during perestroika, the dominant narrative of the war's history shifted from an epic story of mass heroism manifested by the patriotic Soviet people to a tragedy of double suffering under both Hitler and Stalin (cf. Chap. 2). The stories of the Ostarbeiters re-narrated from the post-Soviet perspective now included the repressions of the late Stalinist era, the hunger and post-war hardships of kolkhoz life, the mistrust with which returnees were viewed by the Soviet authorities, and the silencing of "uncomfortable" memories. With the arrival of Ukrainian state independence in 1991, historians freed from Soviet ideological constraints embarked on the new endeavor of writing a national history of World War II, filling in the blank spots and addressing under-researched

subjects. The theme of the Ostarbeiters' suffering was incorporated into the new paradigm of history writing in independent Ukraine with its key narrative based on the collective victimhood of the Ukrainian nation. In addition, contemporary historical research has turned to social aspects of the war and its human dimension, focusing on previously neglected topics such as everyday life under Nazi occupation, Soviet civilians' contacts with Germans, collaboration and survival strategies. Finally, the "memory boom" in history and the social sciences has brought new theoretical and methodological perspectives to the research on forced labor. An interest in eyewitness accounts of Nazi deportations, forced labor and repatriation has inspired researchers and journalists to conduct oral history interviews with former Ostarbeiters.

Since the late 1980s, these developments have coincided with an important political move on the part of the German government, which finally acknowledged moral responsibility for forced labor as a crime of the Nazi regime. In the late 1980s and early 1990s the Federal Republic of Germany offered humanitarian assistance to Ukrainian civilians who had worked on the territory of the Third Reich during World War II. In the early 2000s the Remembrance, Responsibility and Future Foundation, established by the German government in partnership with German business, started issuing monetary compensation to the "victims of Nazi persecutions" in Eastern Europe, among whom forced laborers featured as the most numerous category. In this way, Ostarbeiters as a social group were (re-)constituted through post-Cold War restitution politics[1] and the corresponding German and Ukrainian legislation.

In this chapter, I will address the emergence of Ukrainian Ostarbeiters as a "community of memory"[2] created through a twofold process: as a search for public recognition of the individual and collective memories of former forced laborers initiated by activists, journalists and historians, on the one hand; and as the reconstitution of this social group as "victims of Nazi persecutions" through Ukrainian legislation and German restitution policy, on the other. I begin with an analysis of changing representations of Ostarbeiters in Soviet and post-Soviet commemorative cultures and the incorporation of their particular experience into the Ukrainian national narrative. My account highlights the ways in which the Ostarbeiters' collective memory has always been transnational. This transnational dimension has been further facilitated by European research and commemoration projects on forced laborers as victims of National Socialism.

From "Captive Girl" to "Anti-fascist Fighter": Representations of Ostarbeiters in the Soviet Era[3]

During the war the theme of forced labor was widely employed in Soviet anti-Nazi propaganda. From early 1942, when the first mass deportations of Soviet citizens to Nazi Germany started, the sufferings of this group occupied an important place in Soviet media, and it was at this point that the term "slave labor" began to be applied in this context. It should be noted however that in 1942–1943 the "slave labor" label was applied not only to those Soviet citizens who had been taken to Germany by force but also to those who were forced to perform labor in the occupied Soviet territories. Only later, when the Germans began withdrawing from occupied Soviet lands, did "slave labor" come to be understood as forced labor on the territory of the Third Reich. Soviet propaganda of the time presented "slave labor" as one of the Nazis' crimes against the civilian population.

Two official Soviet documents were particularly important in the elucidation of the forcible recruitment of the Soviet population to perform labor in Germany. First, on 2 November 1942, the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet of the USSR issued a decree ordering the creation of an "Extraordinary State Commission for ascertaining and investigating crimes perpetrated by the German-Fascist invaders and their accomplices, and the damage inflicted by them on citizens, collective farms, social organizations, State enterprises and institutions of the USSR" (Maiorov 1946: 322–325). Next, on 11 May 1943, the Soviet People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs Viacheslav Molotov issued a Note "Regarding the Mass Forcible Deportation into German-Fascist Slavery of Soviet Civilians and on the Responsibility for These Crimes of the German Authorities and Private Individuals involved in Exploitation of Slave Labor of Soviet citizens in Germany." The commission created by the 1942 decree was tasked with gathering facts related to the deportation of Soviet people into German slavery and exposing facts on the killings of civilians and the violence inflicted by the occupiers on defenseless people, including women, children, and the elderly. Propaganda materials were then published, based on the scores of documents that were collected by the commission, including letters and testimonies of forced laborers. The deportation of the civilian population to forced labor in Germany now figured among the atrocities and crimes committed by the occupiers.

An important example of the propaganda use of forced laborers' suffering is the feature film *Chelovek No. 217* [Person No. 217] (1944).[4] It recounts the story of a young woman, Tania, who was driven into forced labor, assigned the number 217 and placed with the Krausses, a family of German grocers. Tania returns from German captivity in 1944, bearing experience and knowledge unknown to her compatriots; her personal story of suffering testifies to the Nazi crimes, indicting German fascism and calling for relentless struggle against it. In the heroine's final speech the people who were worked to death in captivity are mentioned alongside those who perished heroically in battle, were executed in the occupied territories, or died on the gallows or in gas chambers. At the same time, the film's pathos is aimed at exposing the "everyday fascism" of "ordinary Germans," who are accused of inhumanity and of supporting a racist ideology that was manifested in their treatment of Soviet forced laborers.

From 1942 through to the mid-1950s, the figure of the young girl enslaved in a foreign land [Ukr. *polonianka*] was a staple of Soviet anti-Nazi propaganda. This representation had, first and foremost, a clear mobilizational aim: during the war, it was intended not only to boost the martial spirit of Soviet combatants, calling upon them to liberate their wives, sisters, and girlfriends, but also to unite the entire Soviet society in a struggle against the hated enemy who was abusing, torturing, and killing the civilian population in the occupied territories, and maiming and working to death those who had been deported to Germany. Thus, for example, in 1942 the journal *Ukraïns'ka literatura* [Ukrainian Literature] published a short story by the distinguished Ukrainian writer Yurii Ianovs'kyi. Entitled "Ukraïnka" [The Ukrainian Girl], it describes the encounter between members of a Soviet tank crew and a girl named Mariika, who is on her way home from Germany. The Germans had maimed the girl as punishment for setting fire to a German farm and using gas to poison a farmer to whom she had been enslaved: they cut off her hands and sent her home. But the heroine turns her injuries and sufferings into a rallying cry: "I walk the earth like a holy *kobzar* [an itinerant Ukrainian bard], and I carry my maiming high, like this, and *I cry out for revenge and call for retribution* [my emphasis—G.G.]. Rise up, free people; rise up, my Ukraine; rise up, Soviet land! I go like this! I go like this!" (Ianovs'kyi 1958: 318–319). Similar calls to take revenge against the Germans for the sufferings endured by Soviet citizens

deported to forced labor also rang out on the pages of numerous propaganda leaflets.

The figure of the male forced laborer, on the other hand, was rather marginal in wartime and in the immediate post-war period, but went on to receive more public attention in the post-Stalin era. The forced laborer first appeared as an anti-fascist fighter in the late 1950s (e.g. Brodskii 1957: 85–91). This shift was related to the partial "rehabilitation" of prisoners of war and the new narrative of the anti-fascist struggle that emerged during the Khrushchev era. The figure of the male forced laborer remained prominent throughout the Brezhnev era when the narrative of the Great Victory and the commemoration of fallen heroes became fundamental elements of the official Soviet commemorative culture. In Soviet literature and art produced in those years, attention was given to a rather broad spectrum of routine wartime practices that were now reconstituted as unquestionably heroic, even if less straightforwardly so than death on the battlefield. In this context, the experience of forced labor and the daily practice of survival acquired a highly moral dimension. Dignified human behavior in difficult circumstances now attained a heroic character and was redefined as resistance.

This new discourse of forced labor was reflected in the autobiographical work *Nagrudnyi znak OST* [The OST Chest Badge] (1976) by the well-known Soviet writer Vitalii Semin. The story is narrated by an adolescent who was deported to forced labor in Germany when he was fifteen. For three years the hero of this novel works in a factory in the town of Langenberg, in North Rhein-Westphalia. His experiences there, superbly portrayed by Semin, include the teenager's back-breaking work in a foundry, which depletes his last reserves of strength, followed by serious illness, a period of quarantine in a typhus barrack, incarceration in a prison and abuse at the hands of his jailers, as well as the constant fear of death, and physical pain. Far more importantly for the hero, throughout those three long years he is plagued by an acute and unspeakable spiritual distress, coupled with his intense hatred of Germans. Later, even when his pain and hatred begin to recede, they are replaced by no less draining feelings—of guilt and pangs of conscience stirred by his terrible desires to kill his oppressors. The sufferings resulting from constant humiliation and abuse, the thirst for revenge, and the awareness that his own cruelty is itself dishonorable are just a few of the many daunting experiences endured by the teenage Ostarbeiter, whom Semin depicts masterfully.[5]

To sum up, by the end of the Soviet era forced labor had become a legitimate and established part of the collective memory, first and foremost due to the post-Stalinist literary discourse addressing "difficult" and under-represented themes of the war experience (cf. Chap. 13). In this literary discourse, emphasis was placed on individual experience and the human dimension of forced labor—a novel tendency which was developed further in the post-Soviet decades.

"Victims of Nazi Persecution": Restitution and Political Recognition of Forced Laborers' Suffering

From the last decade of the twentieth century, humanitarian assistance and compensation payments to Ukrainian former forced laborers contributed to their political and institutional recognition and played a decisive role in reframing the collective memory of this social group and its public representation. Ukrainian Ostarbeiters were, of course, only a part of the newly defined transnational group of the "victims of Nazi persecution." According to some estimates, in the early 1990s, Eastern Europe was home to nearly 20,000 former concentration camp inmates and about three million former forced laborers, who had yet to receive any compensation. Unlike the Holocaust survivors in the USA, Israel and Western Europe, these categories of victims of Nazism could hardy exercise any political pressure on the West German state during the Cold War decades, and there had been little initiative on the part of the German government or business in this respect. After nearly half a century of foot-dragging, postponements and sometimes even blatant neglect, political recognition of the former forced laborers from Eastern Europe became institutionalized as the first compensation payments were initiated by the German government in partnership with East European governments.

As early as the mid-1980s a surge of scholarly and public interest in the history of the Nazi use of foreign civilians as forced labor (along with the histories of other non-Jewish groups of victims, such as the Roma and Sinti, homosexuals, Wehrmacht deserters and Jehovah's Witnesses) paved the way for the first legislative initiatives by the German Green Party (later supported by Social Democrats) aimed at attaining recognition and restitution for these half-forgotten Nazi victims. In 1986, on the initiative of the Greens, the European Parliament approved an appeal

to all German companies that had exploited slave and forced labor in the Third Reich to establish a compensation fund for the victims.[6] While these first initiatives were rejected by the German Bundestag, their role in a still-divided Europe should not be underestimated: it was thanks to these efforts that the issue of historical responsibility for Nazi crimes perpetrated against millions of Eastern European forced laborers was finally introduced into the realm of politics (Niethammer 2007: 39).

In the USSR, the first state commission tasked with examining practical questions connected with the issuance of compensation by the Federal Republic of Germany to Soviet citizens who had suffered as a result of Nazi crimes was created in January 1991, shortly before the collapse of the Soviet state. Subsequently, an official resolution on providing humanitarian assistance to those victims of Nazi crimes who had worked on German territory for a minimum of six months was approved during talks held between the USSR (later, the Russian Federation) and united Germany, which were concluded in Bonn in early 1993. According to this resolution, Germany undertook to issue one billion Deutschmarks (DM) to three foundations of Mutual Understanding and Reconciliation to be established in Moscow, Kyiv[7] and Minsk. At the trilateral negotiations held in Minsk in September 1993 this sum was divided among Russia (40 percent), Ukraine (40 percent) and Belarus (20 percent) (Polian 2002: 640).

As of 1 September 1999, the Ukrainian National "Mutual Understanding and Reconciliation" Foundation (UNF) disbursed compensation funds in the amount of 377,407,000 DM to 631,375 individuals, an average of around 600 DM for every former forced laborer (Polian 2002: 651). However, in the early years the lack of information about the procedure for obtaining compensation and several financial scandals surrounding these payments undermined their effect. The biggest scandal erupted in Ukraine in 1997, when the Kyiv-based Hradobank failed to pay out 78 million DM as it went bankrupt after nearly four years of using and flipping the funds earmarked for Ostarbeiters. Moreover, the paltry sums that were issued were perceived as something of a token gesture. Germany established similar funds for other countries of Eastern Europe. In comparison to Western European citizens, however, Eastern European victims of Nazism received significantly smaller sums, and these took the form of humanitarian assistance rather than actual compensation for forced labor (Hennies 2006: 58).

In the early 2000s Germany's ultimate assumption of moral responsibility for the victims of forced labor as victims of a crime of the Nazi

regime was attested by a new level of restitution policy, made possible by cooperation between German industry and government. In February 1999 twelve German companies founded the German Industry Foundation Initiative; by the late 2000s, its membership included more than 5000 companies. According to an agreement reached in Berlin in December 1999, the German government and the German Industry Foundation Initiative each contributed five billion DM to the Remembrance, Responsibility and Future Foundation (German acronym EVZ), established by German federal law on 2 August 2000.[8] The EVZ established partnerships with its Ukrainian, Russian and Belarusian counterparts, as well as with the Foundation for German–Polish Reconciliation, the German–Czech Future Fund and two NGOs—the Conference on Jewish Material Claims against Germany and the International Organization for Migration. All of these partners were authorized to administer compensation payments. The disbursement of payments started in 2001 and was completed in 2007. As a result of the EVZ activities, more than 1.66 million people in approximately 100 countries received around €4.37 billion. In Ukraine, the UNF paid out a total of €867 million to 471,000 claimants, including former Ostarbeiters and their heirs.[9]

Parallel to German restitution policy, amendments to Ukrainian legislation contributed to public recognition of forced laborers. A first attempt to define this social category and its legal status was made by the Ukrainian parliament on 22 December 1995 in amendments and additions to the 1993 Law "On the Status of War Veterans and Guarantees of Their Social Protection." According to these amendments, the category of "war participants" was expanded to include "former inmates of concentration camps, ghettoes and other places of forcible detention during the Second World War; persons who were forcibly removed from the territory of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics during the Great Patriotic War to the territories of states that were in a state of war with the USSR or occupied by fascist Germany, if they had not committed any crimes against the Fatherland during this period."[10] Thus, for the first time in the fifty years since the end of World War II, forced laborers were officially equated with war veterans, who hold a privileged social status in post-Soviet Ukraine. In terms of memory politics, this was an important symbolic act which signaled a shift in the collective attitude to this group, now "hallowed" with veteran status.

However, compared to other "communities of memory"—such as the Ukrainian Insurgent Army fighters or victims of political repressions—for a long time forced laborers were characterized by low organizational levels and weak collective identity, which limited their mobilization. It was the compensation payments initiated by the German government which played a decisive role in the institutionalization of their status. The legal status required for Ukrainian citizens to obtain compensation payments as former forced laborers was enshrined in the Law on Victims of Nazi Persecutions, passed on 23 March 2000.[11] The law authorized the UNF to deal with questions of issuing compensation payments and providing humanitarian assistance to victims of Nazi persecution. This legislative act meant the political recognition of former forced laborers as victims of Nazi persecution, thus shifting the emphasis to physical and moral suffering as the main aspect of this group's collective experience and introducing it into the transnational legal and commemorative context.

Compensation payments and legislative provisions facilitated the further institutionalization of former forced laborers, who now created various associations representing their interests. The largest civic organization representing the interests of forced laborers in Ukraine is the Ukrainian Union of Prisoners-Victims of Nazism.[12] This organization was founded in 1991 as the Ukrainian Union of Former Juvenile Prisoners of Fascism and originally united those who had experienced Nazi concentration camps as children. In 1998, after the former forced laborers received public recognition as victims of Nazism, they were incorporated into this Union, which was duly renamed and restructured. The Union currently has nearly 200,000 members in 118 branches located throughout Ukraine and has broad international connections. Its mission is to secure the historical, legal and moral rehabilitation of former Nazi prisoners and forced laborers, to provide them with social protection and material aid, and to commemorate the tragedy suffered by the Ukrainian people by erecting monuments and collecting and publishing memoirs of Nazi victims. The Union has cooperated with the UNF (until 2011)[13] and the International Foundation Mutual Understanding and Tolerance,[14] founded in 2008 in order to carry on humanitarian assistance after compensation payments ended.

Further research is needed to estimate the impact of compensation payments on public recognition and commemoration of victims of forced labor in Ukraine. Ever since Germany embarked on the process of restitution for Holocaust victims in the 1950s, academics have debated

the issue of *Wiedergutmachung*, "the ultimately impossible attempt to exchange historical guilt (Schuld) with money debts (Schulden)" (Weigel 2002: 269). In his seminal book *The Guilt of Nations* (2000) Elazar Barkan argues that for all their ambiguities, restitution agreements validate victims and perpetrators alike. Perpetrators make amends for their wrongdoings and hope to rehabilitate themselves, while victims acquire the power that comes from recognition of their victimhood. And yet, "financial restitution can serve to acknowledge and recognize suffering. What it cannot buy is either forgiving or forgetting" (Ignatieff 2000). In the case of Ukrainian forced laborers it was definitely "too late, too little." Moreover, Ukrainian pensioners thrown into poverty by the collapse of the Soviet economy and market reforms devaluing decades of their working life in the Soviet Union often saw compensation payments from Germany as a humiliation. Many of them, if given the choice, would certainly have preferred proper recognition from their own state. As Barkan rightly points out in his book, restitution cannot serve as a substitute for social justice. In practice, compensation payments, which differed according to various criteria, created a hierarchy of victims, simultaneously excluding certain categories (such as POWs, "Volksdeutsche," or those deported to forced labor on the territory of the former Soviet Union) and thus devaluing their suffering (Dubyk 2013). On the German side, there was an understandable desire to see compensation payments as a final settlement of the issue, a "thick line" under a difficult past. For example, Ukrainian recipients of compensation had to sign statements renouncing any further claims to Germany. However, the German ethos of commemoration as never-ending work aimed at preventing repetition of the past has also influenced Ukrainian memory politics. As I will show later in this chapter, a number of commemorative projects on forced labor in Ukraine were supported by the EVZ and its Ukrainian partner organizations after the compensation payments ended.

"Hitler's Slaves, Stalin's Social Outcasts": A Paradigm Shift in Post-Soviet Ukrainian History Writing

Since the late 1980s the critical reassessment of the Soviet past allowed Ukrainian historians to address such new topics as the repatriation of forced laborers, and the difficulties of reintegration into Soviet life and

persecution by the Soviet authorities. In opposition to the previous scholarly tradition, which presented Ukrainian Ostarbeiters as victims of fascism and Soviet patriots, in some new publications they were presented as people who had experienced repression at the hands of both Nazi Germany and the Soviet state, in other words, as victims of two totalitarian systems. This new paradigm was first introduced by the Russian researcher Pavel Polian in his book *Victims of Two Dictatorships* (1996, 2002). In Ukraine this concept appeared in the works of Mykola Koval' (1998, 1999, 2000), aimed at proving that the policies of the Soviet regime towards forced laborers were no less repressive than the Nazi ones. Characteristically, one of his articles was entitled "The Ostarbeiters of Ukraine: Hitler's Slaves, Stalin's Social Outcasts" (1998). In Ukrainian historiography the "victims of two dictatorships" concept represented a decisive break with Soviet historiography and an important ideological shift. It corresponded to the new narrative of World War II as a "Soviet–German war," with Ukraine featuring as a collective victim of both Hitler and Stalin.

At the same time, freed from Soviet ideological constraints, Ukrainian historians were able to reconstruct a more nuanced and often ambivalent picture. The issue of Ukrainian voluntary labor for the Germans, which had been considered collaboration and betrayal from the Soviet perspective, was now revisited in the context of the hunger and mass unemployment caused by Nazi occupation. While in Soviet times historians examining the sabotage of German labor recruitment had mostly focused on the Soviet partisans, they now turned to include the activities of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) and other autonomous military formations. New studies on forced laborers' living conditions in Nazi Germany included such previously taboo topics as sympathy and help extended to forced laborers by ordinary Germans and good relations between some forced laborers and their "masters," particularly in rural areas. As for post-war Soviet policy towards the repatriates, the research focus here shifted to sexual abuses perpetrated by Red Army soldiers against liberated female Ostarbeiters, and to the repression and imprisonment of repatriated Soviet citizens in the labor camps of the Gulag and their intensive labor exploitation, this time by the Stalinist regime (Koval' 1999: 170–196).

It has to be noted, however, that there is little evidence to support this narrative of the repressions and persecutions to which the Soviet regime allegedly subjected Ukrainian forced laborers after their return home. For

example, the last subsection of Koval's chapter "'Ostarbeiters' of Ukraine: Hitler's Slaves, Stalin's Social Outcasts," which appears in a popular historical series on World War II, is entitled "From Germany to … Kolyma" (1999: 193–196). But the author fails to provide any documented examples of arrests and deportations of former forced laborers to Kolyma, and hence the dramatic subheading would appear to be unjustified. Anton Meliakov, who has studied materials of the Kharkiv oblast party committee's Repatriation Department, concluded in his doctoral dissertation that "repressions, in the sense of such measures as deprivation of liberty, exile, etc., were to all intents and purposes not applied to civilian repatriates" (Meliakov 2002). Claims about the mass arrest and exile of former forced laborers are also refuted by the Ukrainian historian Tetiana Pastushenko, who emphasizes that:

> the study of the practice and results of the activities of the verification-filtration commissions undermines all contemporary stereotypes of repressions (in the form of arrest, imprisonment or deportation) concerning this category of citizens. The existing sources do not offer sufficient evidence for the widespread belief that former Ostarbeiters were subject to mass repressions just because they had worked in Germany. (Pastushenko 2011)

The popular view of Ostarbeiters as "forgotten victims" is another example of the demonization of Soviet policy towards former forced laborers. From the early post-Soviet years, Ukrainian Ostarbeiters were declared "forgotten victims" of the war; practically every post-Soviet publication on the topic began with a ritualistic call to save their memory from oblivion. In this way, Ostarbeiters acquired the stigma of a dual victimization: as victims of Nazi forced labor and as victims of Soviet "amnesia." However, as I showed in the first section of this chapter, during the Soviet decades the topic of forced labor performed by Soviet civilians in Nazi Germany was in fact a legitimate part of the war narrative (cf. also Grinchenko 2012). The post-Soviet presentation of Ostarbeiters as victims of post-war oblivion was part of the radical critique of the Soviet past which prevailed in the 1990s. This critique dovetailed ideologically and coincided chronologically with the German discourse on the "forgotten victims" of Nazi crimes in the political debates on compensation payments in the mid-1980s. Contemporary Ukrainian historiography of forced labor demonstrates not only a radical shift, but also a kind of contiguity with the Soviet narrative. It turns out

that it is rather difficult to overcome customary Soviet formulations and the bombast of the Great Patriotic War myth that had been prevalent in the late-Soviet years. Thus, the introduction to the first book of the four-volume publication *Remembrance for the Sake of the Future* (2001), a project undertaken by the Ukrainian Union of Prisoners-Victims of Nazism, represents a mixture of the heroic Soviet discourse on the Great Patriotic War and the contemporary approach aimed at saving the "forgotten victims" from oblivion. One characteristic passage runs as follows:

> The people in striped clothing with the humiliating "OST" badge were not heroes who covered themselves with battle glory; their achievement lies in the fact that they endured and withstood the inhumane tribulations and abuses behind the barbed wire of the casemates of death, the humiliation and disdain for human dignity. Some of these people took part in the anti-fascist resistance movement, bringing the Great Victory closer. In those times and after the war these people were able to preserve human dignity, loyalty to their native land … People were perishing from hunger, cold and infectious diseases. The course of their lives is still unrevealed in history. Most of them have been forgotten, they will never be identified for they were left without a name, without a surname, without photographs. (Demidov et al. 2001: iv)

Also noteworthy in this fragment is the presentation of Ostarbeiters as prisoners of a Nazi concentration camp, given that the phrase "striped clothing with the humiliating 'OST' badge" is a metaphor rather than a documented fact and that forced laborers usually wore regular working clothes. This example demonstrates how the story of forced laborers is being reinscribed into the still powerful narrative of the Great Patriotic War and, at the same time, is contributing to the political modification and semantic expansion of the Soviet rhetoric on this subject.

"Rescued from Oblivion": Ostarbeiters on Museum Display

Since the early 1990s, war museums and traveling exhibitions in particular contributed to a growing public awareness in Ukraine about former forced laborers and their fates. In this section I will address some of these initiatives.

During the late-Soviet decades, the theme of forced and slave labor was not banned from the museums but it usually occupied a particular niche and was presented from a highly specific angle. As we saw above, the fate of Soviet forced laborers was usually presented in the context of the Nazi crimes and of the anti-fascist resistance led by the communist underground. As historical and war museums in particular were considered important venues for patriotic education of the Soviet masses, the dominant museum representation of Ostarbeiters served to reaffirm the endurance and spirit of Soviet citizens in fascist captivity, their superior moral values and their patriotism.

From the early 1990s on, former Ostarbeiters appeared in the Ukrainian public space as a separate category of Nazi victims, a new "community of memory" constituted through Ukrainian and international historical research, German politics of *Wiedergutmachung* and Ukrainian legislation. While the collective memory of former Ostarbeiters became a legitimate part of the Ukrainian narrative of World War II and contributed to its pluralization, the singularity and uniqueness of their experience were recognized and appreciated. This new approach, which provided Ostarbeiters with their own "territory of memory" has been reflected in various museum exhibitions, in Kyiv as well as in other Ukrainian cities. The theme of forced labor was highlighted in the permanent display at the National Museum of the History of the Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945 in Kyiv, which was reopened in 1994–1995 on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the victory. The Museum is a late-Soviet creation and part of the war memorial that is most famous for its huge statue of a woman with a sword symbolizing the Motherland which dominates the right bank of Dnieper. Initially tied to the highly ideological and dogmatic Soviet narrative of the Great Patriotic War, the museum was reorganized in the early 1990s to accommodate more controversial themes (such as the Ukrainian nationalist underground) and to promote the narrative of mass suffering and the huge human cost of the victory paid by the Ukrainian people. The Ostarbeiters theme was integrated into this changing narrative in order to contribute to the understanding of the war as a human tragedy.

In 1998 the museum organized a special exhibition entitled "Not Everything Has Been Said about Them …—The Fate of Ukrainian Ostarbeiters," which was organized in cooperation with the Ukrainian journalist and amateur historian Viktor Pedak and showcased more than 400 objects. This first special exhibition on Ukrainian Ostarbeiters

attracted a great deal of public interest and helped to enrich the museum collections. In 2001–2002 the traveling version of this exhibit entitled "The German Occupation Regime in Ukraine: The Fate of the Ukrainian Ostarbeiters," was presented in four museums in Germany, where it was viewed by approximately 20,000 visitors. In 2003 the museum held an exhibition entitled "The Mail of Ukrainian Slaves in the Third Reich," which featured documents from the museum's collections and approximately 200 items from the collection of the Kyiv-based philatelist Viktor Mohylnyi (Lehasova and Shevchenko 2006: 26–27).

Several features of these exhibitions deserve our attention. First of all, materials on the history of Ukrainian forced laborers were usually grouped together with documents attesting to Nazi crimes on occupied territory, for example, punitive actions, including the burning of Ukrainian villages, the Babi Yar tragedy and the mass starvation of Soviet POWs. The Nazi occupational regime in Ukraine was presented as a system of extermination, looting, and exploitation. Thus, forced laborers were presented as *victims* of Nazi crimes (and not as *fighters* of the anti-fascist underground). These Nazi crimes took place on the occupied Ukrainian territory, and in this context the "local," Ukrainian dimension of the Ostarbeiters' experience was emphasized, despite the fact that the Ostarbeiters' suffering took place, in most cases, outside Ukraine's borders. Second, the exhibited documents highlighted rather routine and everyday aspects of forced labor rather than its political and legal dimension. This approach fostered a more emotional perception of Ostarbeiters' stories. Finally, these exhibitions were focused on the individual rather than institutional aspect of forced labor. Priority was given to personal documents: registration and work cards, work- and insurance books, identity cards and private letters. Several dozen group photographs and portraits of Ostarbeiters taken in Germany and sent to Ukraine added to the emotional involvement of the visitors.

An exhibition on Ostarbeiters, "It Was Slavery: Ukrainian Ostarbeiter in Literature, Art, Memoirs, Oral Histories," was organized by the National Museum of the History of the Great Patriotic War in August 2009, and showcased photographs, documents, paintings, and memoirs of forced laborers.[15] The exhibition combined the results of both scholarly and journalistic investigations of the Ukrainian Ostarbeiters, underpinned primarily by forced laborers' personal memoirs and oral histories, thus addressing this topic from the point of view of the victims. This focus on the personal experience of forced laborers made it possible to

include the previously politically sensitive theme of the "good Germans" who treated their laborers as humans or even felt sympathy for them. For example, the exhibition shows works of the now-famous Ukrainian artist Anastasiia Rak, who painted landscapes in her spare time when she was a forced laborer. In an interview she said that she had received encouragement and support for her artistic endeavors from her German "master," Wilhelm Kapler:

> There were different kinds of Germans—good ones and bad ones. Kapler treated the Ostarbeiters very well. When he saw my works, he rejoiced and began to teach me a bit. He showed me his own works. He said that earlier he had thought Ukrainians were a bit dim, but now he was convinced that they were all talented. His wife took care of me and was constantly feeding me up. (cited in Solonyna 2009)

Last but not least, this exhibit offered moral lessons to be learned from the forced labor experience and underlined the significance of this issue for educating contemporary Ukrainian youth. Ukrainian journalists and civic activists pointed to the fact that in Europe, and particularly in Germany, these issues had now been incorporated into school curriculum programs.

"Fractured Lives": Ukrainian Ostarbeiters in Transnational and European Memory

From the very beginning the collective memory of the former Ostarbeiters had a transnational dimension. Among the first to publish their memoirs were Ukrainians from the Western diaspora, those who, for various reasons, had not returned home after the war but had settled in Europe and North America (Khelemendyk-Kokot 1989; Fedenko 1996; Saits 1996; Smereka 1998). Along with other aspects of the forced labor experience these memoirs speak of the difficult decision not to return to Soviet Ukraine after the war, a subject that was a taboo in the Soviet era. The authors of these memoirs—committed members of the post-war Ukrainian diaspora—were among the first to introduce a national perspective (usually critical toward the Soviet regime) on the theme of forced labor. The wife of President Yushchenko, Kateryna, who was born in the USA into a Ukrainian family of former Ostarbeiters,

wrote an introduction to one of the Ukrainian publications on forced laborers (Yushchenko 2009: 5).

Since the 1990s, the German compensation payments to the victims of the forced labor programs as well as subsequent educational and social projects conducted by the EVZ and its local partners in several Eastern European countries have created a common transnational space for discussing the issue of forced labor as a Nazi crime of pan-European scale. The Ukrainian narrative on Ostarbeiters has thus been included into the European academic and public discourse and integrated into European commemorative culture. This transnationalization of Ostarbeiters' memory is reflected in both academic and educational projects conducted in cooperation by Ukrainian and German scholars as well as excursions and visits by former forced laborers to Germany, and their participation—as both visitors and contributors—in exhibits and museum displays. Memoirs of Ukrainian Ostarbeiters have also been translated and published in Germany, and used by German and other European historians in their research (Bojko 2005; Lopatto and Pilipenko 2007; Kutsay 2007; Bouresh et al. 2007). In Ukraine such projects have been supported by various organizations, first of all by the UNF "Mutual Understanding and Reconciliation" and the Mutual Understanding and Tolerance International Foundation in cooperation with the EVZ, the Kontakte/Kontakty Association, as well as with German cities, NGOs and community groups.

Throughout the 2000s the EVZ Foundation contributed significantly to the transnationalization of research on forced labor in Eastern and Western Europe. In the mid-2000s the Foundation provided financial assistance to the International Slave and Forced Laborers Documentation Project, which brought together researchers from more than twenty European states as well as the USA, Israel and South Africa. Project members conducted interviews and collected written memoirs, diaries, letters, photographs and other documents dating to the war on the territories of 27 countries. The largest number of interviews was conducted in Ukraine and Poland, eighty in each country. In addition to the immense collection of interviews and documents now held in the EVZ archive the project also resulted in the volume *Hitler's Slaves* (von Plato et al. 2010) published both in German and English. The project took an international comparative perspective, "researching the ways in which experiences during National Socialism influenced the later lives of those deported to Germany for slave and forced labor in the occupied territories: in respect

of health, education or career, love and family, religious belief, political orientation, finances as far as compensation for wrongful imprisonment or pension, and much more" (von Plato et al. 2010: 13). Thus, life under forced labor conditions was examined here in terms of a specific "line of fracture" stretching through the lives and fates of "Hitler's slaves." The project is an interesting example of how the transnational discourse on forced labor as a Nazi crime intermingles with the specific national discourses of post-war and contemporary memory of this phenomenon in different countries. In addition to the International Slave and Forced Laborers Documentation Project, in 2008–2011 the EVZ Foundation supported thirteen international projects on the history and memory of forced labor, two of them carried out by Ukrainian scholars.

This transnationalization and Europeanization concerns not only historical research but also public memory. A good example is the traveling documentary exhibition entitled "Fractured Lives: Reminiscences of Ukrainian Forced Laborers in the Rhineland," a joint project organized in 2007 by the "Ukraine 3000" International Charitable Foundation and the Provincial Rhineland Alliance. It featured twenty posters recounting the fates of ten Ukrainian women whose lives were profoundly marked by the years of forced labor. The posters reconstruct their childhoods and subsequent lives in post-war Ukraine, which were shattered by deportation and the years spent in forced labor in Nazi Germany. In November 2008 the exhibition was showcased in the Ukrainian House in Kyiv, and in 2009 it traveled to the ten biggest Ukrainian cities. The exhibition and its companion catalog and CD offer a comprehensive look at the testimonies of these female Ostarbeiters through images, texts and voice recordings (Bouresh et al. 2007). Particularly interesting in this project is an explicit gender approach, which is prevalent today in transnational memory studies and oral history. It is women's experiences of life in slavery (pregnancy, abortions, childbirth) that come to the fore here. Indeed, "statistically the average forced laborer was from Ukraine, female and eighteen years old" (Bouresh 2007: 14). The focus of the exhibition is on aspects of the everyday life of women and the survival practices of women living in conditions of slavery, both topics which have still not garnered any scholarly attention. At issue here are women who bore children under forced labor conditions and their lives during the years of slavery and after their return to Ukraine. This women's experience is central to the way forced laborers are presented in the exhibition, since "for many of them after the return from Germany, a normal

life, in the sense understood by their fellow countrywomen, no longer existed. Childlessness, an unhappy and sometimes belated and brief marriage, and a lonely old age awaited the women who had expected that life in peacetime in their native land would be completely different" (Bouresh 2007: 21). The years of forced labor thus appear as a line of fracture "running through the entire lives" of these women.

Nevertheless, this private, sometimes very intimate aspect of forced labor experience also had its bright and joyful moments: friendship, solidarity and true love blossoming between people despite war and loss of liberty, and across linguistic and cultural barriers. The transnational dimension of these individual memories has been rediscovered in contemporary Ukraine, where labor migration to Europe has become the only option for millions of Ukrainian families. Romantic stories of love between Ukrainian women and foreigners in German captivity during the war, of tragic forced separations and happy reunions after the decades of the Cold War today inspire novels, plays and films. One such real story of a life-long love and eventual reunion in the final years of the USSR was conveyed to the public in the Russian film *Roses for Signora Raïsa* (2003). The film tells the story of Katia Khanina, a young girl from Kharkiv, and Mario Siniscalti, a young Italian from Sorrento, who met during the war while working in a factory in Germany. Their son Stefano was born in early 1946, but that same year Katia was repatriated to the USSR. Her son Stefano was raised by his father in Italy and spent much of his adult life searching for his mother. His search finally ended thanks to the help of Mikhail Gorbachev's wife Raisa, who spotted a poster bearing the words "Help me find my mother!" which Stefano was holding in a crowd of people gathered on the streets of Milan to greet the Soviet leader and his wife. The story has a happy ending: Stefano visited his long-lost mother, who was living in a small village near Kharkiv, and Mario followed shortly afterwards. Their wedding was celebrated twice—in Ukraine and in Italy, where Kateryna Davydivna Khanina eventually went to live with her husband and son.

Another story of true love was recently immortalized in stone. In May 2013 a statue dedicated to "Eternal Love" was erected in Kyiv's Mariinsky Park in honor of the Ukrainian woman Mokryna Iurzuk and the Italian POW Luigi Pedutto, who met and fell in love in a concentration camp in Austria in 1943. Like many such international couples, they were separated after the war and lived out their lives in their respective home countries. They were reunited in 2004 thanks to an episode in a

television show about missing people, "Wait for Me." Mokryna has since accepted Luigi's marriage proposal but is in no hurry to move to Italy. At the time the statue was erected Mokryna was ninety-three years old and Luigi was ninety-one.

These life-affirming stories of human solidarity and true love in the face of terrible suffering reveal a great potential for reconciliation and mutual understanding. Unlike other aspects of World War II history, despite its sudden and immense popularity in Ukraine, the topic of forced labor has not been instrumentalized in recent memory wars. Due to the active involvement of German institutions, the contemporary European ethos of "remembering for the sake of the future" has come to dominate this field, helping to forge contacts between people and countries, establishing dialogue between generations and playing a crucial role in preserving the memory of the Nazi crimes as a cautionary reminder for contemporary societies.

Notes

1. The term "restitution" is used in this chapter as an equivalent to German *Wiedergutmachung*, which literary means "to make well again." Restitution in this broad political sense cannot be reduced to material compensation and includes recognition of the victims' suffering, public apology for historical injustices and reconciliation.
2. According to Irwin-Zarecka (1994: 54) a "community of memory" is formed "by individuals with not only common experience but a shared sense of its meaning and relevance."
3. This section of the chapter is based on Grinchenko (2012).
4. *Chelovek No. 217*, directed by Mikhail Romm (co-written by Evgenii Gabrilovich, music by Aram Khachaturian), Mosfilm in collaboration with the Tashkent Film Studio, 1944.
5. Cf. the reception of Semin's book in Soviet literary criticism (e.g. Dedkov 1981: 71–92).
6. For more information visit http://www.wollheim-memorial.de/de/parlamentarische_bemuehungen_um_entschaedigung_in_den_1980er_jahren.
7. The Ukrainian National "Mutual Understanding and Reconciliation" Foundation (UNF) was established on 16 June 1993 by Decree no. 453 of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. For the official website, visit http://www.unf.kiev.ua/main.php?id=1.

8. For information, see www.stiftung-evz.de/. In addition to the EVZ, compensation payments were also issued by Austria's Fund for Reconciliation, Peace and Cooperation and the Catholic Foundation.
9. For more information, see http://www.stiftung-evz.de/stiftung/zahlen-und-fakten.html.
10. Law of Ukraine "On the introduction of amendments and additions to the Law of Ukraine 'On the Status of War Veterans and Guarantees of their Social Protection,'" 22 December 1995. Electronic version: rada http://zakon.gov.ua/cgi-bin/laws/main.cgi?nreg=488%2F95-%E2%F0.
11. Law of Ukraine "On the victims of Nazi persecution," 23 March 2000. Electronic version: rada http://zakon.gov.ua/cgi-bin/laws/main.cgi?nreg=1584-14&.
12. For more information, see http://usvzn.com/.
13. The UNF was dissolved by Resolution no. 455 handed down on 27 April 2011 by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine.
14. For more information, see http://www.toleranz.org.ua/.
15. The "Rodynna Pamyat" ("Family Memory") memorial and educational complex, dedicated to the history and fates of former Ostarbaiters from the region, was created in late 2015 in the town of Shostka, Sumy region, but for various reasons access to its exhibition is not regularly available.

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PART IV

Old/New Narratives and Myths

CHAPTER 11

Memory, Kinship, and the Mobilization of the Dead: The Russian State and the "Immortal Regiment" Movement

Julie Fedor

The 2015 jubilee celebrations of the Red Army's Victory over Nazi Germany were marked by the arrival of a new mass commemorative ritual, a striking addition to the repertoire of Victory Day traditions in post-Soviet space. In the newly invented annual "Immortal Regiment" parade, people march bearing photographs of their ancestors who fought or otherwise served the Soviet war effort in the Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945. In this new ritual, participants take their ancestors'

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photographs out of their family albums or cardboard boxes, or off the wall at home. They reproduce the photos, making enlarged copies that are then laminated, mounted onto little placards on sticks, and carried overhead by the participants in procession. Bobbing above the heads of the marchers, the deceased ancestors are brought back to life, and their gathering together makes for an impressive spectacle, enabling a kind of visualization of the otherwise unimaginably huge losses sustained by the Soviet Union during the war. The Immortal Regiment made its most spectacular debut during the 2015 jubilee Victory Day celebrations marking the 70th anniversary of the end of the war. As part of the celebrations, the Regiment was granted permission to march across the country's most sacred war memory site, Red Square, and President Putin himself joined the parade, bearing a photograph of his father. The number of people taking part in the Immortal Regiment on Victory Day 2015 reportedly reached twelve million, or, as self-appointed leader of the "Immortal Regiment of Russia" (BPR) movement Nikolai Zemtsov noted, more than thirty million if you count the dead who took part (cited Golubeva 2015b).

The BPR's organizers argue that this movement represents "a new reading" of the Soviet Victory in the war (ibid.). "Never before," the BPR website proclaims, "has the meaning and grandeur of the Victory holiday been revealed so completely and deeply" (BPR n.d). Clearly, this is a movement that enjoys massive popularity and that represents a significant shift in the way in which Russia's war dead are commemorated, and yet the nature and meaning of this shift remains a very open question. The advent of the Immortal Regiment has sparked lively online and offline discussions over the meaning, the ethics, and the aesthetics of the new ritual. Should it be read as a symptom of the post-Crimean militarization of Russian society, or a healthy sign of a grassroots revival of family memory (see Reut 2016)? Does it represent a shift away from the heroic Victory cult towards a new emphasis on mourning the war's victims (Starikov 2015b), or is it rather a "mass death cult" reflecting a morbid fixation on the dead (Babchenko 2016)? What is the relationship between this movement to commemorate the victims of war and the forgetting of the victims of state terror (see Bessmertnyi barak n.d)?[1] Is the movement doomed to be "bureaucratized" and taken over by the state, or might it, on the contrary, potentially mark the new beginnings of an independent civil society in Russia based on shared respect for the value of human life, representing a nascent participatory historical culture,

perhaps along the lines described by David Thelen, who posits that such a culture can help people "to reach from the personal to the collective" (Thelen 1998)?[2]

The debates reflect the way in which the Immortal Regiment movement has become a battleground for redefining not just the meaning of Victory Day, but also much larger questions relating to state–society relations; the nature of the connections between family/national and individual/collective memories; and broader attitudes to warfare and violence, past and present. In this chapter, I examine one strand of the discursive representations of the Immortal Regiment phenomenon: the new meanings that the Russian state authorities and their supporters are weaving around this movement. Extravagant claims have been made with regard to the significance of the Immortal Regiment phenomenon. It has been hailed as a "truly popular and inter-ethnic movement" (Golubeva 2015a); and "an ideology, perhaps even a national idea" by United Russia Moscow City Duma deputy and director of the Museum of Contemporary Russian History Irina Velikanova (cited in Vinokurov 2015). It has even been described by the organizers as representing "a new reality" (Golubeva 2015b). What, then, are the defining features of this new reality, this ideology? How is this new tradition being used, and to what ends? What kinds of visions of Russia's past, present, and future are presented here?

My account focuses on the attempts to instrumentalize the new Immortal Regiment ritual and to appropriate the Red Army's war dead, and the emotions they evoke, in the service of an authoritarian vision of the future of Russia and the region. I trace out the key themes and tropes in the pro-Kremlin interpretations of this new memory practice and show how the redrawing of boundaries between the living and the dead that is performed by the Immortal Regiment also entails the creation of other sets of new boundaries: between patriotic citizens and "enemies," and "fascists" and "anti-fascists"; legitimate and illegitimate uses of public space; authentic and inauthentic manifestations of civil society; and between "real" eternal spiritual borders and "artificial" post-Soviet geopolitical borders. The creation of these borders is performed and enacted by the figure of the dead Red Army soldier, who is being brought back to life in new ways as part of the current regime's authoritarian project. I focus in particular on the ways in which the advent of the Immortal Regiment is being claimed as evidence of near-unanimous

support for the Putin regime, not only among the living, but also among the nation's war dead.

Performing Memory, Kinship, and Nationhood

The Immortal Regiment parade is an obvious example of a performative act of memory, one that uses "the language of the past to say something about the present," not just with a view to describing but also with making something happen, as in John Austin's use of the term "performative" (Burke 2010: 105–106). Erll and Rigney note that remembering is an active process of engagement with the past that is performative rather than merely reproductive, "as much a matter of acting out a relationship to the past from a particular point in the present as it is a matter of preserving and retrieving earlier stories" (Erll and Rigney 2009: 2). In the case of the Immortal Regiment ritual, the relationships to the past being performed here revolve primarily around notions of kinship.

One of the reasons why the Immortal Regiment became a media sensation in May 2015 was the fact that President Putin himself joined the parade, bearing a photograph of his father. For many commentators, in taking part in the parade, Putin was taking up his position as head of the Russian nation as family, and thus enacting a moment of consolidation of national unity. As Nikolai Zemtsov put it, "[Through the Immortal Regiment] we've shown that we are one family, the head of which has now been taken up by the president, who showed that he is a person like everyone, he spoke about the link of his simple papa-soldier with the country" (cited in Neroznikova 2015). Elsewhere too, Zemtsov linked the emotions called up by the parade to a newly awakened sense of national kinship. He commented that, "Those who love Russia rejoiced and wept from the excess of feeling. Those who came also felt this extraordinary unity—they felt themselves part of a big family, part of a nation. Of a nation like a family" (Golubeva 2015b).

The trope of nation as family is of course a staple of all nationalist discourse (see further Verdery 1999), and most nations define themselves by tracing their origins to foundational wars (Soltysik Monnet 2012). Yet at the same time, as Jan Assmann (2011: 4) notes, the differences in the ways that societies remember play a crucial role in shaping cultures and identities. What, then, is distinctive about this particular national kinship model, and the particular forms of remembering and narrating the war upon which it draws?

It is the distinctive use of the Red Army soldier that I wish to highlight here, in particular, the ways in which the Red Army soldier is framed as a mythical progenitor and a shared forefather for all the peoples of post-Soviet space. Thus for example the website of the Immortal Regiment movement proclaims that children, present and future, "are all offshoots from that mighty root—the soldier who conquered Evil" (Lapenkov n.d). Through crowdsourcing family histories via the movement's online historical databases, the organizers hope that "the soldier himself will become a center, clamping together kinship bonds" (ibid.)—presumably an allusion to Putin's famous December 2012 speech in which he lamented the lack of "spiritual clamps" holding together contemporary Russian society (Putin 2012).

The Red Army soldier is sometimes coded as Russian, and sometimes in supranational terms, as the representative of a universal anti-fascist mission; often both associations are present simultaneously.[3] In this way the discourse mixes together elements of Soviet internationalism and supra-ethnic messianism, primordialist ethnic nationalism, and neo-imperialism. Its eclectic nature mirrors the varied trajectory of the development of post-Soviet-Russian nationalism more broadly, which as Pål Kolstø (2016) describes, has oscillated between imperialist, ethno-nationalist, and statist tendencies, sometimes combining features of each.

The framing of the Red Army hero as a common ancestor offers a powerful way to connect the official cult of the Great Victory and the private family memories of wartime loss and suffering; and also to assert a connection between the Russian Federation and the rest of the "Russian world," discursively constructed as a space that is saturated and sanctified by the Red Army's blood. Consider for example the following statement by Nikolai Zemtsov, in an interview about the Immortal Regiment, in which he said that even though official state borders had changed since 1945,

> the space of the spirit has been preserved. Good memory will allow future generations to sew the hems of geo-politics back together. This year's celebration of … Victory… showed that this is so… The power of jointly split blood places big obligations on the descendants. (cited in Golubeva 2015b)

In this way, the blood shed by soldiers of different nationalities in the Soviet army is said to bring into being a different set of "spiritual" borders.

These in turn are used to justify Russian implied claims to territory elsewhere in post-Soviet space, in a discursive move signaling Russian revisionist and expansionist intentions.

The writings of pro-Kremlin publicist Roman Nosikov represent one of the more extreme varieties of this nationalist kinship discourse. Here we see a biological discourse in which the blood of the Red Army soldiers shed during the war acted as a "seed" that brought forth the Russian nation:

> In our birth a role was played not only by the seed of the fathers but also by the blood of the great-grandfathers … we are one family. We were conceived by blood [*My—zachatye krov'iu*—the Russian term *zachatye* has an exclusively biological meaning—JF]. (Nosikov 2015: 126)

Nosikov's writings on this topic also have an occultist tinge. Consider, for example, the image he deploys of a Red Army soldier from the Great Patriotic War who stands behind the "curtain" of reality watching the present unfold, his breath causing the curtain to sway from time to time, but who can only be seen by Russians (ibid.: 77). Nosikov writes that: "When a Russian looks at the world, he always see behind it this silent motionless figure, and he knows that at any moment this figure might pull the world off to one side, as though pulling back a curtain, and step to meet us" (ibid.). This trope of the undead Red Army soldier, existing in a kind of parallel reality whence he observes and exerts a mysterious influence over current events, is a recurring motif in contemporary Russian treatments of the war theme, such as the controversial "social advertisement" produced in the lead-up to Victory Day 2016 which featured the ghost of a child soldier ("Samarskii 'Yeralash'" 2016).

Another distinctive aspect of the nationalist kinship model linked to the Immortal Regiment movement is the fact that *poiskoviki*, members of volunteer search detachments who take part in expeditions aimed at finding the bodies of missing soldiers, are granted a special honorary kinship status as surrogate blood relatives by virtue of their role in discovering, exhuming, identifying, and reburying fallen soldiers. Whereas normally participants in the Immortal Regiment are supposed to carry portraits of their family members, in the event that relatives are unable to take part, *poiskoviki* have the right to march on their behalf, according to the Immortal Regiment coordinator in Rostov (*Gorodskoi reporter* 2016).

Much emphasis was placed by Putin, and, following his cue, by pro-Kremlin media, on the fact that he was taking part in the Immortal Regiment parade as an ordinary citizen and specifically as the son of a "simple soldier." In an interview following the event, Putin said:

> I think that my father, just like millions and millions of simple soldiers, he was simply a simple soldier, had the right to march across this square… And hundreds of others, and thousands of other simple people, simple soldiers, laborers of the rear, can now take their place on Red Square… they've earned this (cited in "Putin proshel po Moskve" 2015).[4]

Putin thus framed the parade as a democratization of Victory Day, a long overdue restoration of justice and recognition of the ordinary anonymous soldier, exemplified by his own father. As Nataliya Danilova has pointed out, the official component of the Victory Day tradition, the military parade across Red Square, is noted for its exclusivity (Danilova 2015: 195). But now, by participating in the Immortal Regiment, ordinary people gained access to Red Square, the symbolic heart of the country and of the Victory myth (see Buckler and Johnson 2013: 3–6). This democratization of Victory Day represents a reverse shift to the one described by Catherine Merridale in her account of the reframing of the Victory through a military parade on Red Square in June 1945 which, she argues, was aimed at reasserting military hierarchy and state control over commemoration of the war (2010: 508). Here we see a declared move in the opposite direction, with Putin descending from the heights of power to merge with the crowd, and a deliberate avoidance of references to ranks or hierarchy of any kind. As *pater familias* of the nation, Putin also stands in for the anonymous mass soldier, thus forming a bridge between the state and the *narod*.

9 May: A Day of Mourning or Celebration?

The debates around the Immortal Regiment throw into sharp relief one of the basic questions that have always dogged the Victory Day commemorative date: what should be the appropriate mix of celebration and mourning, of triumph and trauma? This is a question that has accompanied rituals of war commemoration in many parts of the globe, particularly in the wake of the post-World War II shift towards remembering war as violence and victimhood rather than heroism and glory (on which see Confino 2005;

Winter 2006; Bessel 2010). The ANZAC Day ceremonies in Australia, for example, have repeatedly been the subject of heated debates over how to delineate between honoring the memory of the dead and glorifying war (see Thomson 2013: 155). But these issues are especially acute when it comes to Victory Day in post-Soviet space. In addition to the controversies over this date in countries occupied by the Red Army after the war, or facing the threat of Russian aggression today, the issue is also divisive within Russia itself and raises sharp issues about the nature of the obligations structuring relations between state and society and the admissibility of challenging the Great Patriotic War myth and its taboos. The topic of the scale of the massive Soviet war losses, for example, has always been sensitive because it raises the fraught question of responsibility for the Red Army's exceptionally high casualty rate, as well as the issue of the Soviet state's long neglect of many of its war dead, of their burial sites and their bereaved families.

In theory, mourning and celebration are divided neatly on the Russian commemorative calendar, which features two key dates designated for these ends: 22 June, the Day of Memory and Mourning, marking the anniversary of the German invasion of 1941; and 9 May, when the Victory of 1945 is celebrated. But in practice the emotional division of labor between these twin poles is not so easy to achieve, and instead it is generally acknowledged, as Putin did in his 2016 Victory Day address, that Victory Day represents "a ceremony in which joy, memory, and mourning are merged together as one" ("Vladimir Putin" 2016). The mourning and the celebration cannot and indeed must not be fully separated; as Russian Minister for Culture Vladimir Medinskii has put it, "the most important law of Russian history proclaims that any 22 June must always end with a 9 May" (Medinskii 2016). Trauma must always ultimately be transformed into triumph—this is a key message in the official discourse in keeping with the increasingly "upbeat" tone of Victory Day celebrations under Putin.

But for some patriotic commentators, the emergence of the Immortal Regiment parade has destabilized the conventional 22 June/9 May division in ways that endanger national unity. Neo-Stalinist author Nikolai Starikov, for example, was alarmed by what he saw as the inappropriately mournful tone of the new ritual. Starikov argued that this not only marked an unacceptable departure from the Victory Day traditions laid down by the war heroes but was surely an element of the ideological warfare being waged against Russia by the United States, aimed at

destroying Russian morale and identity. It was right and fitting to mourn the nation's war dead, but this should be done exclusively on 22 June. Victory Day, by contrast, was the day when people "celebrate the power of their spirit, the power of their victory, the might of their *derzhava*" (Starikov 2015b). Popular patriotic blogger burckina_faso[5] likewise complained that the Immortal Regiment represented:

> the re-formatting of the shared Victory (triumph) into a personal tragedy… Whereas previously on this day people walked with their heads proudly held high, like victors or the descendants of victors, nowadays they are forced to march with a tragic expression on their face, suitable for a funeral procession. (burckina_faso 2016)

For adherents to this hardline position, to mourn the victims of war on Victory Day is to submit to national humiliation.

State and Civil Society

The debates around the Immortal Regiment speak to one of the research questions posed by Mischa Gabowitsch as part of his major ethnographic project on Victory Day: whose holiday is this? (Gabowitsch 2015). Much of the media discussion around the Immortal Regiment has hinged on the question of the relationship between the state and the grassroots elements of this ritual and of Victory Day commemorations more broadly.

A closer look at the history of the Immortal Regiment movement reveals a story of competing and disputed genealogies. There are in fact two separate movements, with very similar names: "Immortal Regiment" (moypolk.ru) and "Immortal Regiment of Russia" (polkrf.ru).[6] The latter is a state-affiliated "clone" organization set up with the aim of displacing and/or taking over the original grassroots movement (see further Sergei Parkhomenko 2015; "O situatsii" n.d; Gabowitsch 2016). The original Immortal Regiment movement was the initiative of a small group of journalists, historians by education, who were friends and colleagues working for the Tomsk TV station TV-2 (the station that was closed down in February 2015) (Nordvik 2015). The group shared fond memories of Victory Day from the Soviet period as the "main family holiday," as well as an aversion to the form that Victory Day had taken from the mid-2000s, which they found commercialized and crass. As one of the founders Sergei Lapenkov put it, "Purity and sincerity had

disappeared, and so we tried to make Victory Day come to life again" (cited ibid.). The group came up with the idea of using photographs of deceased war veterans and marching with them, partly as a means of reinserting veterans into the commemoration in a context when so few living veterans remained; and also with the aim of strengthening the institution of the family by fostering a renewed interest in family history. When they ran a trial version of this event in Tomsk in 2012, it proved very popular, and they subsequently began to be put under pressure by state officials seeking to impose their own preferred leaders on the movement (Parkhomenko 2015). The journalists immediately realized that they needed urgently to set down principles in order to defend the movement's autonomy, and they adopted a statute that specified that this was a non-commercial, non-political movement that was independent of the state (Nordvik 2015).[7]

Subsequently there ensued a battle for control and leadership of this movement, while simultaneously it grew in popularity and spread across different regions of the country (see further Gabowitsch 2016). Officials from the ruling "United Russia" party made attempts to link the party to the movement, in violation of the movement's statutes ("O situatsii" n.d).[8] Tensions escalated in 2015 with the lead-up to the 70th jubilee celebrations of the end of the war. That year's celebrations were viewed by the government as especially important in the context of Russia's increasing international isolation and deteriorating economic position in the wake of the imposition of Western sanctions over Ukraine. By this time what was effectively a state-affiliated "double" of the Immortal Regiment movement had been set up, with a slightly different name (the Immortal Regiment of Russia, henceforth BPR from the Russian initials). The BPR sought and received support from the Russia-wide Popular Front (ONF) and the Russian Federation's Civic Chamber (Golubeva 2015b), which lobbied the government on its behalf. Celebrities were brought in, and according to Lapenkov, a founding congress was hurriedly convened, without inviting the original activists, and a new leadership then "appointed" at the congress (see Galeeva 2015 and Vinokurov 2015). An especially striking detail of this story is the fact that organizations of *poiskoviki*, the volunteer "searchers" discussed above who take part in annual expeditions to locate the remains of Red Army soldiers, appear to have been co-opted to help legitimize this founding congress. Indeed, it seems this is why the Smolensk region was chosen, because of its status as the place where the search movement

first arose in the 1950s (according to Lapenkov, cited Galeeva 2015).[9] In May 2015 the coordinators of the original movement sent an open letter to Putin setting out their "negative attitude towards the appearance of 'Immortal Regiment of Russia'" (BPR) ("Bessmertnyi polk" 2016a). However, no response seems to have been forthcoming, and instead the clone movement was evidently given full backing by the state. There were also some signs of a campaign in the media apparently aimed at discrediting the founders of the original Immortal Regiment movement (see for example Golubeva 2015a).

Despite all the advantages that BPR would seem to enjoy, however, in fact the jury is still out on which movement will prevail. According to some reports, at least, the organizers of the Immortal Regiment parades elsewhere in post-Soviet space have tended to show a preference for dealing with the Lapenkov rather than the BPR camp ("My budem delat' svoe delo!" 2016). In Tallinn, veterans' organizations declined to take part in the BPR procession that pro-Russian activist Dmitrii Linter tried to organize in May 2016; instead, they held their own Immortal Regiment ceremony at the local war cemetery, also involving family portraits, but without any procession (Staropopov 2016). Meanwhile, the heads of the BPR and their supporters continue to claim that this is a genuine independent grassroots movement (see for example Golubeva 2015c). It is precisely by virtue of this claim to be a spontaneous and autonomous movement that the movement retains its value as a source of legitimacy for the state.

In the wake of Victory Day 2016, the organizers of the original Immortal Regiment issued a detailed statement in which they set out their attitude towards the rival BPR and assessed the prospects for their movement's future ("Bessmertnyi polk" 2016a). They noted that there had been numerous violations of their statutes in May 2016.[10] For example, some schools had forced pupils to take part, thereby also preventing them from marching with their families—something deemed especially objectionable given the movement's mission to bring families closer together. The event had been used by politicians as part of the forthcoming parliamentary election campaigns, and also for commercial profit. A "kitsch" culture was developing around the event ("Bessmertnyi polk" 2016a). Nevertheless, the organizers concluded that:

> Despite all this, for the overwhelming majority of Russia's towns and villages, the Regiment has become a voluntary, honest, personal history…

> Despite all the "recommendations" from the top, in the majority of locations it was precisely our coordinator comrades, carriers of the *narodnaia* idea of the Regiment, and not imitators of the form, who were at the center of public attention.

They went on to acknowledge that the existence of the quasi-official "clone" movement alongside the grassroots one was now a fact of life, and to call for solidarity in developing strategies for remaining true to the movement's original goals and spirit in this new context:

> Today, de facto, the Regiment unavoidably exists in two versions: *narodnoi* and quasi-official [*polukazennoi*]. That means that we need to learn to cooperate with all sensible people, and not only to be on the back foot. Can one cooperate with someone who became a coordinator by appointment? If so, then how should this be done? You won't find the answer to this question in a book. The regiment began as an initiative by individuals, but today this is already *narodnaia stikhiia* whose life is governed by its own laws. That is, we'll have to cooperate, but let's work out the measure and depth of the compromises together, colleagues! (ibid.)[11]

This quote exemplifies how difficult it is to draw a neat line between state and civil society in Putin's Russia (on which see Hemment 2012), but also how resilient, determined, and creative this Russian civil society organization is in the face of immense state pressure. It is still an open question what kind of organization will ultimately emerge here.

Crafting a New Genealogy for the BPR

The emergence of the "clone" movement was accompanied by the creation and dissemination of a new genealogy for the movement. I turn now to examine this genealogy with the aim of identifying and exploring the ideological meanings that are being spun around it.

The BPR leaders trace the movement's beginnings to a vision that appeared in a dream to the chairman of a police battalion veterans' council in Tiumen', an "ordinary guy" by the name of Gennadii Ivanov. The story goes that he had a dream in 2007 in which he saw people in his city marching across the city square to the strains of the song "A Sacred War," and carrying portraits of war veterans. The dream left an "unforgettable" impression on him, and he decided to make this dream

reality, organizing his friends to come out that year on Victory Day carrying photographs of deceased veterans ("O Dvizhenii" n.d). As Mischa Gabowitsch (2016) notes, it is the case that Gennadii Ivanov's Tiumen' initiative was (like other initiatives of its kind, based on the same idea of introducing veterans' photographs into Victory Day commemorative ceremonies) technically a precursor to the Tomsk movement, albeit one that mostly failed to spread further beyond the Tiumen' region. But for my purposes it is the BPR's narrative and the tropes it employs that are of interest here. The invocation of a vision or a dream as justification for a change in symbolic politics recalls the case of Dora Lazurkina's call to move Stalin's body out of the Lenin mausoleum in 1961 after Lenin appeared to her in a vision and requested this (Davies 1989: 259; Beliaev 2016). It is only representatives of the *narod*, ordinary people, and/or women, who ever have such visions, and this foundation story can thus be connected to the long Russian tradition of exploiting the concept of the *narod* for ideological ends (on which see Rzhevsky 1998: 7), based in part on the mystical notion that the members of the *narod* have privileged access to the supernatural realm.

The thrust of such claims about the Immortal Regiment's origins is often aimed at deflecting criticism of the state's appropriation and bureaucratization of the movement. Thus, Putin has emphasized that this is a movement that was "born not in offices, not in administrative structures, but in the hearts of our people" (cited in "Organizatory" 2015). The notion that the state merely "supports" the movement, scrupulously taking care not to interfere, is a common refrain. In April 2016 Putin asserted that the Immortal Regiment was an "absolutely honest, sincere project, and it must remain as such and must develop freely. And of course, it needs to be supported" ("Putin prizval podderzhat' 'Bessmertnyi polk'"2016). Sergei Shumakov, editor-in-chief of "Kul'tura" television channel, likewise asserted that, "This is an event which, although it is supported by the regime, has no relationship to the regime" (cited in "'Bessmertnyi polk' napugal zapad" 2015).

In 2016 Putin also called for support of the Immortal Regiment as a "genuinely *narodnaia* initiative" ("Putin prizval podderzhat' 'Bessmertnyi polk'" 2016). One celebrity supporter of the BPR, the actor Vasilii Lanovoi, has also emphasized that this was a "surprising movement, invaluable, because it is not organized by the authorities but was born inside of society, and was instantaneously supported" ("Bessmertnyi polk" 2016b). In other words, this is an "organic"

movement from below; in supporting it, the state is merely following the *narod*'s lead. The pro-Kremlin journalist Petr Akopov enthused in an article entitled "Family Memory of the War Gives Birth to *Narodnoe* Unity" that "The Immortal Regiment movement which began … in the provinces has reached Moscow, engulfing the capital in a wave of memory, love, and unification" (Akopov 2015). The imagery used here to describe the movement as an outpouring of elemental energy is a common motif in the media commentary, and can be connected back to the Soviet master plot's trope of "spontaneity," as outlined in Katerina Clark's classic work on Soviet culture (1981). In this connection it is perhaps not insignificant that the movement first began in the provinces, that is, in the heart of the real, the pure Russia, rather than in corrupt and Westernized Moscow.

Another key motif in the pro-BPR narrative is the notion that it is the ancestors themselves who have willed the Immortal Regiment into being. Thus, for example, Shumakov characterized the movement as:

> a mysterious event of incredible power, to which we were all witness… This was a gigantic eruption of energy…
>
> The dead rose up alongside the living—this is not an artistic conceit, this really happened (cited in "'Bessmertnyi polk' napugal zapad" 2015).

Quasi-mystical imagery of this kind is frequently used by the BPR's organizers and their supporters to describe the movement. One interview with BPR leader Nikolai Zemtsov in *Komsomol'skaia pravda* featured the subheading: "Death has Lost its Power over Russia" and the following quote from Zemtsov: "In essence, we, the descendants, have been mobilized and united by our fallen soldiers. There is some kind of mystery in this, something incomprehensible for human consciousness" (cited in Golubeva 2015b).[12] Here, then, it is explicitly the actual fallen soldiers who are setting this process in motion, and this is framed as a kind of consolidation or birth of the community through this intervention from beyond the grave. In May 2016, the director of the Russian Academy of Sciences' Institute for Economic Strategies took this rhetoric a step further, when he called for Russia's war dead to be granted the right to vote in elections. This right could be exercised, he suggested, by the participants of the Immortal Regiment parade, who could vote

on behalf of their ancestors. Such voting had the potential to become a "point of consolidation of society" (Obukhov 2016).

The Immortal Regiment and the "Near Abroad"

Attempts to mobilize Russia's war dead for symbolic and political capital also extend to the sphere of Russia's relations with the rest of post-Soviet space. Petr Akopov, writing in the online pro-Kremlin media outlet *Vzgliad*, drew a direct causal link between the 2014 annexation of Crimea and the rise of the Immortal Regiment the following spring. He described both events as "miracles." "A year ago," Akopov wrote:

> with the single Crimean gesture Putin awakened the Russian spirit—not because the president is some kind of superman, but because the Russian *narod* was acting through him—and now [with the Immortal Regiment] the *narod* itself has shown the first results of this awakening. (Akopov 2015)

Here, then, the Immortal Regiment effectively legitimizes the Crimean annexation. Putin is cast as a mere vehicle for the spirit and desire of the *narod*; and the remembrance and honoring of ancestors enacted by the Immortal Regiment is proclaimed as the "source of the power of our *narod* and our state" (ibid.).

Another version of the genealogy of the movement locates its genesis in the post-Soviet-Russian diaspora. Viktor Marakhovskii, the editor-in-chief of *Odnako*, proclaimed that:

> What is most interesting of all is that Victory Day's second life did not begin in Russia. It began in the "Soviet diaspora," in the newly formed independent republics… It was precisely there … that it turned from a "holiday with tears in its eyes" to a holiday about the present day. For it became a day … for demonstrating civilizational identity, a "Russian [*russkim*] holiday"—from Tallinn to Sevastopol. (Marakhovskii 2016)

Again, here, we see a shift in the emotional register, and a transformation of trauma into triumph: Victory Day used to be a mournful day, a "holiday with tears in its eyes" (a quote from the famous Brezhnev-era song *Victory Day*). But now, with this new ritual, it has become a holiday about today, a day for joyously displaying one's allegiance to Moscow

across the former Soviet space. In this way, the Immortal Regiment is linked to the notion of the so-called "Russian Spring," one of the root metaphors used in the Russian media coverage of the events in Ukraine in 2014 and heralding the "awakening" of Russians oppressed throughout post-Soviet space. Consider, for example, this extract from a transcript of the live federal TV coverage of the Immortal Regiment procession on *Rossiia* TV channel in May 2015, hosted by patriotic talk-show host Vladimir Solov'ev and leading cinema industry figure Nikita Mikhalkov. At one point Solov'ev exclaimed, "It's marvelous—the people has awoken! … This is the re-unification of the victor-people!" Mikhalkov responded, "This is only natural… A little girl who already lives in a completely different country, she apprehends this unity genetically … and it will be hard to turn her, to zombify her, so to speak, although there are people who very much want to do this, as is happening with our friends and colleagues in Ukraine, you understand?" (*Rossiia* 2015).

As these examples show, this metaphor is inherently connected to the notion of a reawakening of the memory of the war. Indeed, the recovery of this memory is the central "trigger" enabling this awakening, often said to be willed by the ancestors, acting through the living via mysterious mechanisms. For journalist Anastasiia Skogoreva, for example, the Immortal Regiment showed that "you can write as many mendacious history textbooks and no less mendacious pseudo-academic studies as you like, but there is such a thing as genetic memory. It will awaken, and it will show us the way" (Skogoreva 2015).

A Message to the World: Russia's War Dead as a Tool of Soft Power

The BPR also prides itself on being an international movement. In 2015 Immortal Regiment processions took place in 15 different countries (Slesarchuk 2016), and in 2016, they were held in forty countries, including, for the first time, in Australia and China (Vasil'chenko 2016). The BPR organizers describe the movement's portal polkrf.ru as unique in its capacity to "bring together into a single space of Memory all heirs of the soldiers of the Great Patriotic War, dispersed around the world" ("Bessmertnyi polk" 2016b). The organizers have ambitions for a further exponential growth in the movement, with the

ultimate aim of uniting the "300 million descendants of participants in the Great Patriotic War" ("Portal" 2016). The movement appears to have been integrated into the broader government campaign aimed at co-opting "compatriots" as allies in the struggle to "preserve historical memory" and counter alternative narratives of the war (see for example "Matvienko" 2016).

This performance of memory is thus also directed outwards, to an external audience. According to Mikhail Zygar', the organizers of the opening ceremony for the Sochi 2014 Olympic Games initially planned to incorporate a version of the Immortal Regiment tradition into the opening ceremony. This was planned as the climax of the ceremony, in fact. An envelope containing a photograph of a Soviet citizen who died in the war was to be placed on every seat in the stadium, and at the culmination of the ceremony, the crowd was to fall silent, and every member of the audience was to hold up their photograph above their head. The International Olympic Committee eventually vetoed this plan on the grounds that it would introduce a political dimension to the ceremony (Zygar' 2016: 320). But the story reflects an important impulse at work here: to perform this memory and kinship on the global stage, here by physically holding up photographs of the faces of the Soviet Union's war dead and subjecting the world's conscience to their steady gaze.

In an interview with the tabloid *Komsomol'skaia pravda* BPR leader Nikolai Zemtsov defined the message being sent to the world through the Immortal Regiment procession. He said:

> [the Immortal Regiment is] a kind of translation of energies, emanating from Russia and addressed to the whole world. A reminder to Europe… "Look at the faces of the soldiers who gave you peace"…. This is one of the reasons why the Immortal Regiment procession was not shown in the West. (Golubeva 2015b).

The claim that Western media refused to cover the event was made frequently; for example, Sergei Shumakov was quoted as saying that "The 'Immortal Regiment' amazed foreign journalists with its mysterious power, and ultimately it frightened them. Precisely this is why all the Western TV channels showed the Victory Parade, but ignored the mass procession of Muscovites" ("'Bessmertnyi polk' napugal zapad" 2015).

In general the BPR movement is often viewed as a potential means of projecting Russian soft power abroad by instrumentalizing Russia's war

dead. Its international significance has been noted by Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, who has held up the Immortal Regiment campaign as an example of how the important work of cooperating with compatriots abroad can be carried out ("Vystuplenie" 2016). It provides a useful tool for the process described by Russian Baltic diaspora activist and would-be leader of the Immortal Regiment in Estonia Dmitrii Linter as "teaching the world to interpret our victories in a manner profitable for us" ("Dmitrii Linter" 2014).

The Myth of Western Victory Denial

The Immortal Regiment movement at least in part draws its energy from a hostile myth that has becoming increasingly entrenched in Russian public space over the past decade or so: the notion that the West has systematically denied the Soviet role in defeating Nazi Germany (see for example Putin's 2015 speech to the Russian "Victory" Organizational Committee session in March 2015) ("Zasedanie" 2015). Often this is combined with claims that a wholescale whitewashing and rehabilitation of the history of fascism is also underway in Western countries, and that the West is also covertly sponsoring the same process throughout post-Soviet space (see for example Bordovaia 2015). Media reports of people being persecuted for trying to celebrate Victory Day and/or hold Immortal Regiment parades outside of Russia serve to reinforce this myth (see for example Neroznikova 2016; "Vystuplenie" 2016).

In turn, the Immortal Regiment is also being inserted into the narrative of Putin's Russia as leading the world's "anti-fascist" forces. For commentator Rostislav Ishchenko, "The 'Immortal Regiment' takes the last trump card away from Western propagandists—their attempt to present the Great Victory as a purely Russian national entertainment. It gathers under its banners an anti-fascist international" (Ishchenko 2015). Deputy head of the war veterans' organization *Boevoe bratstvo* Gennadii Shorokhov likewise commented that the Immortal Regiment represented:

> not only love of ancestors, but also the active position of Russians in defending the truth about the war. The truth about the fact that the USSR and the Red Army won the war. The parades took place in the EU, in the US, not only in Russia. This testifies to the fact that we have support, that our compatriots are united with us, this is a unified Russian space…

> Let the whole world know: Russians big and small have gathered and will gather together to defend their Victory. (cited in Samoilov 2015)

One reason why this myth is so powerful is that it contains a grain of truth. Since the beginning of the war in Ukraine in particular, there have been instances of inaccurate and inflammatory high-level statements on the subject of the Soviet role in the war, such as Polish Foreign Minister Grzegorz Schetyna's statement in January 2015 that Auschwitz was liberated by Ukrainians rather than Russians, or Ukrainian Prime Minister Arsenii Yatseniuk's statement the same month on "the Soviet invasion of Ukraine and Germany" (this last was perhaps misrepresented in the pro-Kremlin media, where it was used as part of the campaign to brand Yatseniuk as a neo-Nazi) (see *Izvestiia* 2015). Perhaps more importantly, it is the case that popular levels of consciousness of the Soviet role in the war are generally low throughout the Western world. Surveys taken among young people in the USA have routinely shown low awareness of the fact that the USA and USSR were Allies during World War II. For the most part, however, lack of popular knowledge in the West when it comes to the Soviet role in World War II is overwhelmingly a matter of simple ignorance of basic historical facts at the broader level, and claims that this ignorance is the result of a deliberate policy of suppressing or denying historical facts are deeply misleading.

Nevertheless, the myth of Western denial of the Soviet Victory has now become so entrenched in Russian public life that it qualifies as an example of what Stuart J. Kaufman calls a "myth-symbol complex" (Kaufman 2001: 16). As such, it has strong mobilizational power, precisely because of the strength of the family memory of the immense wartime sufferings in Russia and elsewhere in post-Soviet space.[13] This myth is frequently couched in the language of national humiliation. Memory functions here as a site of existential threat; and as a sacred and pure object demanding protection at all costs, up to and including the use of armed force.

The "Real" Civil Society

The sheer numbers of people taking part in the Immortal Regiment processions make this event ideal material for supporting claims about the popularity of the Putin regime. Contrasts are frequently drawn to the size of oppositional rallies, with a view to demonstrating that the

Immortal Regiment constitutes the face of the *real* Russian civil society, sometimes said to be only now awakening in Russia. An article on the *Russian Spring* website, for example, commented that the Immortal Regiment was "probably **the largest ever procession in the history of Russia …** This is the main outcome of the awakening of a genuine civil society in Russia" (Rakhmetov 2015) (original emphasis—JF).

In a similar vein, it was asserted that:

> Now [after the success of the Immortal Regiment] it will be very hard for non-systemic liberals to talk about the "successes" of the protest rallies of the past year. Because all their "tens of thousands of protesters" pale in comparison to the human torrent of the "Immortal Regiment"… The columns of the "Immortal Regiment" have already been called a genuine march of millions and a genuine march of dignity. And this is right. (Samoilov 2015)

The issue of authenticity is key here, with the Immortal Regiment contrasted to the notion of color revolutions as manufactured and sponsored by foreigners. Given the periodic scandals for example during the 2011–2012 oppositional protests over crowds bused in and paid to take part in pro-regime demonstrations, the Immortal Regiment's credentials as a genuine movement from below make it especially valuable here. Samoilov's use of the term "dignity" is also an allusion to the Ukrainian "Revolution of Dignity" on the Maidan. A celebrity member of the BPR, the actor Mikhail Nozhkin, drew an explicit connection to the Maidan, commenting that the Immortal Regiment had shown "that this is an awakening that is essential for unification of the *narod*. There hasn't been such an upsurge of the *narodnyi* spirit for a long time. In essence, the 'Immortal Regiment' is in fact an 'anti-Maidan'" (cited Vinokurov 2015).

The very sight of such huge crowds of people marching through public space in Putin's Russia is itself striking, particularly in the context of how much smaller groups of oppositionists, and indeed lone individual protesters, attempting to exercise their constitutional right to peaceful public assembly have been treated by the authorities (on which see Amnesty International 2014: 6–7). This context is reflected in the curious incident in May 2015 when United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon, in Moscow for the Victory Day celebrations and witnessing the Immortal Regiment parade, reportedly initially assumed that the

parade was an oppositional rally. According to some media reports, he later apologized for jumping to this conclusion and commented that the Immortal Regiment was proof that Putin had "earned the love of his people" ("Ban Ki-Moon" 2015). Whether or not he really said this, it is certainly the case that the pro-Kremlin camp has sought to present this event as the irrefutable evidence of its overwhelming popularity and to insist that this is effectively a rally of people displaying and performing their loyalty to the Putin regime. For prominent political scientist and government adviser Sergei Markov, for example, the Immortal Regiment was an expression of the "huge level of support for Putin" in response to Western sanctions and to "the fact that Russians feel that the external world is waging hybrid war [against them]. And in this situation they … support Putin and the symbol of this consolidation is the 'Immortal Regiment'" (cited Klinch 2015).

Meanwhile, critics of the Immortal Regiment, and oppositionists more broadly, were labeled "hereditary Nazis" who were moved by the genetic memory of wartime treachery. This trope was activated especially after a scandal in May 2015 caused by the reported discovery of a pile of Immortal Regiment placards that had apparently been dumped after the parade was over, prompting speculation that some participants may have been paid to take part (see "V sotssetiakh" 2015). "I'm starting to conclude," wrote one journalist in connection to the critical media coverage of this incident, "that [those who criticize the Immortal Regiment] simply don't have anyone via whom they might join the 'Immortal Regiment.' Perhaps their kinfolk carried out the role of *polizei* and traitors in the faraway forties? Genetic memory, you know, is a strong thing" (Ryzhevskii 2015). Aleksandr Samoilov wrote in a similar vein that,

There's also one more theory on why there were no current leaders of the opposition in the "Immortal Regiment" column. This might be "hereditary." Well, their ancestors didn't fight but were also engaged in all kinds of "alternative things" in the war years. And somehow it's a bit uncomfortable to remember this (Samoilov 2015).

This notion of "hereditary Nazis" and "hereditary enemies" has been a recurring motif in pro-Kremlin media. In May 2016, for example, *Komsomol'skaia pravda* ran a ludicrous story on a "grandson of a Nazi attacking a granddaughter of a hero" in Kyiv on Victory Day (Kots 2016). *Literaturnaia gazeta*'s editor-in-chief Yurii Poliakov has claimed that anti-Russian policies in Poland and Ukraine today are being promoted by "Pilsudski's grandchildren" and the descendants of Banderites

(cited in Kuz'mina 2015). This rhetoric gains credence partly through the history of Soviet propaganda on Western governments as the heirs to Nazism (on which see Hirszowicz 1993), from which the key images and tropes are borrowed, adapted, and also applied to critics of the Putin regime more broadly, stigmatizing them as descendants of Nazi collaborators.

Fusing the State and the *Narod:* Family Photographs in Private and in Public

The Immortal Regiment has been hailed as representing a fusion of family memory and state memory, of the *narod* and the state. To quote Akopov again, in this ritual "[p]eople came together [*splotilis'*] around that which is the source of power of our *narod* and its state: around the memory of ancestors, love and respect for their fate and life" (Akopov 2015). Putin's 2016 Victory Day address also highlighted the two, intersecting dimensions of the holiday as a day on which the "sacred kinship" of the Russian state and people is affirmed: "The 9th of May is both a state holiday, and a very personal family history. It has become a symbol of the sacred kinship [*sviashchennogo rodstva*] of Russia and her *narod*… We are united by deep, penetrating emotions for our fathers, grandfathers, great-grandfathers" ("Vladimir Putin" 2016).] Again, Putin's personal participation in the procession in the capacity of an ordinary soldier's son further underlined this fusion of the top and bottom dimensions of Russian war memory. Media commentary emphasized the fact that, "[f]or the president, as for the absolute majority of Russians, the Great Patriotic War is a part of family history" ("Putin proshel po Moskve" 2015).

Yet as we have seen, it is precisely this aspect of the Immortal Regiment—its engagement with family experiences of the war—that is viewed as threatening by some patriotic commentators. Neo-Stalinist Nikolai Starikov has argued that this emphasis on the private, family dimension of memory is dangerous since it will lead to a fragmentation of national consciousness: "Instead of celebrating this day as a holiday of shared unification and Victory, it becomes broken up into millions of private 'mournings' [*skorbei*]" (Starikov 2015b). Indeed, as historian Nikita Sokolov has pointed out family memories of the war are often diametrically opposed to the official state memory of the war, in that the

memories that leave their traces in the family "are precisely the horrors of war … not the … generalissimus and Victory" (cited Pavlova and Baryshnikov 2016). Moreover, the fact that huge numbers of the soldiers depicted in these family photographs are still missing and unaccounted for, potentially raises the uncomfortable issue of the state's failure to fulfill its duty to its war dead.[14]

Nevertheless, in many other respects these family photographs make an ideal tool for top-down national/state memory projects, offering a powerful way to connect together different levels and dimensions of historical narratives and experiences. Photography's much-analyzed peculiar ability to convey the illusion of direct access to an accurate and true representation of reality lends photographs a special status as historical documents and evidence, as "real" traces of the past.[15] This is compounded in the case of family photographs in particular by "their embeddedness in the fundamental rites of family life" (Hirsch 1997: 5). The particular properties of photographic images mean that they cross the line between the public and the private with particular ease (Shevchenko 2014: 4), and represent a point "where private and community memory meet" (Boros 2010: 89). Family photographs thus provide a means of authenticating and authorizing particular narratives; they make it possible to humanize and create a direct point of identification with grand narratives of the nation's past, activating the imagination and emotions by showing how these narratives are reflected in the life course of an individual.

Most studies of the use of family photographs in post-Soviet Russia have focused on the Memorial Society's use of such photographs in order to provide access to suppressed dimensions of the Soviet experience, so as "to countervail the gloss of official state history" (Sarkisova and Shevchenko 2014: 151); but family photographs also offer themselves as tools for processes working in the opposite direction as we see here, where the state is attempting to use the power of these images in order to bolster and authenticate the official narrative of the past. The state authorities have engaged with these photographs directly through this movement; in Moscow, for example, it is possible to take your family photograph to various municipal offices and to have it blown up, fit to a standard format, and laminated, free of charge.[16] The use of these photographs offers a way to fill the gap left by the passing of the generation of World War II veterans, who were previously a central focus of Victory Day commemorative ceremonies.[17] Indeed, the transition from living veterans to their photographic images opens up new possibilities



Fig. 11.1 The 3D "Living Memory" Talking Portrait. *Source* Valentin Slesarchuk, 'U "Bessmertnogo polka" poiavilsia novyi format', *Utro.ru*, 25 February 2016, http://www.utro.ru/articles/2016/02/25/1272351.shtml

for instrumentalization of the war memory. The silent form of witnessing to the past enacted by these photographs enables a kind of ventriloquizing—the eyes seem to speak eloquently, the words and meaning can be supplied by the state at will.

Animated version with sound available at: http://www.memory.live.

Figure 11.1 shows an especially striking example of how these two dimensions—private family memory and public official memory—are being fused together in this new tradition, and also commercialized. The image shows the 3D "Living Memory" interactive portrait, a multimedia product that was launched in 2016 in Krasnoiarsk. It features animated elements, such as a candle flame that flickers in response to passers-by, and interactive audio components—one can record and play back one's own "radio show" about the soldier, for example. The product is designed specifically for use both as a family shrine to hang

on the wall at home for most of the year, and also for public display in the annual Immortal Regiment procession. According to its website, it is now producing samples for use in educational and other state institutions, apparently on commission from the Russian Ministry of Education and Science.[18] While the commercial success of this product is unclear, the example is suggestive of the ways in which people are being encouraged to use these photographs in the public and the private realms interchangeably. One journalist wrote of the Immortal Regiment, "Who could have thought … that this simple step—printing out a photograph and coming out onto the street with it—would warm the hearts and souls of millions across the whole country?" (Golubeva 2015a). This quote pinpoints an important element of this new tradition: the fact that it involves taking these photographs out of the private family domestic setting or domain, and transferring them into public space. This then renders them potentially available as cultural, ideological, and political resources, including for the state.

A Celebration of Vitality

Kul'tura television channel executive Sergei Shumakov has called the Immortal Regiment movement "the breathing of soil and fate," and has claimed that it has "returned soil and fate to us" (cited in "'Bessmertnyi polk' napugal zapad" 2015). This imagery can be linked back to various strands of the Russian nationalist tradition such as *pochvennichestvo* or the Village Prose movement. The pro-Kremlin language of war memory today is one that is also saturated with blood and soil, and with biological metaphors. In the remainder of the chapter I examine some of these key tropes.

First, there is a strong preoccupation here with what we might characterize under the umbrella term of "vitality." The Immortal Regiment is frequently said to have revitalized the Russian war memory, and made it young again. As Marakhovskii put it: "The 'Immortal Regiment' has given Victory Day a second life … without any grey hair and without any nostalgia" (Marakhovskii 2016). This is a new incarnation of Victory, and a new incarnation of Russia, an awakening of new life. For Vladimir Mamontov, head of *Govorit Moskva* radio, the May 2015 Victory Day celebrations had made him realize that "I was mistaken when I wondered whether our Victory had grown old… She is young, full of power" ("Vopros dnia" 2015).

Both official and popular forms of Russian war commemorative paraphernalia are characterized by a striking prevalence of imagery featuring children and babies—both today's living children, and children as yet unborn.[19] The pervasiveness of images of infants and children dressed in Great Patriotic War Soviet military uniform was particularly noticeable during the 2015 and 2016 Victory Day commemorations,[20] and especially in Crimea. Mothers paraded in uniform together with their young children in prams in Simferopol' on Victory Day 2015 (Oblomov 2015); and to mark the Day of Defender of the Fatherland (23 February) in Crimea in 2016 a group of mothers took part in a ceremony in which their new-born baby boys were issued their call-up papers in advance ("V Krymu" 2016). We might read this trope as another instance of the way in which trauma is being transmuted back into triumph, and mourning into aggression, but an aggression that is righteous, "pure," and innocent, and hence embodied in the symbol of the child or infant warrior.

This preoccupation is also a characteristic of Russian official discourse more broadly. Consider for example the recent spate of laws related to children's issues, in which putative concerns over the safety and wellbeing of Russian children have been used as a pretext for politically motivated legislation, as in the case of the 2012 Dima Yakovlev law which banned US citizens from adopting Russian children in response to the Magnitsky bill. The need to protect children has been held up as justification for internet censorship and for the 2013 anti-gay propaganda law, and pro-Kremlin organizations such as "Russkie materi" (created 2011) campaign to raise awareness of what they view as the repressive practices of Western state social services and rescue Russian children subjected to these abroad.[21] In 2016, Putin's "Direct Line" conversation with the nation was noteworthy for the prominence of children among the participants (and much mocked on social media for this).

The flipside of this trope is the notion of the "degeneracy" of the West, standing in stark contrast to the vitality and purity of the "Russian world." This degeneracy and corruption is connected to Western Europe's distorted memory of World War II. Thus for example, the head of the Night Wolves bikers "The Surgeon," one of the high-profile celebrity participants of the Immortal Regiment parade, commented that the 2015 Victory Day celebrations were not just a triumph for Russia but were also about "testing Europe for lice" ("Vopros dnia" 2015). Even more radically dehumanizing imagery of this kind is reserved for

pro-Maidan Ukrainians; not only do they lack "vitality," but they are strikingly often cast as the living dead, whether in the form of visual memes circulating online in which Maidan activists are styled as zombies (as in "Ukrainski zombilend" 2014), or in texts such as Roman Nosikov's diatribe against Ukrainian nationalism:

> The truth is that so-called "Ukrainian nationalism" is nothing but decaying flesh which has already proved that it has no place in the land of the living, but which is still able to walk, kill, and sing hymns to death and decomposition. And the truth is also that envy of life, nobility, and victory prevents this zombie even from dying in a dignified way—it's capable only of carking it in the midst of lies and paroxysms of hatred. (Nosikov 2015)

Again, strikingly often, such imagery contains the notion that it is the wrong kind of memory of the war, or a lack of memory of the war, that is to blame for this state of affairs—note, for example, in the passage above, the reference to the Ukrainian "envy of victory." Likewise, it is precisely through an attack on the Russian memory of Victory that enemies seek to destroy Russia. For Nikolai Starikov, the ultimate aim being pursued by Russia's enemies in Ukraine is "to bury the memory of Russia's victories and to solve the 'Russian' question definitively. Simply to annihilate us [*Prosto chtoby nas ne bylo.*]" (Starikov 2014: 7).

Meanwhile, the Victory itself is cast as confirmation and the result of the Russian people's innate vitality (or *passionarnost'*, to borrow the popular term coined by Lev Gumilev). In 2016, Putin described the Victory as evidence of the "genuine life force of our *narod*" ("Vladimir Putin" 2016). In turn, the memory of the Victory serves as the source of kind of esoteric power, as in Sergei Markov's claims that: "We draw power from this Great Victory… We take these photographs, so as to take possession of the power of these photographs for ourselves" (cited in "Osoboe mnenie" 2016). For Markov, this power is needed in order to defend Russia from dismemberment and annihilation. He sees the rise of the Immortal Regiment as the Russian people's response to events in Ukraine:

> [W]hy did [the Immortal Regiment] become so popular only after the coup in Ukraine? Because this is a war, everyone understands this very well… [T]he Immortal Regiment is our reaction to this war [being waged

> by the West] against Russia… [T]he Immortal Regiment… is a great ascension of the *narod* with the aim of defending its country. (ibid.)

Conclusion

> [We] have a new war now. A new *narod* is taking shape in our country. We must win this war!… You know, the Immortal Regiment—essentially this is the new Russian [*rossiiskii*] *narod*. The new *rossiiskii narod*.
>
> Sergei Markov. (cited in "Osoboe mnenie" 2016)

This chapter has outlined the contours of the official and patriotic discourse surrounding the war memory in Russia as it has been taking shape since the beginning of the war in Ukraine and expressed through the pro-Kremlin commentary on the Immortal Regiment movement. As this quote from Sergei Markov illustrates, the Immortal Regiment movement is being claimed first and foremost as marking the emergence of something new: a new stage in the development of the Russian nation—the genesis of a new form of that nation, even. While the Immortal Regiment ritual is focused on remembering a past war, for the pro-Kremlin camp, its significance has everything to do with present and future wars. The nature of these wars is often left undefined, but it is clear that they may be both international and internal in scope, and that domestic enemies are among those who will have to be defeated in these conflicts.

As we have seen, this latest incarnation of Russian war memory is a high-octane discourse, built on hostile myths that depict Russian memory and identity as radically under threat, and that potentially justify and fuel inter-ethnic violence. Within this discourse, memory of the war takes on a life of its own—if taken to its logical conclusion, then citizens are transformed into mere vehicles of an immutable genetic memory which has value in its own right and which must be reproduced at all costs. This is a discourse that has already been used to justify military aggression in Ukraine, and that is being used most fundamentally as a tool for bolstering the current regime's legitimacy. At the most basic level this war memory is being framed literally as a matter of life and death—of "vitality" twinned with and fueled by the willingness to shed blood in the name of that vitality.

Notes

1. The Immortal Regiment movement has sparked a counter-action, the "Immortal Barracks," aimed at shifting the focus onto the memory of victims of state terror; see further http://bessmertnybarak.ru.
2. Historian Ivan Kurilla is one of those who take a more optimistic view of the Immortal Regiment phenomenon (see Reut 2016). For a discussion of the movement's transformative potential, see Gabowitsch (2016).
3. Thus, paradoxical statements like the following become possible: "Russian [*russkaia*] national pride is in general a unique thing, because it's international. There's no way it can be compared with Nazism, because in our country Russians and Ukrainians fought in the same ranks" (Bukker 2015). For reflections on the instrumentalization of the figure of the Red Army soldier in connection with Soviet war graves in Poland, see Nowak (2013); and on the construction of the "Soviet fighting family," from which certain groups were excluded, see Weiner (2012).
4. The fact that the parade was granted permission to march across Red Square was significant here. The territory of Red Square is a special category of public space that comes under the direct auspices of the president, and the fact that Putin had personally granted permission to march across the Square was emphasized by the BPR leaders ("Obshchestvennaia organizatsiia" 2016).
5. burckina_faso is not one of the top bloggers, but has a respectable rating position on *Livejournal*: 427 overall and 18 for Volga region (as at 17 December 2016); http://burckina-faso.livejournal.com/profile.
6. "Immortal Regiment—Moscow" (parad-msk.ru) is also part of "Immortal Regiment of Russia." The story of its leader Nikolai Zemtsov's relations with the original civic movement is complicated and tortuous; one side of the story is told at moypolk.ru.
7. It should be noted that as Mischa Gabowitsch (2016) has pointed out, the grassroots movement has also cooperated in various ways with local state authorities and other powerful institutions such as Gazprom from the outset, and so the state–society divide should not be overstated; but the organizers have attempted to set limits on such cooperation.
8. Later, United Russia member Viacheslav Makarov would claim that the party had been involved in creating the movement; "We have given immortal life to the heroes of the war," he said ("Spiker" 2016). The Russian Ministry of Culture also claimed credit for organizing the Immortal Regiment processions in its 2014 report (Ministerstvo Kul'tury RF 2015: 13).

9. This is according to Lapenkov, cited Galeeva (2015). See also the comment by the leader of the "Search Movement of Russia" Yelena Tsunaeva that the development of the BPR (presumably, she meant its growth and its increasingly close relationship to the state) was similar to that of the search movement; that the founders must understand that the initiative needs "to develop," and that if they did not wish to undertake such development then they should leave this to others; cited Vinokurov (2015). On the *poiskoviki*, see Chapter 14.
10. They have invited and crowdsourced reports of such violations, which are gathered at http://www.moypolk.ru/gauptvahta.
11. They also proposed the radical solution of dissolving all existing structures, including their own, before convening a "legitimate congress of the real coordinators" (ibid.).
12. As various commentators pointed out in social media, this dimension of the Immortal Regiment uncannily recalls nineteenth-century philosopher Nikolai Fedorov's project aimed at resurrecting the dead.
13. According to a 2015 survey, 52% of Russians report that a close relative perished during the Great Patriotic War; 20 percent say a close relative went missing; 22% do not know or unable to say whether any family members were killed in the war; Levinson (2015).
14. Some estimates place the number of Russian soldiers still missing and unaccounted for at around five million; see further the website of the *Forgotten Regiment* project, which is aimed at identifying and documenting Russian soldiers missing from this and other wars: http://www.polk.ru/vojjna-v-chechne/. The Putin government has taken a series of measures aimed at rectifying this situation and particularly focused on locating the families of soldiers who never received their decorations; see for example: http://podvignaroda.mil.ru/.
15. The classic texts here are Sontag (1977) and Barthes (1981).
16. See parad-msk.ru for details on the free service offered by all Moscow municipal state service centers for printing out portraits for use in the Immortal Regiment procession.
17. As Sarkisova and Shevchenko point out, family photographs "reside at the intersection between cultural and communicative memory" (2014: 151). On this distinction see further the Introduction to this volume.
18. http://memory.live/ (accessed 17 December 2016).
19. See for example Odessan child singer Anna Komiakova's performance of the song "Aist na kryshe," available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=emThQlfdEBk. While the song's lyrics celebrate peace, this is a peace that is only enabled by the military hardware over which children

clamber in the background in the course of the video, perhaps reflecting the ways in which this kind of militarism arises out of a fundamental desire for security, sought in a powerful state capable of threatening potential enemies and enabling its population to live out the fantasy of a childlike and innocent existence. Cf. the "pervasiveness of the theme of infants" in French World War I patriotic culture; Huss (2004). See also Chap. 9. On biological national discourses in contemporary Russia, see also Hemment (2012: 249–250).

20. See for example a Blagoveshchensk billboard featuring an infant, wearing nothing but a *pilotka*, with the slogan: "I'm going to be a hero too, like my great-grandpa"; image available at: http://antikor.com.ua/articles/102370-ljapy_ko_dnju_pobedy_spasibo_bebu_za_podebu/print.
21. See the movement's official website: http://www.russianmothers.ru/.

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CHAPTER 12

The Holocaust in the Public Discourse of Post-Soviet Ukraine

Andrii Portnov

The subject of the Holocaust and the fate of the Jews during World War II in many respects remain on the margins of public discourse in Ukraine. This is in stark contrast to the case of neighboring Poland, where Jan T. Gross's book *Neighbors* (2000), describing a massacre perpetrated by some Poles against their Jewish neighbors in Jedwabne village in July of 1941, resonated widely both in the media and in political circles, sparking lively and often sophisticated debates. Why should this be the case? Why is it that no book on the Holocaust had (or is likely to have in the near future) the same effect in Ukraine? This question provides the starting point for my reflections in this chapter.

The current intellectual tension in Ukraine is often characterized as "the dichotomy between the innocent, sacred nation of traditionalists and the complicated, disturbing narrative of their opponents," that is liberal intellectuals and historians (Himka 2013b: 635). This binary approach does not take into account an important third category: the numerous supporters of the (post-)Soviet and Russian narratives in Ukraine. Hence adherents of the binary view often overlook the fact

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that the most visible criticism and even condemnation of the nationalistic view of history in Ukrainian public debate comes not from liberal or leftist groups but from those who continue to subscribe to a particular set of historical views whose origin can be traced to late-Soviet propaganda. In other words, in Ukraine the rather weak liberal position, also described as "critical patriotism," is torn between two opposite extremes: the Soviet and the nationalistic. Any position that involves decisive criticism of Ukrainian nationalism looks "dangerously close to the soft version of the Russian imperial narrative" (Olszański 2013: 48). This is in strong contrast to the Polish setting, where the Soviet/Russian imperial narrative is almost entirely absent. In the Ukrainian case, the complex interplay between the nationalistic and the Soviet/Russian narratives of the war has been an important factor in shaping the evolution of the historical debate.

This is the context in which I examine the Ukrainian discourse on the Holocaust in this chapter. I begin by sketching out the basic contours of the Ukrainian discourse on this issue and the specificities of the Ukrainian approach to the problem of the Holocaust, and tracing the connections here to the country's Soviet past and to its present geopolitical position between the European Union and Russia. I then provide an overview of the changing state politics on the issue, and of its treatment in school history textbooks. I pay particular attention to the role played by Jewish international organizations in public representation and commemoration of the Holocaust in Ukraine. Finally, I try to describe the views of Jewish Ukrainian intellectuals on the Ukrainian–Jewish dialogue as well as the existing research centers and museums of the Holocaust.

Dilemmas of World War II and Holocaust Memory in Ukraine

Contemporary Ukraine within its political borders and with its ethnic and social makeup is largely a product of World War II. During 1939–1945, parts of contemporary Ukraine were attached to several administrative entities, including those under Romanian and Hungarian control. For East Galicia, which was part of Poland in the interwar period, the war meant two periods of Sovietization: first in 1939–1941, and then for several decades from 1944.

The peculiarities of the "double occupation" in western Ukraine where German troops replaced the Red Army in 1941, as well as the brutality of war on the eastern front that was unprecedented in European history, created the context for the Nazi policy of the "final solution of the Jewish question" (Snyder 2010). Anti-Semitic Nazi propaganda blaming the Jews for Communist atrocities provoked the wave of anti-Jewish pogroms that rolled over the cities and towns in East Galicia in 1941. The Ukrainian auxiliary police took part in these pogroms. In Soviet Ukraine some Jewish families managed to evacuate to the east before the arrival of the German troops, but the majority of the Jewish population stayed under Nazi occupation.

Unlike most European countries, where Jews were transported to the death camps, on the territory of contemporary Ukraine the extermination of the Jewish population was carried out through mass shootings during the first weeks of the Nazi occupation. Usually the Jews were first gathered at some officially announced locations in the cities, towns and villages, and then taken to secluded places, where they were shot and buried (Babi Yar in Kyiv, Drobyts'kyi Yar in Kharkiv, the Botanical Gardens in Dnipropetrovsk). The punishment for local people and their families who tried to save Jews was the death penalty—and it should be noted that this was one important difference from Nazi-occupied Western Europe, where the death penalty was not applied in such cases. The degree of violence, the shifting political contexts and the pre-war experience of occupied Ukraine—all of these factors mean that the "neat categories of victims, perpetrators, and bystanders" (Himka and Michlic 2013: 4) are not sufficient for describing the Holocaust in Ukraine (compare Brandon and Lower 2010 and David-Fox et al. 2014).

The most important feature of Ukrainian war memory today is the competition between two coexisting but rather inflexible narratives: the (post-)Soviet narrative, and the nationalistic narrative. The Soviet narrative of the Great Patriotic War (formed primarily in the mid-1960s) stressed the heroism and the unity of the "Soviet people" in their fight against fascism, the victory of the Red Army and the liberation of Europe. Numerous taboos surrounding that narrative included such topics as the Soviet deportations of several ethnic groups (e.g. the Crimean Tatars) accused of collective collaboration with the Nazis, and the fate of the Soviet prisoners of war, often sent to the Soviet camps after being released from the German ones. The post-Soviet version of this narrative in Ukraine lacks the ideological coherence of its Soviet predecessor,

but remains complementary to the official Russian politics of memory centered on the victory in the Great Patriotic War as the most important achievement of the Soviet era. This narrative has been promoted in contemporary Ukraine by the Communists, the Party of Regions, and pro-Russian organizations.

The Ukrainian nationalistic narrative, on the other hand, features the glorification of the anti-Soviet underground and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), which was still active in East Galicia up until the late 1950s (Motyka 2006). This narrative was banned in the Soviet Union but was kept alive by Ukrainian diaspora publications and by family memories in western Ukraine. The nationalistic narrative has its own taboos, which include collaboration with the Nazis and massacres of Polish civilians in Volhynia in summer 1943 organized by the UPA. This narrative has been promoted in Ukraine by the nationalists and partly by national democrats.

Diametrically opposed in other respects, these two narratives are united on one point: both of them marginalize the memory of the Holocaust and the tragic fate of the Jewish population in Ukraine. The Soviet narrative does not single out the Jews from the rest of the Soviet civilian victims of the Nazis (Gitelman 1997). Soviet writer Vasilii Grossman, whose mother was killed by the Nazis in the Ukrainian town of Berdychiv, wrote in 1943 that "the Fascists exterminated the Jews just for being Jews. For them, no Jews have the right to exist in this world. Being a Jew is the greatest crime, and is punishable by death" (Grossman 1985: 339). But these words were ignored in the post-war Soviet narrative that was unwilling to differentiate the victims on the basis of their ethnicity. An important reason for this unwillingness was the anti-Semitic campaign initiated by Stalin in the late 1940s, the repressions against the Jewish intelligentsia and the banning of the "Black Book" prepared by the Jewish Antifascist Committee with the documentation of the Nazi destruction of European Jews. The Soviet narrative "made sense of war" by abandoning the disturbing topic of the Holocaust (Weiner 2001). Consequently, subjects like the anti-Semitism that the Jews encountered in Soviet civilian life and in the Red Army were a de facto taboo in the USSR until the end of the 1980s.

As far as the nationalistic version of war is concerned, the Holocaust theme has been especially unwelcome, because a significant portion of UPA soldiers had previously served in the auxiliary police, and had participated in anti-Jewish pogroms and the implementation of the Nazi

policy of the *Endlösung der Judenfrage*. The dangers that this topic held were realized very early on. As early as October 1943 the leaders of Bandera's wing of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) issued a truly Orwellian order to prepare a "special collection of documents proving that the anti-Jewish pogroms and liquidation was conducted by the Germans themselves, with no help of the Ukrainian police" (Kurylo and Himka 2008: 265). In addition to falsifying the sources in this way, they also propagated the myth of Jewish voluntary participation in the UPA (see details in Motyka 2006; Rudling 2011). Whenever the issue of collaboration with the Nazi policy of Jewish extermination came up, it was usually resolved by stressing the point that "a subjugated people with no state of its own" cannot bear responsibility for a policy initiated by the occupiers of its territory. In present-day Ukraine many followers of the nationalistic narrative of the war likewise attempt to sidestep the issue by pointing to the example of Andrey Sheptytsky, Metropolitan of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, who saved hundreds of Jews. (For the most complete study of the Metropolitan's views on the Jewish question and his behavior during the war, see Himka 2013a.) In fact, Sheptytsky's actions were quite exceptional at the time. The current tendency to invoke his example shows how easy it is to identify, both personally and group-wise, with a position that in retrospect is deemed to be moral and righteous.

In post-Soviet Ukraine the nationalistic narrative remains very strong in East Galicia. Since 1991 it has opposed the Soviet one in the public sphere, and during the official national ceremonies a certain convergence and blending of the two occurred. For instance, President Viktor Yushchenko, searching for the rhetoric of reconciliation of the veterans, spoke about the Great Patriotic War in his address to the UPA veterans, and greeted the Red Army veterans with the nationalistic slogan "Glory to the Heroes!" (for more examples, see Portnov 2010). Such state-sponsored convergence did not reconcile the two narratives, but allowed their supporters to talk about either an "unfinished de-Sovietization," or an "orgy of nationalism." Such claims were especially inflexible in the context of the two challenges post-Soviet Ukraine had to face simultaneously: the ambiguity (often perceived as weakness) of national identity, and the Russian factor, related to fears of a "new Russification" and of dissolving in the "Russian world."

This explains why many Ukrainian intellectuals believe that any discussion about the dark pages in the UPA's history can be appropriate only

after an official recognition of the insurgency by the Ukrainian parliament. Ukrainian essayist Mykola Riabchuk has repeatedly said that the Ukrainians have to choose, not between a nationalist dictatorship and European liberalism, but between "defending national sovereignty, dignity and identity and abandoning them in favor of Russia" (Riabchuk 2012: 165). American political scientist and writer of Ukrainian origin Alexander Motyl has put forward his view that critical works on Stepan Bandera, the leader of the OUN's radical wing, will inevitably become part of the Ukrainian public forum, but "only after the Ukrainian identity is consolidated and the fears of a neo-imperial Russia disappear" (Motyl 2010).

The Maidan movement, the Russian annexation of Crimea and the outbreak of war in the Donbas region changed Ukraine dramatically and increased the political desire to draw a symbolic dividing line between post-Maidan Ukraine and Putin's Russia. On 14 October 2014 the Verkhovna Rada tried to vote for the official recognition of the OUN and UPA as the combatants of World War II, but failed (after seven rounds of voting) even to put this draft bill on the agenda. But the newly elected Ukrainian parliament on 9 April 2015 adopted a set of "historical" laws, one of which recognized members of various Ukrainian political organizations (including UPA partisans) as "fighters for Ukrainian independence." Although this law proposed a kind of "compromise" by granting UPA veterans the special status of "fighters for Ukrainian independence," but refusing to give them the same social privileges as Soviet veterans, it significantly contributed to the state-sponsored commemoration of Ukrainian nationalism and supported its tendency to cross the historical boundaries of East Galicia. This tendency resulted from the re-actualization of the Bandera mythology on the Maidan where a significant number of people called themselves "banderivtsi" in order to claim their rejection of the Kremlin propaganda of the "fascist Maidan" and declare their political loyalty to Ukraine. By accepting the pejorative term as positive self-description, and often lacking information on Bandera's devotion to terrorism and anti-democratic political views, many Maidan supporters were trapped by the same propaganda narrative they wished to oppose (see more in Portnov 2016).

Official Discourses on the Holocaust

The lifting of Soviet taboos did not automatically lead to a new politics of memory. Post-Soviet Ukrainian society encountered a number of problems connected to the issue of identity, language and history and these problems made it difficult for society to comprehend why and how it should discuss the Holocaust. From the early 1990s Ukrainian political elites responded to this challenge in two ways—by trying to close the issue or to dilute it at the official level.

Leonid Kravchuk, the first Ukrainian President (1991–1994) who was previously the Ukrainian Communist Party Central Committee's secretary for ideology, took the first of these two approaches. He apologized for the participation of some Ukrainians in the Nazi policy of the extermination of the Jews during his visit to Israel in 1993 (Kravchuk 2011), but his apology was probably meant to close the issue of the responsibility of Ukrainians once and for all. Kravchuk's gesture reflects a static and elitist approach to historical memory, whereby a formal political step seems to exhaust the depth of the problem, especially since his gesture was not meant for the Ukrainian public, but for a foreign audience.

The second approach, aimed at diluting and downplaying the knowledge of the Shoah, was characteristic of the constant attempts by Ukraine's second President Leonid Kuchma (1994–2004), to avoid the rough edges of historical memory. Not only did Kuchma refrain from mentioning the Holocaust in his official speeches on Victory Day, he even managed to do so in his speech on the 60th anniversary of the Babi Yar massacre in Kyiv in 2001. Kuchma relied heavily on the Soviet narrative of Ukrainian history, but he also moved beyond it in certain respects, most notably when he established a Memorial Day for the victims of the Great Famine (Holodomor) of 1932–1933.

Viktor Yushchenko (2005–2010) became the first president to use the word "Holocaust" in an official Victory Day speech. He also granted Babi Yar the status of a national memorial in order to stop the conflict over the construction projects on the burial place, as we shall see below. Despite these steps, Yushchenko gained the reputation of a hardened nationalist for his decree granting the title of a "Hero of Ukraine" to Stepan Bandera, signed in the last days of his presidency. His predominant concern with the memorialization of the Great Famine of 1932–1933 and the international recognition of it as "genocide against the Ukrainian nation" reveal, among other aspects, an attempt to apply

the Holocaust paradigm as a model for Holodomor commemoration (Zhurzhenko 2011). It should be noted, however, that Yushchenko's position on this issue was in some respects more moderate than that of the Ukrainian diaspora in North America. In the diaspora the Holodomor has been labeled the "Ukrainian Holocaust." Yushchenko avoided using this manipulative term, though it was taken up by some of his nationalistic allies. At the same time, he proposed to criminalize the denial of both the Holodomor and the Holocaust.

The Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance created on Yushchenko's initiative, unlike its Polish model, limited its activities to the history of ethnic Ukrainians. In his efforts to achieve international recognition of the Famine as genocide, Yushchenko steered clear of making anti-Russian and anti-Jewish statements. However, his subordinates sometimes crossed that line. For example, on 24 July 2008 a list of the Soviet and Communist party leaders responsible for the Famine and political repressions appeared on the website of the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU). The list, led by Stalin, includes 19 names, most of them Jewish and Latvian. The controversial list was criticized by some historians, journalists and politicians, including Oleksandr Feldman, the head of the Ukrainian Jewish Committee. A prominent Kharkiv businessman and a member of parliament, Feldman protested against "almost directly accusing the Jews of organizing the Famine" and pointed out that many Jewish families had also fallen victim to starvation (Fel'dman 2008). As a result of this criticism an expanded list of 136 "[i]ndividuals involved in organizing and implementing the Famine of 1932–1933 in Ukraine," grouped by regions, appeared on the SBU website on 17 March 2009 (and was later removed).

The fourth president of Ukraine, Viktor Yanukovych (elected in 2010), tried to bring the nonchalant vagueness, familiar from Kuchma's time, back into symbolic politics, but with a more noticeable bent on the late-Soviet style. Not only did his official message marking the 70th anniversary of the Babi Yar massacre not include the words "Holocaust" and "Shoah," it did not even include the word "Jews." Yanukovych spoke instead of the "mass executions of the civilian population" and the fact that "thousands of people of various nationalities died as martyrs" in Babi Yar (Yanukovych 2011).

President Petro Poroshenko (elected after the Maidan events in May 2014), during his visit to Israel in December 2015, delivered a talk at the Knesset in which he apologized for "the crimes of some Ukrainians who

collaborated in the Holocaust," and claimed that "in Ukraine one could observe the formation of a political nation based on patriotism, common past, difficult current challenges and faith in our common European future" (Poroshenko 2015).

Olesya Khromeychuk is right in pointing out that "instead of encouraging an open and critical approach to the collective-national memory, successive Ukrainian governments replace one set of interpretations with another, leaving no room for a neutral discussion of Ukraine's controversial historical pages and thereby complicating further the unresolved conflicts with regard to the national past and the Ukrainian identity" (Khromeychuk 2013: 167). For the purpose of this chapter, the most important point is that all of those "sets of interpretations" have tended to close or dilute the topic of the Holocaust.

The Holocaust in Ukrainian History Textbooks

The most consistent implementation of Ukrainian nationalistic narrative has taken place on the pages of school history textbooks. The key components of this narrative as reflected here are a teleological approach to the nation-state as the highest aim and culmination of the historical process in Ukraine; a victimhood complex, whereby Ukrainians are portrayed as the autochthonous peaceful population, constantly forced to beat off the attacks of outside enemies; the description of Ukrainians as an internally monolithic group with developed democratic traditions; and the essentialization of the current political and ethnic boundaries of Ukraine.

In 2001, after the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust, the Shoah was made a required topic in the Program of School Education adopted by the Ukrainian Ministry of Education. However, in practice, schoolteachers have a maximum of 20–30 min to spend on this topic out of the entire school year. And the Ukrainian history textbooks used for this subject are vastly inadequate to the cause. Here is a typical example of how the Holocaust is presented, taken from a 2006 textbook: "People of every ethnic group, mostly Jews, were executed in Kyiv's Babi Yar on every Tuesday and Friday of the 103 weeks of the occupation. Every large Ukrainian city had its 'Babi Yar.' Altogether, 850,000 Jews became victims of the Nazis during the first months of the occupation" (Turchenko et al. 2006: 21).

What is missing in this short passage and in the textbook more broadly are the words "Holocaust" and "Shoah," the concept of the "Righteous among the nations," a description of the racist ideology of Nazism and its practical implementation; and there is not a single word about collaboration with the Nazis. According to Johan Dietsch (2006), in Ukrainian history textbooks, "Jews are only portrayed as targets for destruction at the beginning of the occupation" (165), and "there are no distinctions made between the different policies pursued against different ethnic and political groups in Ukraine throughout the war" (167).

It is not easy to say what an average Ukrainian student knows and thinks about the Holocaust. In 2002 one of the research projects aimed at discovering the attitudes towards the Holocaust among pupils from four schools (including a Jewish one) in Kharkiv through analysis of their essays, written on request: "Please write about the Nazi extermination of the Jews." The conclusion was:

> [P]ractically all who participated in the study knew of the mass extermination of the Jews, even though not everyone knew the word "Holocaust" itself. The majority expressed an obviously negative attitude toward the Holocaust and voiced the need to remember it and not to allow anything like it to happen again. On the other hand, the number (17% of the students) manifesting anti-Semitic and racist views was quite large, as was the number more generally under the sway of stereotypes and prejudices. (Ivanova 2004: 418)

This shows that the topic of the Holocaust remains under-represented in the history teaching in Ukraine and that its promotion lacks the understanding and support of the Ministry of Education. It seems especially problematic in the context of the complicated family and personal stories of the twentieth century in various parts of Ukraine.

Ukrainian and Jewish Memories of the Twentieth Century: Clash and Reconciliation

As Henry Abramson has pointed out, "the centuries-old mutual history of Ukrainians and Jews is unique in that most of the heroes of the former are the villains of the latter" (Abramson 1994: 40). This statement applies to the key figures in this history: Bohdan Khmelnytsky, the

leader of the Cossack uprising in 1648; the leaders of the Koliivshchyna movement in 1768; and Symon Petliura, the head of the Directorate of Ukraine, a provisional Ukrainian government in 1918–1920. All of these important figures are usually associated with anti-Semitism and anti-Jewish violence. A stereotypical "readiness to believe in Ukrainian anti-Semitism" (Gitelman 1990: 455) has deeply influenced a common statement in Jewish memoirs of the Holocaust that "Ukrainians were the worst" of the perpetrators (Himka 2009). A new phase in Ukrainian–Jewish relations, often seen "as a reductive competition of victimization" (Petrovsky-Shtern 2009: 7), was opened by the attempts of some Ukrainians—initially in the American diaspora and later in post-Soviet Ukraine—to categorize the man-made Great Famine of 1932–1933 as a "Ukrainian Holocaust" and to accuse the Jews (indirectly, if not overtly), as a group over-represented in the Communist party and the NKVD, of organizing the starvation of Ukrainian peasants (Dietsch 2006).

The notion of the "Ukrainian Holocaust" as well as all forms of accusations against the Jews have been strongly criticized by leading Ukrainian intellectuals, including the prominent supporters of the genocidal definition of the Great Famine (Kulchyts'kyi 2008). At the same time, the attitude toward the Soviet past remains a bone of contention in Ukraine. As Vitalii Nakhmanovych, a Jewish Ukrainian historian of the Holocaust, has pointed out, at the emotional level there is a sense in which Jewish memory in Ukraine coincides with the Soviet one, because both the October Revolution and the victory in World War II have more positive connotations for Jews than they do for Ukrainians. For Jews, these two emblematic events of Soviet history also meant the repeal of the discriminatory laws and the end of the Shoah (Nakhmanovych 2013a). For the Ukrainian national narrative, by contrast, both events marked the failure of attempts at gaining state independence. Furthermore, in the Ukrainian nationalistic narrative, the Jews are often accused of "siding with the imperial powers" and oppressors of Ukraine (e.g. the Russian empire, Poland, Soviet Russia). Such claims require some qualification. For a Jew to make the anti-imperial (pro-Ukrainian) cultural and political choice may have been exceptional, but was not impossible (Petrovsky-Shtern 2009). One such example is Leonid Pervomais'kyi (Illia Gurevich) (1908–1973), one of the most prominent Ukrainian poets of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, mainstream representations of Jewish history in today's Ukraine (as in Soviet times) ignore the complex ways in which this history is interwoven with

the Ukrainian cultural context. For instance, as Tanya Richardson points out, Jewish narratives of local history in Odessa "implicitly reinforce the idea that Odessa is situated in Russian cultural geographies but not Ukrainian ones" (Richardson 2008: 197).

The traditional conflict of cultural representations remains an important issue. Oleg Rostovtsev, the spokesman of the Dnipropetrovsk Jewish community and the producer of the Jewish TV program "Alef," has argued for the necessity of facing this challenge, to start an open sincere discussion about the isolation of the two discourses and the "mirror reflection of estrangement" in both of them (Rostovtsev 2012a). Attempts to overcome the mutual stereotypes ("Ukrainians will always remain our enemies" *vs.* "Jews always side with the stronger non-Ukrainian power") have also been made by some Ukrainian journalists and intellectuals. For example, the only Ukrainian language weekly, *Ukrains'kyi Tyzhden'*, published a special supplement titled "Anti-Semitism, Ukrainophobia: Two Sides of Political Manipulation" (2012). It stressed the "impossibility of being a Ukrainian patriot and anti-Semite at the same time." Although the attempt to blame "two totalitarianisms" for all the problems in Ukrainian–Jewish relations and to understate the scale of anti-Semitism in Ukraine raises historical objections, the good intention to free the Ukrainian nation-building project from anti-Jewish references could be seen as an important step forward. This trend developed further during the "Euromaidan" (October 2013–March 2014) when several important writers, artists, and businessmen of Jewish origin openly supported the pro-European movement and condemned Russian intervention in Ukraine.

Thinking along the same lines, the Director of the Ukrainian Center for Holocaust Studies in Kyiv Anatolii Podol's'kyi has stressed the importance of understanding that the Holocaust "is an integral part of the common history of Ukraine" (Podol's'kyi 2009: 57). In other words, Podol's'kyi tried to formulate an idea similar to that put forward in the works of Jan T. Gross, that the murdered Jews were as much Polish (or Ukrainian) as they were Jewish (Connelly 2012). The next step in this direction could be a broader understanding of Ukrainian culture, which could absorb, but not appropriate, figures such as one of the founders of modern literature in Yiddish who spent more than forty years of his life in Ukraine, Sholem Aleichem (1859–1916); the

Polish writer of Jewish origin Bruno Schulz (1892–1942), who was born and killed in his native eastern Galician town of Drohobych not far from Lviv; or Kyiv-born human rights activist and writer Lev Kopelev (1912–1997).

Memorial Sites and Sites of Forgetting

It is only since the late 1980s that it has become possible to identify "Soviet civilians" as Jews on memorial signs in places where massacres were committed. While many memorials to the victims of the Shoah were indeed built throughout Ukraine, unfortunately, no catalog of these exists as yet. As a rule, it was local or international Jewish organizations that initiated these commemorations. The authorities have not impeded this activity but have not, for their part, come up with their own initiatives. At the same time, representatives of the local authorities have usually been present at the openings of these memorials.

Since Holocaust remembrance in Ukraine has been a product of private rather than state-sponsored initiatives, regional differences have immediately become obvious. In eastern Galicia, where practically no Jewish communities remained after the war, Jewish historical sites, with rare exceptions, are in a neglected and paltry state (Bartov 2007). In contrast, the city of Dnipropetrovsk, which has been dubbed the Jewish capital of Ukraine due to its thriving and very influential Jewish community, saw the construction of the huge Menorah-community center in 2012. It consists of seven towers shaped like a menorah, and includes a synagogue, kosher restaurants and hotels, a hospital, meeting halls, and so on. It is the largest of its kind in Europe (Portnov and Portnova 2012).

In some cases, the inscriptions on Soviet memorials to civilian victims of World War II have been corrected and information about Jewish victims added. In other cases, a new memorial sign has been erected next to the Soviet one. This happened, for example, in Dnipropetrovsk, where more than 10,000 Jews were executed by the Nazis in the Botanical Gardens in October 1941. A modest gray obelisk was erected at the site (now known as Gagarin Park) in the 1970s. Its inscription in Russian said "To Civilians, Victims of Fascism." The first authorized meeting to commemorate the victims of the Holocaust explicitly was held in Gagarin Park in May 1989. On 14 April 2001, a new monument built with money raised by the local Jewish community was erected next to

the Soviet one. The new inscription in Hebrew and in Ukrainian reads: "Here lie the remains of 10,000 Jews, Dnipropetrovsk's civilians, brutally murdered on October 13–14, 1941, as well as those of our numerous venerable brothers and sisters, tortured and executed by Fascists in 1941–1943" (Portnov and Portnova 2012: 35).

On the surface, the juxtaposition of the two obelisks, describing the same historical event differently, is uncontroversial. There have been no surveys on the attitude of the city residents, or in particular of local students towards the two memorials. (Both memorials are located on the Dnipropetrovsk University campus built after the war, near the university stadium, library and dormitories.) One may assume that not too many visitors to the Gagarin Park notice the juxtaposition of the two obelisks, and an even smaller number of them might ponder their link to the same historical event. This illustrates again the weakness of the knowledge of the Holocaust in many ordinary Ukrainians' perception of history.

The lack of a coherent government policy regarding Holocaust remembrance is most clearly manifested at Babi Yar, which is the main symbol of the mass executions of the Jewish population in the occupied Soviet territories. The Soviet memorial there was built as late as 1976; plaques with inscriptions in Hebrew and Russian explicitly referring to Jewish victims were added in 1989. Many monuments dedicated to various groups of victims have been erected here since Ukraine gained independence. One of them honors members of Melnyk's wing of the OUN who were executed at this spot. The famous line from Evgeni Evtushenko's poem—"No monument stands over Babi Yar"—sounds like bitter irony in today's Kyiv as various communities of memory compete for ownership of this site. At present, there are 29 monuments in the grounds of the National Memorial Park "Babi Yar." The park also serves as a recreation zone and hosts children's playgrounds, retail booths, and so on. Despite President Yushchenko's decision to turn Babi Yar into a National Memorial Park, the Ukrainian government has no vision for the future of this site of memory. An international academic conference held in Kyiv on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the Babi Yar massacre was funded by the French embassy and not by the Ukrainian government (Tiaglyi et al. 2012).

Rather exceptional against the background of the Ukrainian authorities' usual indifference to the issue of the Holocaust is an initiative by the Lviv City Council, in cooperation with the Center for Urban History, to issue an international call for projects aimed at increasing the visibility

of the Jewish sites of memory in Lviv. These include the former Jewish cemetery, the old Jewish quarter and the site of the Janowski concentration camp (Birman 2013). Such direct engagement with local Jewish history and the memory of the Holocaust could help to transform Lviv's commemorative landscape, currently strongly dominated by exclusive Ukrainian nationalism (Amar 2011: 394).

Most often, commemoration of the Holocaust victims in Ukraine is a result of the activities of international Jewish organizations and the embassies of Western European countries, sometimes supported by local Ukrainian businessmen of Jewish origin. For instance, the American Jewish Committee together with the German government has sponsored projects on building memorials in Bakhiv, Prokhid and Kysylyn (all in the Volhynia region), Ostrozhets (Rivne region) and Rava-Ruska (Lviv region). The Ukrainian documentary on the Holocaust *Spell Your Name* (dir. Serhii Bukovsky 2006) was produced by Steven Spielberg in cooperation with the Ukrainian philanthropist Viktor Pinchuk. The latter also participated in bringing to Ukraine the exhibition "The Holocaust by Bullets" prepared by the Memorial de la Shoah in Paris on the basis of fieldwork (both archeological and oral history) conducted in Ukraine by the Roman Catholic Priest Patrick Desbois.[1]

In view of the large number of memorial signs, however modest, the lack of museums devoted to the Holocaust and Jewish history in Ukraine is noticeable. One infamous story in this regard took place at Babi Yar, where a Jewish community center with an attached museum funded by the American Joint Distribution Committee was supposed to be built in 2002. However, local protests against an ill-conceived construction on the mass burial ground disrupted this project. The Public Committee for Perpetuating the Memory of the Babi Yar Victims[2] was created to prevent the construction and to develop alternative projects of memorialization. On several occasions the Committee called attention to the imperative that the memory of Babi Yar be open to all groups of victims, and proclaimed its commitment to "the fundamental principle of an inclusive, rather than exclusive, approach" (Nakhmanovych 2013b). The Head of the Committee Vitalii Nakhmanovych approached the Holocaust as a "generalizing symbol for all tragedies experienced by various peoples in the twentieth century":

> Are we ("we" in a broader sense) ready to recognize that various peoples have suffered just as much from horrifying genocides and mass

> persecutions here and now, before us and after us? Hence, our goal is not just cultivating Holocaust memory as such, but using it for integrating the memory and knowledge of the causes and meaning of such events in general. (Gluzman and Nakhmanovych 2013)

At present, the only major museum devoted to the Holocaust in Ukraine is the Dnipropetrovsk Museum of Jewish History and the Holocaust opened in 2012 in the Menorah-community center mentioned above. The creators of the museum proudly call it "one of the largest" in the post-Soviet space. Work on the exhibition documenting the post-war Jewish history in Ukraine continues. The Holocaust is presented as the Rubicon of Jewish history in Ukraine. The exhibition makes extensive use of multimedia technology, undoubtedly inspired by the Holocaust Museum in Washington and Yad Vashem in Jerusalem. Original exhibits on the diverse and contradictory history of the Dnipropetrovsk Jews are especially interesting. For example, the authors of the exhibition made a somewhat controversial attempt to merge the Holocaust narrative with the nationalistic narrative of the UPA. The exhibition "The Ukrainians and the 'Jewish Question' in World War Two" consists of three parts: first, anti-Jewish pogroms in 1941; second, the phenomenon of bystanders[3]; and third, the theme of Jews' voluntary participation in the UPA. Essentially, and symptomatically for Ukrainian Holocaust discourse, the last part uncritically reproduces certain elements of the UPA's propaganda.

The development of the commemorative activities and museums devoted to the places of Jewish history in Ukraine reflects the current state of the historical research and is closely related to the existing research programs and initiatives on, broadly speaking, Jewish studies.

Centers for Holocaust and Jewish Studies in Ukraine

After the Soviet authorities closed the Cabinet for Jewish Language, Literature and Folklore at the Academy of Sciences in Kyiv in 1949, there were no institutionalized Jewish studies in Soviet Ukraine (Borovoi 1993). It would also have been impossible to defend a dissertation on the Holocaust and the Jewish experience of World War II in Ukraine during the Soviet period. It was only from the 1990s that Jewish studies started to be re-established in Ukraine, however, mostly outside of the existing state-sponsored academic institutions. Several new centers

for Holocaust studies in Ukraine were created by younger generations of historians with the support of international foundations and foreign embassies. Some of them deserve to be described in detail here.

The Ukrainian Center for Holocaust Studies (UCHS) in Kyiv[4] is known for its numerous publications (including the best Ukrainian journal in the field, *Holocaust and the Present [Holokost i suchasnist`]* that has published 13 volumes from 2005 to 2015), seminars for history teachers, school competitions and oral history projects (collecting the testimonies of Holocaust survivors and people who helped the Jews during the Nazi occupation) and translations from English.

The Tkuma[5] Ukrainian Institute for Holocaust Studies is affiliated with the Jewish Community of Dnipropetrovsk. It publishes the series *Problems of Holocaust History* (7 volumes so far), organizes academic conferences and seminars, and takes care of the Dnipropetrovsk Museum of Jewish History.

Both centers strive to cooperate with Ukrainian academia and to promote international Holocaust studies in Ukraine. At the same time, their activities are not limited to academic research, but tend to adopt the broader agenda of civic education. In recent years, the Kyiv-based UCHS has organized a number of seminars and exhibitions on "teaching tolerance on the basis of the Holocaust" and developed guidelines for school teachers on how to teach the local history of the Shoah under the motto *Protect the Memory* (Schupak 2005; Podol's'kyi 2007). Such publications strive to compensate for the omissions and limitations of Ukrainian textbooks. They put the Shoah into the broader context of ethnic discrimination, genocide and the need of tolerance; depict the human dimension of the tragedy of Ukrainian Jews through the stories of real people; and present the variety of behavior of the non-Jewish population under the occupation, from participating in the Nazi crimes to rescuing their Jewish neighbors.

The third research institution, the Center for Studies of the History and Culture of Eastern-European Jews is affiliated with the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy. It publishes the cultural and academic journal *Yehupets* (23 volumes so far) as well as books on Jewish studies and Ukrainian–Jewish relations. The Center also develops the curricula of the Jewish Studies for the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy (a similar program was also announced at the Ukrainian Catholic University (UCU) in Lviv in 2012). Both UCU and the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy were created after 1991 and are usually considered to be the main Western-oriented higher education institutions in Ukraine.

Several important academic conferences and research projects on Holocaust history have been held by the Center for Urban History of East Central Europe in Lviv. This Center is a unique private research institution that conducts an annual summer school on Judaica. In addition, significant publications on Ukrainian–Jewish relations regularly appear in such journals as *Krytyka*, *Ї*, *Ukraïna Moderna*, and on the intellectual web-portal historians.in.ua. Some of these publications are critical of the Ukrainian nationalistic narrative and the misrepresentations of the Jewish memory, but one should not overemphasize their influence on public discourse in the country. Despite several enthusiastic initiatives mentioned above, academic degrees in Jewish studies are not offered in Ukraine, although several Ph.D. dissertations on the local aspects of the Holocaust have been defended in the recent years. In general, it is too early to talk about a mature institutional environment for Holocaust and Jewish studies in Ukraine, but important preconditions for its formation and development do exist.

Realities and Perspectives of the Ukrainian Public Discourse on the Holocaust

The difficult nature of the public discussion of the Holocaust in post-Soviet Ukraine is a rather obvious fact. Both the absence of desire and the absence of skills to touch on this theme in the official discourse of the Ukrainian state indicate a serious problem due to the lack of an adequate language and the experience necessary for discussing this topic in the Ukrainian public sphere. Countries of Eastern and Central Europe—from Lithuania and Poland to Romania—have had geopolitical incentives to hold such discussions because they have had real prospects of joining the European Union, which had made the remembrance of the murdered Jews a cornerstone and a major symbol of humanitarian values (Judt 2010). In the case of Ukraine, these incentives have been weak (compare Stryjek 2013). The Ukrainian government has steered away from an active position on the Holocaust, and has made practically no efforts towards the integration of the history of the Shoah into a national narrative of World War II and Victory Day.

A national consensus on the issues surrounding World War II remembrance is a prerequisite for a broad public discussion of the Holocaust and the collaboration of Ukrainians that would be comparable to the

debate about Jedwabne in Poland. Such a consensus, which, of course, does not mean total unanimity, is necessary in order to foster a critical attitude toward the past as an issue concerning the whole society, rather than only the "Banderites in Galicia" or "post-Soviet Creoles." In the current socio-political situation, any attempt to discuss, for example, the issue of collaboration openly and publicly, immediately becomes a bone of contention, as previously observed, between two competing positions: the nationalistic and the Soviet. The latter position considers the collaboration issue as a problem concerning only the nationalistic underground, and does not take into account the real complexity of the issue. As Timothy Snyder has noted, in central and eastern Ukraine during World War II, Ukrainian nationalism was of "no significance as a political movement," yet "here, as in the rest of the occupied Soviet Union, the Germans had no trouble finding local assistance and the murder rates of Jews were as high, or higher, than in western Ukraine" (Snyder 2013). In other words, the problem of collaboration and participation in the Holocaust is not limited to a single region or a single movement. And the coexistence of two competing images of the war in Ukraine is not equivalent to a pluralistic situation.

In view of the environment surrounding the Holocaust remembrance issue in Ukraine, producing special publications and conducting summer schools and seminars are left to private initiatives, mainly to international and local Jewish organizations. A very important multifaceted question comes up within the framework of the foreign-funded projects, regarding whether it is possible—and if so, how—to transfer the normative standards of commemorating the Holocaust, formed mainly in the USA and Germany, to the fundamentally different post-Soviet social and cultural sphere.

Jewish activities in the country are fragmented rather than consolidated at the national level and they occur not "in Ukraine," but in specific locations where local Jewish organizations are active (Rostovtsev 2012b). Thus, there are obvious regional discrepancies regarding Holocaust remembrance. While some pieces of local Jewish history are only just beginning to enter the public sphere in Lviv, where pro-European sentiments somewhat oddly go along with a glorification of integral nationalism, in Dnipropetrovsk, where the Jewish community is active and influential, Jewish memory has largely smooth relations with the Soviet narrative of war which prevails in eastern and southern Ukraine.

David Marples' claim that "Ukrainians are probably no better and no worse than other peoples in offering a conception of the Second World War that contains more distortions than corroborated facts" (Marples 2007: 312) leads to an important question: Why is the Holocaust important for the Ukrainian national narrative? The discussion of this question in Ukraine has taken just the first steps, and these steps remain quite inconspicuous in mass consciousness. It seems that inclusion of the Holocaust in public debate and school textbooks would not only challenge the national direction of Ukrainian history (Dietsch 2006: 170), but problematize the still influential Soviet narrative of war as well. The major point of this chapter is that a reflective discussion of the Holocaust could productively relativize both nationalistic and Soviet self-righteous narratives of World War II and open new creative possibilities for post-Soviet Ukraine's state politics of memory.

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Notes

1. Father Patrick Desbois conducted thousands of interviews with local witnesses of the Holocaust trying to identify sites of mass extermination and burial of the Jewish population in the Ukrainian province. "Holocaust by Bullets" exhibition, based on the results of this unique research project, travelled throughout Ukraine and Europe. See also his book (Desbois 2009).
2. http://www.kby.kiev.ua/komitet/.
3. Interestingly, the English word *bystander* that is part of the triad victims–bystanders–perpetrators is not translated into Ukrainian, just transliterated into Cyrillic.
4. UCHS is located in the building of the Ivan Kuras Institute for Political and Ethnic Studies, but independent of it. The UCHS website with full texts of the publications is http://www.holocaust.kiev.ua/eng/index.html.
5. *Tkuma* is a Hebrew word that means "revival" or "rebirth." For Tkuma`s website with full texts of publications, see: http://tkuma.dp.ua/index.php/en/.

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CHAPTER 13

The "Partisan Republic": Colonial Myths and Memory Wars in Belarus

Simon Lewis

A short story by Belarusian prose writer Vasil Bykau, entitled *Ruzhovy Tuman* ("The Rosy Fog," 1997), opens as follows. Shortly after the collapse of the Soviet Union, a deaf-and-dumb old man approaches a Lenin monument on a national day of remembrance in a Belarusian village. Another veteran notes how little he has changed since World War II: "Look, it's Barsuk! … Still alive, would you believe … And, it seems, he's still the same" (Bykau 1997: 126). The narrator comments on the strangeness of Barsuk being "the same," and asks: "is life or nature the cause of this?" He then tentatively answers his own question: "Or perhaps, it's the rosy fog of deceit, which circumstances won't allow to dissipate" (ibid.: 127). It soon becomes clear that Barsuk's uncanny lack of change is the result of the silencing of memory in Belarus during the

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intervening period between the war and the post-Soviet present day. In other words, the protagonist's ritual commemoration of Soviet power (embodied by Lenin) is inextricably linked to a (false) memory of the partisan war. Barsuk arrives from Western Belarus early in the war, having lost all of his family, and is consigned to a pauper's life because he is unable to fight due to his disability. He ends up surviving the war thanks to a pair of partisans, who provide him with ration cards which enable him to obtain supplies from the German occupation forces, supplies which he then shares with the partisans. Once the war is over, Barsuk continues to think fondly of the partisans, nurturing an idealized vision of the partisan movement, and in particular the men who ensured his material provision and thus his survival. Never does he discover the foundational lie behind his fortune: that the ration cards were counterfeit documents produced by the partisans themselves, and that the partisans were using him, risking his life and fully prepared to let him die in the (quite likely) event that the plan were to fail.

Under post-war socialism, Barsuk was never exposed to any version of history which could contradict his rosy view of the partisan movement, so could never learn the truth: unable to hear or speak, he could only rely on written accounts, rather than participate in or overhear informal, unrecorded conversations between veterans.[1] Meanwhile, the other villagers knew all along that Barsuk's belief was false: "after the war, the story of Barsuk became known to many. In fact, only Barsuk didn't know" (ibid.: 129). However, whilst the story implies that ordinary Belarusians knew that the partisan myth was a mystification, it also suggests that people only *openly* revealed their indifference to official war memory after 1991.The attitude of the veterans who encounter Barsuk at the story's beginning is bemused and condescending, and they treat him as an object of curiosity and a relic of the past. Yet, the veterans appear themselves self-satisfied and lacking in individuality: "*they were all* without their caps and hats … with severe, doleful expressions on their elderly faces" (ibid.: 126, emphasis added); they also continue to gather at the victory monument themselves, thereby revealing their own adherence to expired myths. The story concludes with a comment from the narrator that: "Maybe we should just let him live in his rosy fog, live out his days bringing flowers to the base of the monument" (ibid.: 126). Thus, the narrator appears to side with public opinion, portraying Barsuk

as an oddity who poses no harm and an object of innocuous laughter. At the same time, however, the story implicates *all* of the villagers in tacit collaboration; they outwardly played along with the discourse of the partisan myth until political circumstances changed, and even then, their behavior remained within the Soviet mold. The rosy fog may be thickest around Barsuk, but it affects everyone. For those who have lived in it their whole lives, clarity of vision is only relative, and it is never possible to know whether one has left it entirely.

In an essay written around the same time, Bykau gives another name to the Soviet ideology of remembrance: "anti-memory." He argues that "people's memories about [the war] are not only getting shorter, but are being replaced by anti-memory [*antypamiats'*], actively capitulating to propagandistic stereotypes" (ibid.: 34). In other words, lived experience had been all but displaced, and official myth had taken hold as the dominant form of knowledge. Bykau's use of this term echoes that of the Holocaust scholar Geoffrey Hartman, who defines *anti-memory* as "something that displays the colours of memory, like the commemoration at Bitburg cemetery [by Ronald Reagan in 1985], but drifts towards the closure of forgetful ritualization" (Hartman 1996: 10). Hartman denotes a cultural representation of the past which closes the book on history and thereby becomes an appropriation of it: as his chosen example suggests, concerns of political expediency may overshadow vital work of memory and mourning. In both cases, anti-memory represents betrayal of the dead and deception of the living. Anti-memory for Bykau is a discourse of untruth, propagated by an authoritarian state as a means of exerting control over a subjugated population. Hartman, on the other hand, explicates a means of deferring trauma: when an event such as the Holocaust is commemorated tokenistically, through empty gestures rather than an honest exploration of the terrible past, the wound is only patched over, never healed.

This chapter combines the two ideas to argue that the Soviet myth of the "Partisan Republic," as Belarus came to be known, displaced trauma, attempting to delimit the contours of memory but only deferring the painful process of coming to terms with the past. In addition, it examines the creation of a monolithic image of Soviet Belarusianness based on the memory of the war, that is the construct of the Partisan Republic, as a form of colonial discourse—a means of imposing hegemonic identity

norms on a dominated population. Accordingly, both the Soviet-era resistance to this myth by authors including Bykau and the unmaking of the edifice in the post-Soviet era are analyzed in terms of post-colonial theory.

Post-colonial perspectives on Belarus tend to fall into two categories. On the one hand, contemporary scholars and intellectuals in Belarus such as Uladzimir Abushenka, Valiantsin Akudovich and Viachaslau Rakitski have propounded diverse reimaginings of Belarusian history and identity (Abushenka 2003; Akudovich 2007; Rakitski 2010). What these models have in common is their exploration of Belarus as a borderland, a peripheral territory alienated from itself due to the multiple legacies of colonial subjugation—with Poland, Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union identified as historical oppressors (although the relationship with Poland is treated more ambiguously than that with Russia). With varying degrees of sophistication, these theorists imply a moral and/or intellectual imperative to reconstruct a lost "Belarusianness": they essentialize national identity, whether as a "creole" phenomenon (Abushenka), a mode of "absence" (Akudovich), or by suggesting that colonialism has destroyed an "authentic" Belarusianness which existed in a mythical past (Rakitski).

The second trend is represented by scholars working in Western academia, such as Elena Gapova, Alexander Pershai and Serguei Oushakine. Often directly polemicizing with the above category of Belarusian intellectuals, they take apart the latter's colonial reading of Belarusian history. Critically analyzing the narratives produced by Belarusian intellectuals, they posit that the post-colonial condition is a discursive construct generated by politically motivated strategies of narrating the nation: Belarusian post-colonialism is the sum total of the post-colonial myths being articulated by scholars and activists in post-Soviet Belarus (Gapova 2004; Pershai 2012: 121–141; Oushakine 2013). Whilst this understanding of post-coloniality is unquestionably more nuanced than the primordialist ideas being produced by Belarus-based intellectuals, it discredits the latter's pronouncements as "perpetual laments of self-victimization" (Oushakine 2013: 287) and discounts the possibility of a Soviet colonial situation a priori. As a result, these scholars tend to effectively nullify the temporal connotations of the very term "post-colonialism."

A close examination of Belarusian culture in both the late-Soviet and post-Soviet periods reveals a third kind of Belarusian (post-)coloniality, which both avoids the engenderment of nationalist dogma and reflects

on historical states of subalternity. This Belarusian post-colonialism exists in literary, cinematic and artistic media and is challenging and innovative; its interpretation requires that theoretical models and categories from "traditional" post-colonial paradigms be adapted (see Lewis 2013). An important distinction is that the construction of memory was central to Soviet colonial discourse, an idea captured in Serhy Yekelchyk's (2004) term "empire of memory." According to theorists of Western colonialism such as Frantz Fanon and Albert Memmi, colonization destroys the memory of the colonized: Fanon wrote that "[c]olonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it" (Fanon 1967: 169); Memmi similarly argued that "[the colonized] draws less and less from his past. The colonizer never even recognized that he had one" (Memmi 1990: 146). In Soviet times, however, the Belarusian past was not only destroyed, but also constructed anew: a particular version of the republic's past became a tool for prolonging Soviet domination over the territory and the people. The cult of victory in the Great Patriotic War made powerful claims on Belarusian identity, positing the nation's "heroism" as proof of their loyalty to the Soviet project. The imposition of selective memory was an instrument of Sovietization.

In the Soviet Union after the death of Stalin, Bernhard Giesen's (2004) two paradigms of memory, triumph and trauma, were opposed to each other politically.[2] The discourse of the Soviet state was unwaveringly triumphalist, while works by key authors who had experienced the war firsthand, including Vasil Bykau, were replete with trauma. Frequently, characters in late-Soviet-era Belarusian novels and short stories are tormented by their wartime memories; alternatively, they do not remember events at all, but are forced to relive them through flashbacks occurring at critical junctures—they are traumatized by the horrors of war, which return to haunt them.[3] Exploring the silences and disjunctures of the national memoryscape—and thereby exposing the hollowness of the official slogan "No-one is forgotten, nothing is forgotten"—a number of now-classic authors, filmmakers and artists made the war the central theme of Belarusian culture but refused the mantle of the Partisan Republic. An alternative, non-canonical Belarusianness can be gleaned from their works, sometimes concealed between the lines (as shall be seen in the case of Bykau), and sometimes declared openly (to be demonstrated here in the example of Uladzimir Karatkevich). Their

revisionist historical narratives bear features of anti-colonial writing and lay bare the traumas of war, a dual process that enables Belarusian identity to begin to come to terms with the secondary trauma of colonial subjugation. What emerges in the wake of this process is a post-colonial hybridity, as the last section of the chapter will attempt to show.

The Collective Hero and the Denial of Injury: The Making of the Partisan Republic

The Partisan Republic was a cultural construct upheld by the institutions of the Soviet state. Memory was manufactured and manipulated by means of centralized control over both the "hardware" and "software" of cultural memory, that is respectively, the physical manifestations of memory, e.g. monuments and buildings, and the body of texts that describe, discuss and delimit the relevance of the past (Etkind 2009).

Two complementary but distinct strategies are available for the top-down control of memory, one productive and the other reductive. The first is myth making, an essentially creative endeavor involving the production and standardization of one or more dominant narratives; this process also requires that competing versions be erased, a fact to which we shall return in more detail. A myth is not necessarily false. Belarus was indeed the most important theater of partisan warfare, its thick forests and marshy terrain providing the ideal conditions for stealth combat (Snyder 2010: 234). According to official Soviet statistics, by January 1944, 65% of the entire underground resistance was based there, or 121,903 individuals in 723 partisan units (Musial 2004: 21). Rather, myth is a result of the monologization of language: "[a]n absolute fusion of word with concrete ideological meaning is, without a doubt, one of the most fundamental constitutive features of myth" (Bakhtin 1994: 369). Thus, the representation of the past became a "mechanism of the state-political system," and "books by historians did not contain any mysteries and were as similar to each other as twin brothers, only rarely differing in the set of concrete facts they discussed, and in some of the finer points" (Afanas'ev 1996: 21, 35). The sheer volume of essentially similar material about the war made the cult of victory a cultural monolith[4]: in the post-war decades, the national academy was filled with newly qualified historians, from barely three dozen in 1936 to over a thousand by the beginning of the 1980s; during the 1960s, no fewer than

60% of academics employed at the Institute of History of the republic's Academy of Sciences worked in the department of the history of the war (Lindner 1999: 377–379).

Whilst the cult of the Great Patriotic War was central to claims of Soviet legitimacy throughout the Union (Tumarkin 1994; Weiner 2001), in the Belarusian SSR it practically became the *raison d'être* of the republic. The official representation of the war held that "the Belarusian people, sparing neither its strength nor life itself, unanimously raised itself for the deathly battle against Fascism, proved itself to be a fighting nation, defending its socialist Fatherland, freedom and independence as one with all the peoples of the USSR" (Romanovskii 1975: 12). The central trope of *unity* among all Belarusians, who were loyal communists by definition, was most powerfully conveyed through the lionization of the "Belarusian partisans" who acted as a metonymic marker for Belarusian wartime activity as a whole. The partisans fought heroically under the guidance of the Communist Party, enabling victory, and the "[Belarusian] population always saw in the partisans their own armed forces, their defenders, who did everything in their power to rescue them" (Romanovskii 1975: 43). The partisans embodied the people and vice versa. According to this circular logic, all Belarusians defended the USSR because of their innate love of Soviet power, and the wartime "heroism" of the Belarusian people was the epitome of their timeless Soviet devotion. The partisans' heroics were the proof in the pudding of Soviet Belarusian identity.

A somewhat far-fetched example can illustrate the rhetorical mechanism by which national heroism was asserted as the essential feature of the war in Belarus. Although the partisans were a quintessentially *collective* hero, a number of individuals such as Konstantin Zaslonov, Ded ("Grandfather"/"Old Man") Talash and Marat Kazei were identified as exemplary models, and one of them was given superhuman attributes in a serious work of history. Ded Talash was a Soviet partisan from a previous era, the Polish-Russian war of 1919–1921, who had been immortalized in a novella of the high Stalinist period (Iakub Kolas's *Dryhva*/"The Quagmire," 1934). In 1941, according to an edition of the *History of the Belarusian SSR*, he "again joined the partisans. The glorious deeds of the 100-year-old Ded Talash bear witness to the fact that the entire Belarusian nation joined the partisan struggle" (Gorbunov et al. 1961: 454). Such statements may sound plainly fanciful if evaluated in terms of their truth claims, but they bear witness to the tenacity of the identity

claims being made on Belarus. In effect, the narrative mechanism is a twofold metonymy: the incredible deeds of the stand-out individual speak for the transcendental triumph of the partisan collective, and the glory of Soviet-led partisan movement—often called the "Belarusian partisans"—define the essence of the Belarusian nation: the partisan republic.

Meanwhile, as cities were rebuilt and steadily expanded, dozens of streets were named after war heroes and giant victory monuments adorned central squares; as a result, Minsk became nothing short of "a giant war memorial" (Lastouski et al. 2010: 266). A Belarusian Museum of the Great Patriotic War was founded in Moscow while the war was still in progress, and transferred to the center of Minsk as soon as the Belarusian territory had been regained (Huzhalouski 2004: 38–39); a grand redesigning in the 1960s scaled up the institution and relocated it so it became the city's architectural centerpiece, in Central Square where it still stands (since 1984 named October Square).[5] The 1960s saw the opening of several new "supershrines" (Tumarkin 1994: 143) of the Soviet Belarusian war cult, including the Brest Fortress Memorial Complex and the Mound of Glory on the outskirts of Minsk. A string of films that glorified anti-Nazi resistance, such as *Konstantin Zaslonov* (dir. V. Korsh-Sablin and A. Faintsymmer, 1949) and the six-part epic *Ruiny streliaiut* ("The Ruins are Shooting," dir. V. Chatverykau, 1970–1972) earned the republic's film studio the unofficial name of "Partizanfilm."

Alongside myth making, the second strategy for manipulating memory is what Rory Finnin calls "discursive cleansing," a destructive process more powerful than mere censorship, defined as "disciplining speech through coordinated epistemic and physical violence that is both retrospective and prospective in its application" (Etkind et al. 2012: 16). Public discourse about the war was purged of undesirable histories, and moreover, physical bodies were removed from society and thereby silenced, such as many thousands of wartime returnees who were sent to the camps in punishment for their wartime transgressions, real or imagined (Weiner 1999, 2001).

Among the historical realities that were erased were facts which stained the heroic image, such as partisan detraction to the auxiliary police (whether by coercion, opportunism, or ideological preference), former policemen becoming partisans, or unsavory aspects of partisan life including the coercion of civilians into providing food and supplies. Local collaboration with the occupation forces was the great taboo

of Soviet historiography of the war: the only monograph on this topic (Ramanouski 1964) employed the militant rhetoric of memory war and fundamentally de-historicized its subject, rendering it a tirade against Belarusian nationalism and anti-Soviet Western "imperialism." Discursive cleansing thereby contributed to the "partisanization" of the war by fully transferring the site of agency to the collective: it was the *political* body which both suffered and retaliated, and finally claimed victory. This entailed the purging of any signs of the traumatic effects of war as experienced by individuals. As a rule, individual deaths feature in war narratives as sacrifices in pursuit of the greater cause. Claiming the Soviet collective as the only actor in the hostilities, official memory generalized ethnicity, blotting out the specific suffering of Belarus' considerable Jewish population, as well as Jewish involvement in partisan units (Rudling 2013).

At the most basic level, however, it was *bodily injury* in general, and its sensory correlate *pain*, which were purged from the official memoryscape. A clear illustration of this is the treatment of Vasil Bykau's novella *Mertvym ne balits'* ("The Dead Feel No Pain," 1965): the author endured a battery of scathing reviews from conservative critics. A lengthy review in the newspaper *Sovetskaia Belorussiia*, for example, was entitled "Against the Truth of Life" (*Vopreki pravde zhizni*), and inveighed against the work's "distortion of historical truth and veracity" and "incorrect, distorted representation of the sources of the mass heroism of the Soviet people" (Shapran 2009: 408–409).

The story's narrative alternates, like many of Bykau's works, between the present day and the protagonist's experience of war. It opens with the former officer Vasilevich arriving in Minsk to attend the 20th anniversary celebrations of the victory over Nazism. Significantly, he is physically disabled because of wounds suffered during the war. A chance encounter with a stranger causes him to remember vividly his wartime sufferings, many of which were exacerbated by the abuse of power by a SMERSH officer in the unit—whom the present-day stranger resembles. Vasilevich's newfound acquaintance turns out to be more than a lookalike of his erstwhile tormentor, however. He is also an ideological double, who served on Stalinist military tribunals and sentenced many soldiers to the camps. The arguments which ensue between the two present-day characters reflect the epistemological conflict which characterized Belarusian society in the Thaw era. Vasilevich suffers physically and emotionally, and is alienated from the triumphant celebrations which are taking place in the city. He feels threatened by the fireworks which

accompany the victory parade, and remains on the fringes of the event. In a passage censored from the published version, he riles against the Minsk war memorial, calling it an "oversized, not very original monument, built in the spirit of the pompous canons of the cult [i.e. Stalin] period… It has absolutely nothing to do with Belarus" (Shapran 2009: 376). The story's title theme of pain features throughout, and an anguished refrain closes the narrative: "If only it weren't for the pain" (Bykau 1980–1982: 347). Vasilevich, whose name is derived from the author's own, is a vehicle for Bykau's own objections to the victory cult—he returns pain to the memory of the war. His interlocutor in the story is clearly the embodiment of official triumphalism. Bykau must have grasped the cruel irony of his reviewers echoing the opinions of his character in their attack on his work. Indeed, he later reflected on the episode that: "nowhere did [those reviewers] write anything about SMERSH, the NKVD, or the KGB. As if the story had nothing to do with those 'organs.' I read and couldn't understand: is this deliberate, or have they misunderstood my work?" (Shapran 2009: 428). Avoiding the subject matter of the novella, Bykau's critics demonstrated that the partisan myth was not subject to criteria of historical verisimilitude and verifiability—despite the assertions they made. Rather, it was a matter of identity and faith. The Soviet version of memory, with no connection to Belarus in Bykau's opinion, was above all a sign of the nation's Soviet fidelity, both past and present.

Alternative History and Alternative Memory

Despite the troubles he endured with *Mertvym ne balits'*, Vasil Bykau persisted in his literary struggle against the victory cult. His dedication to treating a multiplicity of war-related perspectives and themes over several decades is a testament to the perniciousness of official memory as he perceived it. During the war, the author had been a frontline officer, yet it was the unfamiliar experiences of partisans that he depicted in many of his mature works.

The novella *Kruhlanski most* ("The Bridge at Kruhlany," 1968) is perhaps the most direct affront to partisan heroization. The story revolves around two teenagers, both victims in different ways. The first is the principal character Stsiapan Taukach, who is for his young years a seasoned partisan. At the outset of the tale, he is in confinement at a partisan base, awaiting a military tribunal. The remainder tells us why: on a

routine exercise in a four-man team, he is betrayed by two of his fellow fighters. They firstly allow the leader, a positive character much admired by Taukach, to die needlessly. They then recruit a second eager teenager with the sole aim of using him as a decoy, in a plan which is designed to sacrifice the boy's life. Angered by the second death in particular, Taukach shoots the more senior of the two rogue partisans and becomes embroiled in a disciplinary affair. The narrative ends with Taukach waiting for the commissar's arrival, confident of his innocence.

In this story, the roughness of partisan life is laid bare at multiple levels. If the sinister betrayals which make up the basic plot show "the banditry, anarchy and cruelty of the some of the partisans' detachments" (Gimpelevich 2005: 85), the portrayal of the motivations behind the actions conveys the ordinariness of individual fighters. Foreshadowing devices at the outset also point to abjection as a defining experience of many partisans: a description of Taukach's harsh treatment at the hands of his partisan captors is followed by an overview of his first experiences of partisan life. His recruitment was marred by mistakes which led to temporary imprisonment, after which he was abandoned by his fellows during a police raid, and similar cases of mistreatment (Bykau 1980–1982: 3/348). The lack of a definitive conclusion to the story—that we never find out whether Taukach is acquitted—makes the young man's defiance the lasting impression of the novella. Rather than the justice of Soviet military law, it is Taukach's youthful honesty and bravery which shines through, against his sharply contrasting partisan experience.

The joint taboos of collaboration and betrayal are the themes of stories such as *Sotnikau* (translated as "The Ordeal," 1970) and *Paistsi i ne viarnutstsa* ("To Go and Not Return," 1978). Both feature pairs of partisans as protagonists, one of whom decides to defect. The narration alternates between the two perspectives, a dense explication of their innermost thoughts on a situation-by-situation basis. This device serves to chart the various justifications for treacherous behavior, thereby contextualizing immorality and muddying the ethical portraits of the characters. They are neither partisan heroes, nor inherently evil collaborators—the moral dualism of Soviet official discourse is negated. These two novellas also feature minor characters whose exchanges with the partisans cast the movement as a whole in an ambivalent light. For instance, one of the lesser heroes of *Sotnikau* is a village elder (*starasta*, a local official acting as liaison with the occupation forces). When the two partisans come to ask him for food, he firstly implies that partisans usually

come looking for vodka, then he exposes the shallowness of their line of questioning:

> Do you read?
> Sure, reading is no harm to anyone.
> Soviet or German books?
> The Bible.
> Oh yeah? Interesting. I've never seen a Bible…
> …
> You are an enemy. And do you know how we deal with our enemies?
> That depends on to whom one is an enemy. – replied the old man, as if not seeing the impending danger, quietly but firmly.
> To your own. Russians.
> To my own I am no enemy.(Bykau 1980–1982: 2/157–158)

If the first exchange is a veiled attack on the dualism of the Soviet worldview, the second reinforces that notion by revealing the foreignness of the two main characters to the place in which the action unfolds. The *starasta*, as we learn later in the story, is indeed acting in the interests of his villagers in working for the occupiers, protecting them by acting as a buffer. Whilst the partisans consider themselves and, importantly, the *starasta*, to be "Russians," this is a label he rejects. Rather than answering positively that he is a Belarusian, however, he covertly reproduces an age-old trope of Belarusian anti-colonial discourse, the trope of "localness" (*tuteishasts'*): he does not name an identity (see Pershai 2008). Similarly, in a scene in *Paistsi i ne viarnutstsa*, the partisans ask some villagers whether any "foreigners" (*chuzhyia*) have entered the village. Their answer is non-committal, suggesting that partisans are just as foreign as Germans (Bykau 1980– 1982: 3/155).

It may be argued that in these stories, the partisans are themselves victims—a message which in itself contradicts the official pathos surrounding these quintessential heroes. Their deceit, betrayal, and other troubles are conditioned by circumstance and universal human weakness. They are not, as individuals, at fault. However it is the smaller characters, the non-combatants, the innocent and often terrified villagers, who put the partisan woes into perspective. Bykau endows his fighters with individual voices, giving us elaborate pictures of the tragedy of warfare, but his real sympathies appear to lie with those who speak in fragments, only in answer to questions posed, who avoid the gaze of others

and are half-hidden from the reader. This is an impression reinforced by a later novel, *Znak Biady* ("The Sign of Misfortune," 1982) in which just such a family becomes the main focus. In Bykau's partisan stories, these villagers are the subaltern under-class created by Soviet myth making, mistreated by the history of the war and excluded from its memory. Bykau's skill lies in the way he illuminates their presence, countering the pathos of the partisan myth with the espousal of a hidden, undefinable Belarusian identity.

Whereas Bykau confronts the partisan myth by writing alternative histories, the anti-colonial rhetoric of Uladzimir Karatkevich (1930–1984) rests on alternative memories: i.e. if Bykau's stories animate the history of the war in a vastly different light to the state discourse, Karatkevich offers other periods of the past as models for Belarusian identity. Karatkevich's *oeuvre* includes very few works related to twentieth-century conflict; he is best known for his historical fiction set in the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries. The major work which combines these two subjects is his first full-length novel, *Nel'ha zabyts'* ("One Cannot Forget," 1962), whose publication as a book was suppressed for two decades.[6] Here, a connection is made between the January Uprising of 1863 (an event to which he would return several times in later writings) and the present day, in the form of a love story. The anti-Russian rebellion of Polish–Lithuanian nobles in the territory of Belarus acts as the reference point for an ideological resistance which identifies the official Soviet war cult as an oppressor of national memory.

In the prologue, set in the 1860s during the uprising in Belarus, a Russian officer helps a desperate woman whose insurgent husband is awaiting execution by the imperial authorities. The officer, Horau (Gorov in Russian), is appalled by the behavior of his fellow officer, a loyalist Belarusian who impedes the woman's passage to the site of the execution. The woman fails to reach her husband, even though she holds a letter of pardon signed by the Tsar himself. Horau then challenges his companion to a duel, killing him, thereby avenging the wrongly killed warrior and earning the respect of the aggrieved wife. In the main body of the novel, the action moves to Moscow a century later, where an aspiring author named Hrynkevich arrives from Belarus to join a literary-historical study course. Hrynkevich, a descendant of the prologue's executed insurgent, falls in love with an instructor named Iryna Horava, whose ancestor was the officer who tried to save the elder Hrynkevich. The two protagonists' ultimately tragic romance provides a sentimental

reconciliation after the historical injustices depicted in the prologue. Moreover, Hrynkevich's memory of World War II adds a dimension of confrontation with official methods of commemoration.

Traumatized as a teenager by events of the war, Hrynkevich's bitterness translates into a discontent with the post-war aftermath in Soviet society. He has a number of arguments about the meaning of World War II, including with Horava:

> I am thinking about the people whose lives were shattered by those events, who lay with their eyes wide open in 1937 and then voluntarily went to the front in 1941. Maybe it's worth staying silent, not destroying those people's faith.
>
> Here Hrynkevich lost his temper.
>
> Don't you think that the truth is better than hypnosis? (Karatkevich 1987–1990: 3/150)

Hrynkevich's experience of Stalinist terror is only hinted at, but his memorial forthrightness is a theme which permeates his character throughout the novel. Through the figure of Hrynkevich, Karatkevich exposes the yawning gap between official discourse's purportedly comprehensive commemoration of the war and the denial of injury, in this case inflicted by Stalinism. Later on in the story, Hrynkevich has another row with a fellow intellectual about the significance of the bygone war. He looks through the window and becomes immersed in his thoughts: "In all certainty, when they shot the [World War II] partisans, the blood must have been very red against such snow. The motherland [*radzima*], red against white, blood on snow" (Karatkevich 1987–1990: 3/202). In this phrase, Karatkevich evokes the colors of the pre-Soviet alternative Belarusian flag,[7] a white-red-white tricolor drawn into the snow in the blood of executed partisans. Thus, Hrynkevich mourns the losses of the past by making connections between different eras: in the first example, World War II and Stalin's purges; and in the second, the war and the nationalist uprisings of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Similarly, the tragic romance with Horava, which unfolds amidst the echoes of the 1863 rebellion, turns into mourning after her death from a fatal disease. These acts of double mourning hint at the connection between military rebellions such as the January Uprising and an alternative war memory: both are forms of national resistance. Hrynkevich's musing on the

partisans' blood implies that for Karatkevich, the partisan idea belongs to an older tradition of resistance, the memory of which need not contradict a process of sincere mourning for the victims of the recent war.

Bykau and Karatkevich were among a generation of artists who defied official strictures and articulated a perspective which was grounded in local (Belarusian) history, especially the trauma of personal injury and collective loss. The former's alternative histories of the war foregrounded individual experience and resonated with readers' actual memories of the war: Bykau "gave them all a voice" (Gimpelevich 2005: vii). The latter's appeal to remember and value pre-Soviet models of Belarusian identity debunked official representations of the war. Thus, in their anti-colonial discourse, they enabled modes of identity other than the Soviet uniformity demanded by the concept of the Partisan Republic.

The Partisan as Pastiche and Parody: Belarusian Partisans and De-Sovietization

In the aftermath of the collapse of the USSR, the state-sanctioned restrictions on discourse were lifted. As the horizons of permissible expression broadened, so the reconstitution of a post-colonial subjectivity within new political borders became a narrative imperative. As a now-classic analysis of post-colonial writing puts it: "[t]he crucial function of language as a medium of power demands that post-colonial writing define itself by seizing the language of the centre and replacing it with a discourse fully adapted to the colonized place" (Ashcroft et al. 1989: 38). In Belarus after 1991, "seizing the language of the centre" did not necessarily mean using *Russian* as a linguistic medium in which to deconstruct colonial discourse as, say, African and Caribbean literatures have embraced English and French, subverting those languages' lexical and grammatical norms in the process. Rather, the task of reconstructing a "discourse fully adapted to the colonized place" involved the *ideational* rewriting of Belarusian memory: it inevitably entailed a de-Sovietization of the partisan concept.

However, in Belarus, unlike in other ex-Soviet republics, (re-)nationalization was a short-lived affair. Aliaksandr Lukashenka came to power in 1994 on an electoral platform that tapped Soviet nostalgia, and since then has employed a policy of recycling the Soviet past in order to prop up its state ideology (Lewis 2011: 372–373). Expensive renovations of

Soviet-era museums, combined with new memorials and monuments, have contributed to an expansion of the commemorative arsenal, whilst the state has also gradually adapted its practices to fulfill a nationalizing agenda: the war myth has become less Soviet and more Belarusian, but the sacralization of partisan heroes is largely unchanged (Rudling 2008 and Chap. 3; Marples 2012, 2014).

Meanwhile, a new generation of artists and activists has sought to redefine Belarusian identity. Whereas some have sought to nationalize the partisan, others have preferred a strategy that can be defined as hybridity, i.e. the "creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zones produced by colonization" (Ashcroft et al. 2000: 96). The former open themselves up to the criticism that "the efforts of the native to rehabilitate himself and to escape from the claws of colonialism are logically inscribed from the same point of view of colonialism" (Fanon 1967: 170). However, the advocates of a hybrid, in-between Belarusianness seek "not to restore lost forms of telling and knowing but to pick apart the disjunctive moments of discourses authorized by colonialism and authenticated by the nation-state and rearticulate them in another—third—form of writing history" (Prakash 1992: 17).

A glaring example of the tendency to nationalize the partisan is a collective of historians based around the journal *Belaruski Rezystans* ("Belarusian Resistance"). Siarhei Iorsh and his collaborators have tried to "return" what they claim is the "real Belarusian partisan" to national memory: according to their argument, an anti-Soviet Belarusian insurgent army was fighting the Soviet order in the forests of Belarus until as late as 1957 (see also Rudling, Chap. 3). However, their research is based on a suspect methodology and makes highly exaggerated claims, using few archival sources; instead, they tend to rely on the memoirs of émigré intellectuals, who had little or no contact with Belarus at the time of writing, and were clearly motivated to aggrandize anti-Soviet, nationalist sentiment in Belarus (Grzybowski 2011: 515–530). In addition to these historical writings on the Belarusian partisan, a number of "documentary" films have been made and aired under the label of "PartyzanFilm" (*ПартызанFilm,* using Belarusian spelling), placing an uncompromising nationalist slant on the historical record. Thus, in their *Belarus under German Occupation* ("Belarus' pad nemetskai akupatsyiai," 2009), the Nazi *Generalkommissar* Wilhelm Kube is incongruously glorified as a Belarusian nationalist.[8]

A non-historicizing nationalization of the partisan is achieved by the rock outfit N.R.M. (*Nezalezhnaia Respublika Mroia*, "Independent Republic of Dreams"), which has enjoyed great popularity in post-Soviet Belarus partly thanks to its espoused patriotism. In 1997, they released a studio album ("Made in N.R.M.") in which partisan themes play a major role. These songs, the most explicit of which is named simply *Partyzanskaia*, declare that Belarusians are indeed partisans, proud sons of their homeland who fight foreign occupation:

> [Chorus]
> We are partisans, forest brothers.
> We are partisans, on familiar terms with war.
> We are partisans, we love our country.
> We'll cleanse our country from foreign bands.

The use of the present tense in the chorus, as well as verse lines such as "it's clear that we'll have to dig up our machine guns again, it's clear that we'll have to shoot again," leave no doubt that the foreign occupier is not the Germans of over five decades previously. Written and performed in the years following the rise of the Lukashenka dictatorship, N.R.M. reclaimed the partisan theme as a weapon in the contemporary political struggle against the pro-Russian and neo-Soviet Lukashenka regime. Whilst the regime resurrected Soviet modes of memory for its own legitimation, N.R.M turned those very same models against them through creative inversion.

A hybridizing approach is provided by the poet-humorist, Andrei Khadanovich. In his *Pesnia Belorusskikh partizan* ("Song of the Belarusian Partisans," 1999), Khadanovich employs absurd rhymes to subvert the Soviet partisan myth by poetic stealth. The poem is a parody of a famous Soviet military chant (*Oi tumany moi, rastumany* by M. Isakovskii and V. Zakharov) and is written in Russian, unusually for Khadanovich in particular and for Belarusian poetry in general; it has a few Belarusian words thrown into suggest that the partisans are speaking in the hybrid tongue of culturally Russified Belarusians. This linguistic choice makes a mockery of the idea of the *Belarusian* partisan, and the iconoclasm builds up in the verses. Khadanovich opens by crudely rhyming "Partisans" with "Tarzans," and sends the partisans off on a round-the-world trip to various exotic lands:

O, Tarzans, forest Tarzans!
Long live the monkey King Kong!
Off to camp went the Partisans,
Off to faraway Hong Kong! (Khadanovich 1999)

The middle stanzas are each set in a different country, and bizarre rhymes combine to give surreal events and descriptions which parody and sometimes invert the traditional heroic descriptions, for example:

The popular masses do not give in
and go off to Tibet to fight…
The Belarusian super-pilots
have still not suffered victory!

Following the arc of the poetic narrative, however, are subtle references to real politics: the partisans' bumbling world conquest sees them overhaul Pol Pot and Ho Chi Minh, and the final stanza's reference brings them to Belavezha Forest, suggesting the poem's "plot" is an adventure to destroy Communism which ends with the dissolution of the Soviet Union.[9] The poem's close has the Belarusian partisans issue a warning to Moscow after their symbolic "return" from Belavezha:

They cried "hooray" thrice,
at the edge of the Eurasian landmass,
and then turned around,
and departed for the Belavezha Forest.
And then they turned around again—
start shivering now, *Moskals*![10]

Khadanovich's poem hints at the ongoing relevance of the partisan myth in the de-Sovietized context, stripping the partisans of their Soviet-era triumphalism and also featuring the anti-imperial themes noted in the work of N.R.M above. However, the poet simultaneously ridicules the idea of an anti-colonial, nationalized partisan through linguistic trickery and the poetics of the absurd. This ambivalent treatment reveals a delicate awareness of the danger of restorative historicism in a nationalist vein: Khadanovich refuses to create new myths, preferring to side with ironic subversion.

The nationalistic commitment of N.R.M and the postmodern playfulness of Khadanovich are brought under one editorial "roof" by the contemporary journal *pARTisan*. Edited by conceptual artist Artur Klinau, the journal was founded in 2002 with an opening manifesto which provided an intriguing explanation of the choice of title. Klinau, who authored the text and was perhaps taking some of his cues from Karatkevich, argued that the theory of the partisan had been the lifeblood of Belarusian culture since the Partitions of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth at the end of the eighteenth century, when the Belarusian lands were fully incorporated into the Russian Empire. The imposition of the Soviet myth of the partisan, however, was an aberration which not only colonized the cultural space of Belarus but also overhauled the very concept of the partisan, causing the partisan idea to splinter within itself. In his words:

> The appearance in the Belarusian cultural sphere of the Soviet god-hero—the Great Partisan—creates a surrealistic image of the parallel existence of two partisans; meanwhile, the anti-partisan becomes the referent for the partisan. The anti-partisan is the demon in the midst of the simulacra of Soviet gods. (Klinau 2002: 19)

Now, therefore, the time has come to revive the Belarusian partisan via the figure of the anti-partisan, that is, by a cultural resistance which is at once partisan-like in its stealth and political commitment, but once-removed from the tainted legacy of the Soviet partisan.

Khadanovich and Klinau's explicitly postmodern treatments of the partisan support Linda Hutcheon's (1988: 4) assertion that literary postmodernism is "fundamentally contradictory, resolutely historical, and inescapably political." *Pesnia Belorusskikh partizan* and the manifesto for *pARTisan* are examples of *parody* of the Soviet myth of the Partisan Republic, and for Hutcheon "[p]arody is the perfect postmodern form, … for it paradoxically both incorporates and challenges that which it parodies" (ibid.: 11). The nationalized partisan, however, can be analyzed in terms of Fredric Jameson's rival theory of postmodernism, against which Hutcheon is polemicizing. For Jameson, postmodern culture can only be *pastiche*, because "the producers of culture have nowhere to turn but to the past: the imitation of dead styles, speech through all the masks and voices stored up in imaginary museum of … culture" (Jameson 1991: 17–18).

Therefore, the postmodern and the post-colonial combine and coexist in Belarus' post-Soviet space. The Belarusian post-colonial condition is characterized, on the one hand, by a dependency on the lingering hold of the colonial myth: the partisan is still the master signifier of Belarusian identity and it consigns culture to pastiche. On the other hand, the partisan has been appropriated by the opposition discourse: a new, hybrid form of Belarusianness is emerging as a cultural construct, in which the Soviet partisan is parodied and reinvented. Nonetheless, both trends compete with the Soviet and neo-Soviet partisan myth. The renewed memory wars of "Europe's last dictatorship" call for a reformed and de-Sovietized partisan.

Conclusion

"Fighting" against official discourse in the face of censorship and state violence is inherently similar to being a partisan. Thus, the Soviet-era prose of Vasil Bykau (1924–2003) has been described as "a campaign of partisan warfare, of indefatigable, relentless attrition [against Soviet orthodoxy]" (Ellis 2011: 108). Originally a colonial myth, the Partisan Republic also became a metaphor describing the epistemic struggle raging within Soviet Belarusian society. The irony of the Partisan Republic creating the conditions for a new guerrilla war of memory was not lost on Belarusian culture, and became an explicit theme after 1991.

Perhaps fittingly, cultural rebellion does remain metaphorically underground. State violence has been a defining feature of Lukashenka's Belarus, and there is a history of reaction against writers, musicians and historians whose criticism of the regime threatens to gain popularity. For example, the first major independent film in Belarus, Andrei Kudzinenka's *Okkupatsiia. Misterii* ("Mysterium Occupation," 2003) was banned from cinemas for more than five years, ostensibly for its unfavorable portrayal of the wartime partisans (see Lewis 2011). In 2010, the opposition newspaper *Narodnaia Volia* ran a series of historical articles which challenged official histories of the war and the partisan movement. Its offices were picketed by angered supporters of Lukashenka and the newspaper was threatened with closure. In late 2012, the scholarly journal *ARCHE* was closed down, and its editor-in-chief forced to emigrate, after a forthcoming issue on the history of the war was confiscated by the authorities. (The journal re-emerged several months later, with a new editor.)

Yet the cultural forms which do reach the surface represent a distinct movement which seeks not only to "correct" the history of the partisan movement at the factual level, but to appropriate the myth and redefine Belarusian identity. Analysis of the diverse forms of the de-Sovietization of the partisan idea reveals that in post-Soviet conditions the partisan is far from a unifying symbol. Multiple narratives of Belarusian partisanhood compete with each other, as well as with the Lukashenka regime's resurrection of Soviet myths about the war. It has even been suggested, on the pages of *pARTisan* itself, that the partisan idea is "dead" because the political conditions under which culture evolves have changed (Artsimovich et al. 2012: 10–12). In summer 2016, a project was announced that hints at the further self-ironization of the partisan idea. Andrei Kureichik, a popular film director, declared that he was working on an "eccentric youth comedy—if you like, a [Belarusian] equivalent of *The Hangover* [a 2009 Hollywood comedy]." The project is entitled *PARTY-ZAN Film*, and the plot is said to follow young Belarusians trying to "make money … by making films! By using the fact that in our country, from year to year, war films are made" ("'Partizanfil'm.'" 2016). Kureichik, it appears, is embarking on a near-total carnivalization of the partisan trope, satirically mixing Hollywood-style comic debauchery with a mocking treatment of the country's traditional obsession with World War II. Detaching "partisan" culture from both the Soviet cult of the war and the post-Soviet opposition to this cult, *PARTY-ZAN Film* may be the next heuristic step in the decolonization of Belarusian war memory.

Thus, when Belarusians now say, perhaps jokingly, that their country is a Partisan Republic, they may no longer be referring to World War II. And if they are, they may no longer be proud of it. Whether they have found a way out of Bykau's "rosy fog" is debatable, but they are increasingly aware of it, and learning to live with its effects.

Notes

1. In Bykau's novel *Kar'er* (1986), conversation plays an important role in bringing to the surface suppressed stories about the war.
2. See Kukulin (2005) for an overview of this theme in the Russian context.
3. See, for instance, prose works by Ales' Adamovich, Vasil Bykau and Viktar Kaz'ko.

4. There was, of course, a significant shift in emphasis from the Stalin period to later decades. Whereas during Stalin's lifetime, official historians underlined the leader's personal role in guiding the Soviet Union to victory, later histories emphasize the collective leadership of the Communist Party. Also, there were major shifts from decade to decade regarding the aspects of the war (and Soviet history generally) which could be spoken of. However, especially in Belarus, the overall mode of representation of the Great Patriotic War was very stable. See Kulish (1996) and Kuz'menko (1998).
5. In contrast, a central Museum of the Great Patriotic War in Moscow was planned from the 1950s onwards, but only opened in 1995.
6. Having first appeared in the literary journal *Polymia* in 1962, it only appeared in book form in 1982.
7. The white-red-white tricolor was the symbol of the short-lived Belarusian People's Republic of 1918, and later of anti-Soviet Belarusian nationalist movements. It is still actively used today as an alternate national flag by opponents of Aliaksandr Lukashenka.
8. See Rein (2011: 148–152) for a detailed explication of Kube and his motives.
9. The signing of the Belavezha accords in December 1991 officially brought an end to the USSR.
10. The untranslatable *moskali* is a pejorative term which denotes Russians.

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PART V

Local Cases

CHAPTER 14

Great Patriotic War Memory in Sevastopol: Making Sense of Suffering in the "City of Military Glory"

Judy Brown

Sevastopol is renowned above all else as a city of military history. Founded by and for Russia's Imperial Black Sea Fleet in 1783, Sevastopol was subjected to a year-long siege during the Crimean War[1]; this siege, known in Russian as the Defense of Sevastopol [*Oborona Sevastopolia*] (1854–1855), became the foundation of Sevastopol's mythology as a "city of military glory"—a standard phrase used for the city and a trope of heroism, bravery and steadfastness. This mythologizing is also a strategic act of forgetting. First, it incorporates only selective elements of the history of the Sevastopol area while overlooking, for example, the 342-year history of the Crimean Khanate (1441–1783).[2] Secondly, remembering the Defense of Sevastopol as an episode of military glory elides the fact the defense ultimately ended in military defeat: the Allied campaign succeeded in capturing Sevastopol and almost eradicated Russia's naval presence in the Black Sea.[3]

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The siege of the city during the Great Patriotic War became known as the second Defense of Sevastopol (1941–1942).[4] Recalling even by its name the "first defense," the second Defense of Sevastopol bolstered the mythology of the "city of military glory." Furthermore, the extraordinarily rapid reconstruction of the city in the first post-war decade reinforced a narrative cycle that came to be attached to the city's history, according to which devastation is followed by renewal. In 1954 (when the main phase of the city's reconstruction was complete) the Soviet authorities marked the reconstruction of the Panorama Museum (commemorating the first defense) and the centenary of the outbreak of the Crimean War by awarding Sevastopol the Order of the Red Banner. This sealed the city's reputation as "Legendary Sevastopol": indeed a song of the same name, first performed in 1954, and adopted as the city's official anthem in 1994, praises the city as "impregnable to foes," its "glory, magnified in battle," and extols it as the "pride of Russian [*russkikh*] sailors." Again, this emphasis on military glory, and especially "impregnability to the enemy," appears misplaced, because the second Defense of Sevastopol also ended in humiliating defeat and colossal loss of life following the Nazi invasion in 1942.

In the post-war era Sevastopol was a closed city on account of its naval base; all entrants to the city required permits. Nevertheless, the city became an important destination for Soviet educational tourism; during this time an entire industry of patriotic tourism developed around the mythology of Sevastopol as a "city of military glory." After the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991, Crimea became part of an independent Ukraine (the peninsula had been transferred from the Russian SSR to the Ukrainian SSR in 1954). This led to a heated dispute in the early 1990s, as the question of Sevastopol's status and the legitimacy of its Soviet-era transfer to Ukraine were put under intense scrutiny (Sasse 2007). Ukraine's borders were finally accepted in the Treaty of Friendship and Borders (1997), wherein Russia gave up any territorial claims to Sevastopol. Nonetheless, the "true ownership" of Sevastopol remained a popular political issue for some politicians in Moscow, and notably a hobbyhorse for former mayor of Moscow, Yurii Luzhkov.[5] Furthermore, Sevastopol's martial function, including the continued stationing of Russia's Black Sea Fleet in the port, provides a living link with the city's naval heritage and a prime contour of Sevastopol's cultural memory.

In regional and national disputes of the post-Independence era, arguments over right and legitimacy have very often been underpinned by

appeals to historical memory. Recently, the justification given for Russia's dramatic annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol in March 2014 was couched in terms of "historical significance," "common history" and "an unwavering conviction … passed down through the generations."[6] The data in this chapter are mostly taken from my fieldwork in Sevastopol in 2011 and 2012; these offer therefore an intriguing snapshot of Sevastopol's commemorative culture in the years preceding annexation. My research demonstrates some of the ways in which Sevastopol's local commemorative infrastructure, relying on dynamic grassroots enthusiasm, had been serving to promote a Russian imperial identity for the inhabitants and to maintain the image of their city as a "city of military glory."

Between "Lost City" and "City of Loss"

Much of the previous research and popular discourse on Sevastopol has focused on questions of who owns, who lost, or who is entitled to Sevastopol, but the central paradox of the city's cultural memory is that, rather than being a lost city, Sevastopol is a city of loss. Likewise, rather than being a city of military glory, Sevastopol is a city of military defeats that have been recast as glory. This raises two important questions: what accounts for the enduring nature of this myth of military glory? And to what extent do these glory narratives accommodate inglorious episodes in Sevastopol's past?

There is an important distinction to be drawn at the outset between loss and defeat. All conflicts involve losses, but defeat is a particular kind of loss—it entails a humiliating surrender and formal recognition of the absence of military glory. The ways in which defeat can be recast as glory are various. First, and most prominent in national geopolitics, is lacrimogenesis—the location of national glory in past suffering.[7] Secondly, glory can be located in defeat, especially where the defense held off the eventual defeat for longer. Thirdly, where there was eventual glory, irrespective of defeat, there can be a sublimation of the details of the defeat in such a way that glory is all that remains in memory. Rather than enumerating the various ways in which defeat is reframed as glory in Sevastopol's case, in this chapter I suggest reasons for the endurance of Sevastopol's glory narrative over time by exploring the city's robust commemorative apparatus and military heritage. I also consider the commemoration of ill-fitting elements of Sevastopol's war history within and outside the

glory narratives, namely: loss of life through wartime Soviet mismanagement, and ethnic minority experience during the war.

Performative Memory Culture in the "City of Military Glory"

I follow Paul Connerton (1989: 3–4) in conceptualizing cultural memory as embodiment or "performance," whereby "images of the past and recollected knowledge of the past … are conveyed and sustained by (more or less ritual) performances." This is a research approach that is especially apt in the case of Sevastopol, since the city has a buoyant local performative memory culture, as seen in parades, historical re-enactments, municipal holidays, tourism, sightseeing, ceremonies and martial displays of various kinds. Connerton's appeal to look at what the "bodies" are doing is also particularly productive here since the local population and space, unlike cultural texts, are limited resources, in the sense that the Crimean War, for example, could receive endless literary treatment and remediation yet only ever accrue a certain number of monuments and memorial events. In this section I show how Sevastopol's renown as a site of Russian (*rossiiskoi*) patriotic history is attributable not only to the city's myriad monuments, architectural continuity and cultural representation,[8] but to this dynamic local culture of memory performances.

Patriotic Educational Excursions

During the Soviet period, Sevastopol had a highly developed industry for state-run excursions (*ekskursii*)—guided tours around its historical landmarks with the aim of patriotic education.[9] Although Sevastopol was a closed city to which visits were possible only by permit, about one million visitors came to Sevastopol annually as part of organized tour groups. At its peak in the 1970s and 1980s, the city's Bureau for Travel and Excursions offered 150 different guided tours and employed 300 tour guides on any given day.[10]

After the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the opening up of Sevastopol in 1997, the tourism industry adopted a free-market model and numerous new tourist firms came into existence. Yet the legacy of the Soviet experience has played a significant role in shaping the current tourism landscape. During the time of my fieldwork, the ten main

tour operators, which largely developed out of the Soviet-era Bureau for Travel and Excursions, were able in effect to maintain their monopoly over city tours by pooling clients to form excursion groups. As a result, city excursions tended to be rather homogeneous, since the tour guides had all undergone similar professional training that was designed in Soviet times.

My interview data with some of these tour guides demonstrate the gravity and zeal with which they continue to approach their excursion work. They recounted to me in detail the heroic deeds of Russian sailors during the first Defense of Sevastopol (1854–1855) and of Red Army soldiers during the second Defense of Sevastopol (1941–1942) up to the liberation of the city on 9 May 1944. In contrast to the conventional tourist industry in Western Europe, the tour guides in Sevastopol saw their role first and foremost as to *instruct* rather than entertain or inform tourists—a clear reflection of the ongoing influence of the Soviet didactic tradition (Omel'chenko 1991: 30–53; Noack 2006: 288–289). Indeed the tour guides I spoke with drew the distinction that whereas guides simply show people objects and places, excursion leaders "undertake the more complex task of showing historical objects, recounting the history in details, then drawing out meaning and conveying a patriotic lesson for tourists." In this way excursion leaders are seen as a source of authority and thus also function as carriers of authorized memory. Furthermore, the Director of the Department for the Training of Tour Guides spoke about the importance of maintaining high standards for excursions and a unified approach to history, at a time when history is being "rethought even on the state level" and when the idea of "who was a hero" is being turned upside down.[11] This indicates another important contour of memory in Sevastopol: history is not only attributed truth-value, but is also constructed in defense against those who would "rewrite" it. Here the Director has in mind those state and educational reforms whereby the traditional Soviet version of history is rejected in favor of a national narrative for the history of Ukraine (Kasianov and Ther 2009: 7).

The composition of tourists to Sevastopol was likewise maintaining the trend of Soviet-style, information-rich sightseeing: anecdotal evidence suggests that Russian-speakers from Ukraine and the Russian Federation made up the vast majority of visitors to Sevastopol, which they regard as an important heritage site. Furthermore, Sevastopol is mapped securely on Russia's heritage trail by its leadership's concept of the "near abroad"[12] and the corresponding "compatriots policy" (1999)[13] which,

among other stipulations, requires Russia by law to provide support to cultural centers, museums, heritage groups, and so on.

During my fieldwork in Sevastopol in summer 2011, I went on four commercial tours of the city and three boat tours. While enacting their didactic memory performances, the tour guides made enthusiastic use of Sevastopol's built environment which boasts more than 2000 monuments (many in the historic center). Without exception, the historical accounts conveyed by the guides were laced with a strong master narrative of wartime devastation and suffering, followed by the miraculous feat of reconstruction, resulting in an overall image of heroism and military glory (Brown 2015).[14] The key narrative trope to crystallize out of their overview of the city's history, and a mainstay of the military glory mythology, was the image of the city's "two defenses."

The "first defense" is arguably the main event commemorated in Sevastopol's urban landscape (Plokhy 2000: 369–383; Qualls 2009: 195); however, it is not the main focus of Sevastopol's performative memory culture, a position occupied instead by Sevastopol's "second defense." This is an imperfect comparison since the very concept of Sevastopol's "*second* defense" commemorates the "*first* defense" and vice versa. However the sheer scale of societal participation mobilized around Great Patriotic War commemoration is dramatic and warrants special attention here.

Great Patriotic War Commemoration in Sevastopol

Victory Day Celebrations

Unlike the more recent local genesis of performative Crimean War memory (Brown 2013), performative memory of the Great Patriotic War in Sevastopol is supported by a strong cultural tradition surrounding "Victory" that is rooted in Soviet-era practice (notably instituted under Brezhnev). Sevastopol's memory calendar reaches its peak with the annual Victory Day celebrations, which are supported *en masse* by locals and attract thousands of visitors to the city.[15] In the run-up to Victory Day, the city's physical appearance is prepared: streets are meticulously cleaned and public places are given a fresh coat of white paint. During commemorative ceremonies, an official delegation from the City State Administration and the city council, often together with veterans' groups and members of the clergy, travels to visit the main memorial sites connected with the Great Patriotic War.[16] They ceremonially lay wreaths at

the Obelisk of Glory on Sapun Mountain; the Memorial Wall in honor of the Heroic Defense of Sevastopol 1941–1942 (opposite Nakhimov Square); and the neighboring Boulevard of Hero Cities. Although these ceremonial events are given saturated media coverage, other Victory Day activities must be considered separately for the more broadly participatory role they offer the public. These include battle re-enactments, the military parade, and commemorative "actions."

Battle Re-Enactments

Battle re-enactments are a common commemorative form, but can be powerfully evocative, especially when the re-enactment takes place at the original battle site. Every year amateur history groups from across Crimea, Ukraine, and Russia gather on Sapun Mountain just outside Sevastopol to re-enact the storming of this Nazi stronghold by Red Army soldiers on 7 May 1944. I attended the Storming of Sapun Mountain re-enactment in May 2012; the "soldiers," in full period costume and with original weaponry and military hardware, re-enacted the main stages of the battle, finishing by raising the Red Banner in victory.

Not only are the actors' roles performative, but so too are the audience's, since they perform as *witnesses* to historical events. The audience must first walk up Sapun Mountain (vehicle access is restricted to official delegates) and then sit or crouch down behind barbed wire fences to view the re-enactment. The performance is lively, loud, and at times frightening, as blank mines explode and unexpected low-flying airplanes drop blank "bombs" onto the mountainside. Following the re-enactment there is a jubilant, festival atmosphere: members of the public are served food from period field kitchen vans, listen to wartime songs performed live by "Red Army soldiers," and can talk with veterans as they walk through the crowds.

Participants of the Sapun Mountain re-enactment on 7 May (including historical re-enactors, veterans, and the audience) proceed to perform a Victory Day parade on 9 May, which simultaneously commemorates the liberation of Sevastopol from Nazi occupation in 1944 and the capitulation of Nazi Germany in 1945. This bringing together of three instances, a process which Oushakine (2013: 275) has called "chronographic suturing," also signifies the "suturing" together in Sevastopol of local and national events: the image of battle and wartime suffering is subsumed into a final tableau of local and national Victory, producing a powerful, emotive, and enduring commemorative act.

Victory Day Parade

On the morning of Victory Day, spectators line the parade route around the city's central municipal ring; they cheer the veterans as they pass, shouting "thank you!" and "congratulations!" while children run out to present them with flowers. This not only emotively re-enacts the original Victory Day parade through Red Square in 1945, but provides a strong sense of connection with, and indebtedness to, the veterans living locally in Sevastopol who are congratulated for their "double victory." Indeed, the relatively high number of veterans living locally (of 117,000 pensioners in Sevastopol, approximately 111,000 are veterans of war, of work, and of military service) imbues the parade with a strong air of authenticity.[17]

The veterans are followed in the parade by military and naval groupings, as well as Cossack regiments, historical re-enactors and political parties. Of particular interest is the participation of school leavers, who parade holding photographs of deceased grandparents who fought in the war. This participation (organized by school teachers in cooperation with veterans' associations) demonstrates a mechanism for the intergenerational transmission of memory: the young people are encouraged to fulfill their "duty to remember" (a key trope of Victory Day) by acting as literal "carriers of memory," reminding themselves and others of their ancestors' sacrifice. In a sense this practice, which resembles the Russian cultural tradition of carrying icons in religious processions, is a way of reaching back to recreate an older cultural form to replace a current one (the parade of veterans), which is now passing away.

Overall, the Victory Day parade constitutes a participatory spectacle, making an impression on the viewer but also eliciting their participation. This quality is also shared with the celebratory evening concert on Nakhimov Square, which features the communal singing of wartime songs (including local classics such as *Sevastopol Waltz* [1955] and *Legendary Sevastopol* [1954]) and a naval salute.

Search Detachments

Another major facet of Great Patriotic War commemoration in Sevastopol relates to the activities of civil-society search detachments—volunteers and history enthusiasts who undertake to recover the remains of Red Army soldiers, which are then identified if possible and given a military burial.[18] The chairman of Sevastopol's *Dom Veteranov* told me,

> Every year we discover the remains of about one hundred soldiers, for whom we hold a grand and ceremonious funeral before Victory Day, about the 5 or 6 of May. Other soldiers are present for this and priests carry out rites, as it ought to be done, and the remains are given back to the earth.[19]

With similar search activity undertaken across the post-Soviet space, this literal hunt for the past in the present differs from other Victory Day activities in that it preoccupies itself not with representations of the past, but with its material traces and the imperative, where possible, of making the unknown soldier *known*. It also underlines the continued importance of mourning to this celebratory holiday, understood within a framework of a "Victory" achieved through sacrifice.

The activities of these search detachments indicate a new way of perceiving the war, without challenging the prevailing glory narratives. As Oushakine (2013: 279) suggests in his discussion of "affective management" of Great Patriotic War commemoration,

> [t]raditional historical formats are perceived as ontological and affective barriers[… the alternative is associated not with questioning/deconstructing the dominant narrative … but with attempts to establish direct and perceptible connections with the military past—through authentic objects, human remains, or documentary footage.

These reburials indicate a further three shifts in the narrativization of wartime suffering: first, and as mentioned by the veterans' representative, the religious element of the ritual is foregrounded. Although this reflects a degree of continuity with the Soviet era, since the Soviet funeral ceremony never achieved popular acceptance (McDowell 1974: 256–270; Merridale 2000: 336–338, 354), this cooperation between church, civil society, and state demonstrates a reconfiguration in post-Soviet remembrance of war towards elevating the image of the Russian Orthodox patriot.

Secondly, the activities of *poiskoviki* (searchers) reflect a grassroots commemorative zeal. The search movement did not begin as a government-directed effort and in some instances represents the attempt to recover a history that the Soviet government had silenced, as in the case of the events at the 35th Coastal Battery (see below). Indeed, this movement shares commonalities with the civil-society search parties and organizations, such as the Russian NGO *Memorial*, that worked

feverishly in the 1980s and 1990s to locate the remains of victims of state terror (Merridale 2000: 378–411)—work that continues to this day.

Thirdly, the dead bodies of Red Army soldiers have "political lives," to borrow Katherine Verdery's phrase (1999: 22), in that reburials create a community of mourners that is constructed in ancestral relation to the dead.[20] The dead bodies are rendered part of Victory Day performances when they are ceremonially "returned" to the company of their comrades during reburials held annually ahead of Victory Day.[21] Reburials also connect *poiskoviki* from across the former Soviet Union in this act of mourning ("Poiskoviki nachali Vakhtu pamiati i v Sevastopole" 2013), thereby substantiating the rhetoric of "togetherness" that marks Great Patriotic War commemorations.

Patriotic Actions

While Sevastopol has a strong local memory of the Great Patriotic War, the drive to preserve a sense of shared Victory vis-à-vis the rest of the post-Soviet space is also powerful. An attractive quality of joint commemorative activity is the possibility it offers for skipping over the national level, which has been marked by sharp contestation in Ukraine, most notably under the Yushchenko administration. For example, Sevastopol takes part in the "Together We Were Victorious" festival every May, which aims to cultivate new cultural representations of a common victory.

A key cultural import in this regard is the new custom of displaying the St George's ribbon. Introduced in 2005 as a joint state–civil society initiative between journalists from Russian news agency *RIA Novosti* and the student organization *Student Community*, the St George's Ribbon campaign runs for about a week before Victory Day, during which time these black and orange ribbons are distributed among the public by a variety of actors, ranging from activists to traffic wardens. The ribbons are designed to be displayed in various ways, and are mainly accompanied by the motto, "I remember, I am proud." The campaign has been highly successful at establishing the ribbons as an overarching and unifying motif of Victory Day, including in Sevastopol where the ribbons are omnipresent around Victory Day, and displayed in/on cars year round. Often appearing alongside the Russian flag, these ribbons represent a strong identification with Russian culture, in opposition to perceived "Ukrainization." A new action, introduced through Sevastopol's

Dom Moskvy in 2012 and popularized through social media, involved displaying car stickers that read, "Thank you Grandfather for the Victory! [*Spasibo dedu za Pobedu!*]". As evidenced by such campaigns, remembrance of the Great Patriotic War constitutes a convenient mechanism for increasing shared sentiment across the post-Soviet space; meanwhile the degree of Russian triumphalism is indicative of Russia's role in promoting its position as successor to the Soviet state and main inheritor of Victory.

Heroic-Patriotic Education

Sevastopol's veterans' movement views the "patriotic education of young people" as their most urgent priority.[22] Each of the city's sixty-seven secondary schools is affiliated with one of the veterans' associations: the chairman of the veterans' association sits on the school board, ensures the school has a "museum of heroic-patriotic education" and organizes joint events with veterans. Every higher education institution is likewise affiliated to a veterans' organization, and it is through this link that the so-called "meeting of generations" is organized, in which students meet with and record the life stories of Great Patriotic War veterans.[23] This emphasis on "direct links" with the past elevates veterans as a vehicle of authorized or *authentic* memory and promotes the idea that the "truth" about the war can be learned only by hearing from those who were actually there.

Teachers similarly exercise their agency to provide heroic patriotic education. I interviewed secondary-school staff who teach the non-curricular subject "Sevastopol Studies," and actively support links with local veterans to organize patriotic actions. For example, primary school children take part in the "Good Morning, Veterans!" action at 8 am on Victory Day, which involves pinning up Victory-themed worksheets around doorways and city streets.[24]

As well as paying tribute to veterans, a certain proportion of this heroic-patriotic education involves more literal performative memory of the past. Final-year pupils compete to take part in "Post No. 1"—an honor guard at the eternal flame by the Defenders of Sevastopol memorial. Selected pupils are taken camping in the mountains, where they learn about military history and receive military training in preparation for their week-long guard duty.[25] The veterans claim this military training gives a more authentic air to this memory performance; however, it also links the commemoration of war with militarism more generally.

Silence and Absence in Sevastopol's Military Glory Narrative

Events at the 35th Coastal Battery (June–July 1942)

Although the activities in and around Victory Day represent the pinnacle of annual war commemorations, they do not fully reflect all aspects of recent Great Patriotic War memorialization in Sevastopol. A significant post-Soviet memory project was undertaken on the site of the 35th Coastal Battery in Cossack Bay—the last area held by Red Army soldiers before the end of their defense in July 1942. Local memory of this episode carries a strong critique of the Soviet military leadership, which gave permission for evacuation only of the fleet command and senior officers, leaving the remaining soldiers to the hands of Wehrmacht. An estimated 40,000 soldiers lost their lives at the site, with a further 80,000 to 100,000 taken into captivity (Manoshin 2001).

The period of glasnost' and the eventual collapse of the Soviet Union brought greater freedom for discussing alternative histories of the war years and engaging in civil society-led war commemoration. A memorialization project was launched for the 35th Coastal Battery site in 2007 by a joint endeavor between civil society groups and charitable foundations in Ukraine and Russia. In March 2008, work began on removing the remaining mines, artillery, and shrapnel from the earth, as well as exhuming the bodies of soldiers that lay in shallow graves. The remains of more than 150 soldiers were found and identified, bringing the list of names of defenders of Sevastopol known to have perished at the 35th Battery to more than 40,000 (Manoshin 2001). In 2013 a Russian documentary entitled *What the 35th Battery was Silent About* explores the Soviet authorities' decision to evacuate only the fleet command and leave the remaining soldiers to the hands of the Wehrmacht. The featured historian says, "they [the ordinary soldiers] were abandoned. In fact they were betrayed [*ikh predali*]" ("O chem molchala 35ia batareia" 2012).

The main commemorative day marked at the 35th Battery site is the *Day of Memory and Mourning* (Russia) or *Day of Mourning and Honoring the Memory of the Victims of War* (Ukraine), which takes place on 22 June to mark the German invasion of the Soviet Union. It is a somber commemoration marked by silence, ceremonial wreath-laying, and Orthodox choral music ("Vozlozhenie tsvetov 35ia batareia" 2013). The site, which many describe as highly emotive,[26] is now included on the itinerary for the official municipal wreath-laying ceremonies in the

lead-up to Victory Day. However, this holiday's metanarrative of sacrifice for the sake of the homeland cannot speak to the tragedy of the meaningless loss of life or the reality of Soviet mismanagement. Therefore, the site of the 35th Battery appears not only geographically but thematically far from the main Victory Day celebrations in the city center. Yet commemoration of this ill-fitting episode of Sevastopol's history within the city's glory narrative is swept up in the pantheon of Victory Day celebrations such that all suffering is seen to contribute to eventual "glory" through the narrative cycle of devastation followed by rebirth.

Another major absence is any discussion of national minority experience during the war. Insofar as municipal event organizers and veterans' groups deliberately emphasize supranational Soviet experience, sacrifice, and victory, it is deemed inappropriate to single out any one group. However, this overlooks the divergent experiences of different nationality groups during the war years, for example the Jewish population of the city and the "deported people" groups.

Commemoration of the Holocaust in Sevastopol

Award-winning journalist, activist and local history enthusiast Boris Gel'man is the leading expert on the history of Sevastopol's Jewish population; his publications, monthly newspaper *Rassvet* [Daybreak] and societal activities put him at the forefront of Jewish commemoration in the city.[27] His work is aimed at correcting the Soviet failure to acknowledge the Jewish victims of the Nazi occupation in Sevastopol and promoting the memory of Holocaust victims. Gel'man largely succeeds at this local memory project, although there are ways in which the Soviet discourse on the Holocaust continues to linger in his work. Furthermore, his incorporation of the Jewish past into Sevastopol's military glory narratives has meant overlooking inglorious moments in the city's past.

In relation to the wartime experience of Sevastopol's Jewish population, Gel'man advances a dual motif of uniformity of condition (as Soviet citizens), and of differential treatment at the hands of the Nazis. In his published collection of documents and memoirs on Sevastopol's Jewish soldiers in the Great Patriotic War (2005), he emphasized that Jews were conscripted into the armed forces alongside other Soviet citizens, that they served the Soviet homeland, and that Jews were part of the civilian population evacuated from Sevastopol during the 1941–1942 defense (Gel'man 2005: 13).

When beginning to discuss the Nazi treatment of Jews, Gel'man notes that Jewish prisoners of war, as elsewhere under Nazi rule, were the first to be executed (2004: 28). Gel'man then recounts the events leading up to the "Holocaust in Sevastopol": the Nazis entered the city on 1 July 1942, and this was shortly followed by mass violence, shootings, and calls for registration of the population. On 6 July 1942 the Gestapo published an order that all Jews and Krymchaks[28] living in and around Sevastopol had to wear the six-pointed star and report for registration at the city's stadium on Kherson Street on 12 July with enough food for three days (Gel'man 2004: 13). The Jews and Krymchaks had their valuables removed, were sorted into groups and transported away from the city to be subjected to mass killings at sites in Balaklava and Bakhchisarai. According to data gathered by an investigative commission in the immediate post-war period, the Nazis executed 4200 Jews and Krymchaks from Sevastopol on 12 July 1942 (Gel'man 2004: 5; Arad 2009: 288; Tiaglyi 2002).

Gel'man sees his main task as reinserting this date—12 July 1942—into the history books for this period. Addressing this absence, he notes that although the Jewish population of the city slowly re-established itself after the war, the extent of Nazi atrocities against the Jews in Sevastopol was not written or spoken about in Soviet society. He stresses that, of the hundreds of books written about Sevastopol in the sixty years after the end of the war, not one of them marks 12 July 1942 as a day of annihilation of several thousand Jews and Krymchaks (Gel'man 2004: 9). In 1975 land workers uncovered mass graves at a site on Balaklava Highway called "5 km" containing the remains of up to 3000 people. The following year a monument was erected on the site with the simple inscription "To the Victims of Fascism" (Gel'man 2004: 9). It was only in 1991 that a Book of Sorrow was published, containing a page about the shooting of Jews in Sevastopol (Gubenko 2001). The question of the Holocaust in Sevastopol was therefore explored significantly only after Independence.

However, Gel'man notes with alarm that an encyclopedia published as recently as 2000 refers to the shooting of "city residents" on 12 July 1942, with no mention of their Jewish identity (*Sevastopol'*: Entsiklopedicheskii spravochnik 2000: 26). Although it is difficult to tell whether this is an anomaly or part of a wider trend, Gel'man is right in drawing attention to a poor awareness of the Holocaust across the former Soviet space (see also Podolsky 2007: 166; Portnov 2010: 54–61). With the help of donations from America, Russia, and Israel,

a monument to victims of the Holocaust was erected in Sevastopol in 2003 on Uprisers' Square next to the Lenin District state administration (Gel'man 2003). Sevastopol's Jewish community mark 12 July as Memorial Day for the Victims of the Holocaust in Sevastopol.

Gel'man's main criticism of the Soviet authorities is their failure to sufficiently acknowledge and commemorate Jewish victims of fascism. Overall, he appears to evaluate the Soviet era positively. First, he identifies Jews with the Soviet narratives of equality and service, and the local expression of this in Sevastopol as bravery and heroism. He emphasizes that Jews fought bravely and died for the sake of the city (therein perpetuating the myth of the heroic Soviet patriot) and that they played an active role in the city's reconstruction (perpetuating the myth of the undefeatable city, reborn after devastation) (2004: 170). Furthermore, he identifies Jewish victims of fascism first and foremost as Sevastopolians, with formulations such as "4200 Sevastopolians were annihilated just because they were born Jews or Krymchaks" (2004: 11), encasing ethnicity within a higher Soviet identity.

Secondly, in his historical overview of Jewish life in Sevastopol, Gel'man highlights the bustling Jewish life of the city at the beginning of the twentieth century, but he does not discuss the fate of Jews under the Soviet repressions of the 1920s and 1930s, which included the closing down of synagogues and the shooting of the last rabbi by the NKVD in 1936.[29] Furthermore, although he briefly mentions the Russian Civil Auxiliary Police (set up soon after occupation and made up of about 120 to 300 people who assisted the Nazis in their operations in the city) (*Sevastopol'* 2000: 450), he leaves the question of local collaboration in the killing of Jews largely unexplored.

In contrast to the approach taken by Gel'man and secular Jews, whose approach serves to incorporate their narrative within the local Sevastopolian mythology, my conversation with a representative of Sevastopol's Hasidic religious community *Chabad* revealed a more marked *disassociation* from local culture. Indeed, when giving an overview of the history of Jews in Sevastopol, the *Chabad* representative emphasized the opposition of the Soviet state to Judaism. He summed up the history of the twentieth century by saying "in short, the Germans struck the main blow, but the Soviets added to that." Whereas Gel'man's work probes the extent to which the Soviet authorities (and post-Soviet historians) have recognized the differential treatment of Jews at the hands of the Nazi occupiers based on biological racism, the *Chabad*

representative's comment here can be contextualized within different, broader debates over the "twin totalitarianisms" of the twentieth century and thus a different way of framing a group narrative of suffering.

Cultural Memory of Wartime Deportations

Sevastopol's "deported peoples" (*deportirovannye narody*) are those national minorities that suffered mass deportations by the Soviet regime: first the Germans in 1941, upon charges of espionage; and then Armenians, Bulgarians, Crimean Tatars, and Greeks in May 1944, who were charged with mass collaboration with the Nazis. These groups endured long years of exile in Siberia and Central Asia and were allowed to return to Crimea only after perestroika. Their communities have re-established themselves to varying degrees and endeavor to preserve and promote their national cultural heritage. However, it can be argued that deportation constituted a particular type of state violence, as it involved violence against ethnic groups *and* their memory: on one hand, the failure to acknowledge and redress the injustice of the deportations during the Soviet era has led to a lower societal awareness of the suffering they endured. On the other hand, the mass accusations of collaboration have left a stigma of treachery, producing the disproportionate association of collaboration with particular ethnic groups.[30]

There are strong similarities in the ways the deported peoples strive to preserve their cultural heritage and memory of the Soviet deportations. This uniformity is explained primarily by the nature of their organization and municipal representation. In Sevastopol there are eighty-nine "nationalities," of which thirty-three representative groups are registered with the city council's Cultural Center. The Cultural Center implements the municipal authorities' model of multiculturalism, which remains strongly Soviet-inflected. For instance, the organization's affiliate library is called "Friendship of Peoples" (*Druzhba narodov*) which was the main Soviet paradigm for inter-ethnic relations in the Soviet Union.[31] The association's coordinating group is called *InterKlub*—an abbreviation from the term *internatsionalizm*, which was a twin concept linked to the friendship of Soviet peoples, albeit with an older genealogy. Finally, signaling the familiar "older brother" approach, the chairman of the Cultural Center is a Russian.

The Cultural Center provides modest resources to the city's national cultural minority groups, for example by allowing them to use its

premises and audio-visual equipment. Its main holiday is "Historical Boulevard Day," a colorful event showcasing cultural and folk traditions (national dance, costume, and cuisine). Note that this "folklorization" of nationality is also strongly reminiscent of the Soviet "friendship of peoples" model for inter-ethnic relations. The second main holiday in which the Cultural Center takes part is Deportation Day (18 May)—a mournful ceremony held at the Monument to the Victims of Deportation.[32] During fieldwork in 2012 I attended Deportation Day in Sevastopol. By examining these memory performances, I analyze how the deportee groups framed memory of the deportations (and associated political demands in the present) and explore how the city authorities handled the Crimean Tatar question.

As had become practice,[33] Deportation Day was held on the anniversary of the Crimean Tatar deportations and was organized predominantly as a Crimean Tatar event: the meeting started with the Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar national anthems, was opened by prayers said by the Sevastopol imam, and was hosted by the Speaker of the Sevastopol Regional Mejlis. The meeting resolution related primarily to Crimean Tatars—the resolution is a list of political demands, the justification of which is rooted in memory of the deportation.[34]

The first to address the crowd in 2012 was a Crimean Tatar man, now in his eighties, who had been a deportee, Soviet political prisoner, and veteran of the Crimean Tatar national movement. He emphasized the particularity of the Crimean Tatars as the only ethnic group to have been formed in Crimea. He recalled the experience of deportation, the deprivation of his childhood, the absence of a real career, and the continuing injustice of "having no grandchildren" because his sons were not given land and so could not marry. When discussing group recompense and the land issue, he lamented that Afghan veterans had been given land whereas the Crimean Tatars had not. He demanded legal measures of redress, such as a law on rehabilitation of the Crimean Tatars and a law for the preservation and revival of their language and culture.

The manner in which the city authorities managed the Deportation Day meeting offers a considerable insight into their interaction with local Crimean Tatar memory politics. In 2012 the mayor, Yatsuba, and the head of the city council, Doinikov, were present at the meeting and addressed the crowd, which at the very least reflected a willingness to engage with the movement and their commemorations. Yatsuba began by addressing the crowd as "Dear Sevastopolians," which became a key

motif of his speech. The phrase "Sevastopolians" emphasizes the separateness of the city from the Crimean Autonomous Republic (and hence the separation of local Crimean Tatars from the wider peninsular movement). The term "Sevastopolian" also emphasizes a meta-identity that transcends ethnic divisions. Doinikov said, "Sevastopol is an international [*internatsional'nyi*] city; it has more than one hundred nationalities. We have never defined people by nationality—a Sevastopolian [*Sevastopolets*] is a general concept [*obshchee poniatie*]." In continuing this theme of togetherness, Doinikov emphasized that the social problems they face are the same for "Crimean Tatars, Ukrainians, Russians—for all those who live in a certain area." He concluded: "Eternal memory to those who died, and a good future not only to those five nationalities who suffered, but to all Sevastopolians."

The mayor and the head of the city council continually emphasized the commonalities among "Sevastopolians" to encase their main argument: that they should never pursue policies along ethnic lines. Doinikov said, "the country is undergoing a process whereby historical mistakes are being put right, and today's event confirms this. This is also taking place in Sevastopol and our historical lesson is that decisions should never be taken according to nationality." They were therefore subverting calls for restorative justice by purporting to have *learned a lesson of history*. Yatsuba said later in response to the elderly activist,

> Let's remember that that decision [to deport the Crimean Tatars] was taken according to nationality, and you are suggesting we do the same thing, to take a measure according to nationality… History made me take the decision never to resolve things according to nationality or to discuss things along national lines… If I decide by nationality, I will be reverting to the people of 1944. That's what it's like.

Correcting this historical wrong, in the view of the city authorities, should be achieved by not pursuing policies according to ethnicity, rather than by reversing the effects of the historical wrong. This sleight-of-hand argument is used to undermine the Crimean Tatars' appeal for restorative justice on the grounds that they suffered deportation and were deprived of their status as the indigenous people of Crimea. And it seems as though the Crimean Tatars find it difficult to articulate a rebuttal to this argument.

It is worth reflecting on the presentation of this historical wrong. At the beginning of his address, Yatsuba said that the deportation "took place during the war, so history will judge those who took that decision." By contextualizing the deportation within the wider sufferings of wartime (note that 18 May falls at the end of the "May holidays" of war commemoration), he implies the operation of a different and as yet *unknown* morality concerning the condemnation of the act. This has the effect of rolling cultural memory of the deportations into a generalized image of wartime suffering—out of which is elicited a general outcome of Victory, secured at a high cost—rather than acknowledging the deportations as war crimes.

Representatives of the other deported people groups also spoke at the meeting and largely endorsed the views of the city authorities, expressing gratitude for municipal support in preserving their language and culture. The head of the German society added: "Let's live as friends as we did during exile," reminding those gathered that not all things had been bad in central Asia. The head of the Greek society was much more critical, recalling the "empty promises" of the authorities (specifically the failure of the Verkhovna Rada to pass a law on the status of deported peoples) and pronouncing that "the war still oppresses us." After condemning their treatment at the hands of authorities past and present, the Greek representative concluded by appealing for "friendship and peace" as a kind of "second best."

Overall, the endeavors of these national minority groups were being channeled by the city council's Cultural Center into Soviet-inflected cultural displays of national identity. At times, the minority groups stepped away from the Soviet narrative in order to emphasize a type of victimhood different from that of other "nationality" groups in the former Soviet Union. This idea of victimhood is a metanarrative in east European remembrance more widely[35]; it is also a quality that prevents greater cooperation between victimized groups. When the memory performances of these minorities took on a more overtly political orientation, such as during Deportation Day, the city authorities undermined claims to specificity by promoting the meta-identity of "Sevastopolianness" and the principle of non-discrimination. This is a continuation of the Soviet approach of equal treatment and denial of difference, which ultimately worked to the benefit and promotion of one national group (Russians) over others. Similarly, there has been strong

continuity in the types of memory performances of the minority groups and few creative elements in memory performance, which is surprising, given the reduced restriction on freedom of expression since 1991. For instance, there is almost no evidence of a broader discussion around collaboration on the part of all nationalities. Most commonly associated in this context with Crimean Tatars and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, collaboration was carried out by representatives of all nationalities and is in fact a shared historical experience of the war. However, the totalizing narrative of Victory Day as a "day without which we would not exist,"[36] which divides into victors and defeated enemies, means that no room is left for the compassionate discussion of collaboration as a shared and sorrowful experience of war.

Conclusions

This chapter began with the central paradox that Sevastopol, though considered by many a lost city, is in fact a city of loss: the city's specificity lies in the perpetuation of its cultural memory as a city of military glory, whereas it can in fact be characterized more accurately as a city of military defeats. This enduring cultural memory is not a leftover of the past; it is continually constituted in the present by the local population's dynamic memory performances. These memory performances range from the didactic and dramatic to the ceremonial and martial. Within Sevastopol's distinctive tradition of patriotic educational excursions, professional tour guides structure the narrative of the city's past around the ubiquitous motif of the "two defenses"—the historic sieges of Sevastopol during the Crimean War and the Great Patriotic War. In the performed location of military glory in the "two defenses" motif, memory of the second defense during the Great Patriotic War features most prominently. This is undoubtedly part of the general resurgence of Great Patriotic War commemoration in Russia and its "near abroad" from 2005 to 2010 and onwards, and a reflection of the rich local resources for this—a large number of veterans and current military personnel. Similarly, it is important to recognize that, as a more recent conflict, the Great Patriotic War remains "living history" for Sevastopolians today. Families retain a sense of personal connection to the war (viewing it therefore as a commemorative priority), while schools and veterans' associations undertake to forge a meaningful connection between today's youth and veterans of the conflict. Performances, including

battle re-enactments, wreath-laying ceremonies, military parades, Victory parades, memorial honor guard, and the reburial of soldiers' remains, are enacted with the dynamic participation and enthusiasm of grassroots, non-state actors in Sevastopol and also enjoy state coordination and support.

Although performative memory of the Great Patriotic War is the most high-profile aspect of Sevastopol's current memory culture, the fact that the city had a prior narrative frame of heroic defensiveness and patriotism from the Crimean War is what made the apparent recurrence of the scenario a century later all the more poignant. The "two defenses" thus operate self-referentially in producing a powerful trope of steadfastness and patriotism, which endures through the local population's dynamic performative commemorations. Performances of both defenses contain a striking element of forgetting; both ended in defeat, but they are recalled as episodes of military glory. I have argued that both conflicts are deemed to have ended in eventual glory—the moral victory of keeping the faith in the Crimean War, and the eventual military victory over Nazi Germany—so that the details of the conflict are subsumed into an image of glory, which is all that remains. In this way, recalling defeats is a means of cycling round to the eventual glory.

There are blips in this cycle, chief among which is the commemoration of the loss of life at the 35th Coastal Battery complex. This non-state initiative expresses a grassroots commemorative impulse to mark the huge suffering and loss of life of Red Army soldiers at the end of the second defense. This episode of defeat and loss does not fit well with the Soviet narrative of sacrifice for the homeland since the deaths were in a sense meaningless. Instead, it represents a shameful episode in which the Soviet leaders evacuated only the fleet command and officers, leaving ordinary soldiers and sailors to their fate at the hands of the Wehrmacht. This is an inglorious site of military defeat, yet it is swept up into the pantheon of local war commemoration culminating in the Victory Day celebrations, and in such a way that all losses are deemed to contribute to eventual glory. This defeat-to-glory cycle therefore subsumes some ill-fitting elements while proving too strong to be effectively challenged by others.

It is likewise important to examine how minority groups react when encountering this ubiquitous myth of military glory. On the one hand, the participation of minority groups (Jews, Crimean Tatars, and other deported peoples) in the military glory mythology need not be

problematized since they share in the city's military history. On the other hand, this is a mythology that does not allow them to articulate their differential experience of the past. When the minority groups step aside from the city's mythology, it is often to emphasize their particular kind of victimhood—the Nazi extermination of the wartime Jewish population, or the Stalinist-era crimes of mass deportations.

However, by virtue of their proximity to the powerful military glory mythology, the representatives of minority groups engaged in cultural memory performance tend to position themselves in relation to the city's narrative and, to an extent, uphold it. This results in a degree of self-limitation whereby minority groups make certain omissions in their memory performances. In the case of Jewish memory performance, this means emphasizing the differential Nazi treatment of Jews without considering local Sevastopolian collaboration in the Holocaust. For the Crimean Tatars, it means refuting mass collaboration and condemning the deportation, without considering why some people (of all nationalities) did collaborate. Indeed this privileging of the local Sevastopolian context means that the city's mythology of military glory, which might otherwise be challenged, is in fact upheld.

It is this mythology of military glory, expressed in the trope of "two defenses" that gives Sevastopol's cultural memory its distinctive shape. On the one hand this mythology is enduring because it *works*—it is a functioning ideology for a functioning military city. On the other hand, this mythology is maintained not merely by the continued presence of the Russian navy in Sevastopol, but by the dynamic grassroots commemorative performances of much of the local population.

The motif of "defensiveness" is a convenient narrative device for interpreting present challenges in the city, but it is also limiting. First, it leaves Sevastopol open to external manipulation. For instance, as seen in the case of Great Patriotic War commemoration, Sevastopolians are easily mobilized around resurgent articulations of Russian military prowess and patriotism, which pivot around the local "Hero City" status. Likewise, the motif of defensiveness is effectively invoked for confronting the perceived "Ukrainization" and bolstering Russian cultural identity. To give a highly illustrative example, during the EuroMaidan protests and subsequent Crimean Crisis in 2014, civil society activists in Sevastopol organized an action entitled "Defend Sevastopol!" (*Otstaivaite zhe Sevastopol*!) in which bumper stickers featuring this famous phrase of Admiral Kornilov (from the first Defense of Sevastopol) were displayed by many

city residents (Kazhanov 2014). This deliberate invocation of a "third defense of Sevastopol" meant that, in a climate of defensiveness and fear, Crimean self-defense forces and Russian troops were regarded as defenders and heroes in the tradition of military glory and steadfast defense.[37] Secondly, the mythology of military glory is limiting because it prevents Sevastopol entering into other ways of being: whereas other post-imperial cities in eastern Europe express certain elements of their imperial past and re-evaluate others (such as past suffering) in order to engage in new post-Soviet identity projects, Sevastopol appears stuck in its alacritous cycle of devastation, rebirth, and military glory, which excludes aspects of its past as well as prospects for its future that it might otherwise enjoy.

Notes

1. For an introductory history of the Crimean War, see Figes (2011).
2. On the north shore of Sevastopol Bay there had been a Crimean Tatar village called "Aqyar."
3. Under the Treaty of Paris (1856), the Black Sea was declared a neutral zone for international trade; Russia was forbidden from stationing battleships on the Black Sea (therein weakening its influence in the region), a provision on which Russia reneged in 1871 (Abbenhuis 2014: 47–52).
4. I use the term "Great Patriotic War" to reflect local discourse in Sevastopol. This term is used in Soviet, much post-Soviet and Russian historiography to describe the war on the Eastern fronts between Nazi Germany and its allies with the Soviet Union from 22 June 1941 to 9 May 1945. Proponents of this term often object to the use of "World War II" (1 September 1939–2 September 1945) because it undermines the emphasis on the defensive struggle of the Soviet homeland.
5. In 2008 the Security Service of Ukraine banned Luzhkov from entering Ukraine after he stated that the legal status of Sevastopol remained "unresolved" ("Ukraina zhdet reaktsii Rossii na zaiavleniia Luzhkova" 2008).
6. For example, see President Putin's Crimean Speech from 18 March 2014 ("Obrashchenie Prezidenta RF Putina" 2014).
7. According to Katherine Verdery (1993: 196), lacrimogenesis is a term coined by a Romanian writer to describe suffering and ill fortune in the national past.
8. For more on commemoration in Sevastopol's built environment, see Qualls (2009).
9. In the 1980s, Sevastopol on three occasions won the All-Union contest for best provision of excursions. Oral communication to the author from

a former Director of the Bureau for Travel and Excursions, from 29 May 2012.

10. Oral communication to the author from the Head of Department for the Training of Tour Guides, from 29 May 2012.
11. Oral communication to the author from a former Director of the Bureau for Travel and Excursions, from 29 May 2012.
12. The term "near abroad" (*blizhnee zarubezh'e*) emerged in the early 1990s to refer to those newly independent countries that had been former Soviet Republics. It is used by Russian politicians who assert that this zone should be in Russia's sphere of influence because it defends its interests there.
13. Federal law passed on 24 May 1999 "On the State Policy of the Russian Federation with regard to Compatriots Abroad."
14. For further discussion, see Brown (2015).
15. Fifty thousand people attended Victory Day in Sevastopol in 2010 (Krivoshein 2010), 2012 and 2013. This figure dropped to 40,000 in 2011, but this can be attributed to the bad weather that year.
16. Monument to the Soldier and the Sailor (Khrustal'nyi Cape), Monument to the Hero Submariners, Memorial to the Second Guards Army (Secondary School No. 9), the Fraternal Cemetery (Secondary School No. 31, Northern Side), Victory Memorial (Khersones Cape), 35th Battery (led by veterans and school children), Monument to the Hero Tankers.
17. Oral communication from Counter Admiral Sergei Rybak, Chairman of the Sevastopol *Dom Veteranov* from September 2011.
18. Sevastopol's search detachments unite under the umbrella organization *Dolg* [Duty]. *Dolg* is a member of the project *Book of Memory of Ukraine*—a database designed to preserve the memory of fallen soldiers and to enable users to find out information about family members who went missing in action during the Great Patriotic War. See database *Kniga Pamiati Ukrainy*.
19. Oral communication from Counter Admiral Sergei Rybak, Chairman of the Sevastopol *Dom Veteranov* from September 2011.
20. The discovery and reburial of remains also links strongly with issues of spatial belonging. See Brown (2013: 69–70).
21. Remains discovered by *Dolg* during their *Vakhta Pamiati* (Memory Watch) campaign are reburied ahead of Victory Day at a ceremony presided over by the mayor, head of the city council, and head of the Sevastopol district of the Ukrainian Orthodox, Moscow patriarchy ("V Sevastopole zavershilas' Vakhta Pamiati" 2012).
22. Oral communication from Counter Admiral Sergei Rybak, Chairman of the Sevastopol *Dom Veteranov* from September 2011.

23. This drive to record videos of the last veterans before they die is a strong trend throughout the post-Soviet space, as has been described recently by Jussi Lassila (2013: 215–227).
24. Oral communication from teachers working at a state-run secondary school of general education in Sevastopol, from May 2012.
25. Oral Communication from the Deputy Chairman of the Committee of Veterans of War, from September 2011.
26. See for example a blog posting by a local amateur historian and artefact hunter who visited the site ("35ia Beregovaia Batareia, g. Sevastopol'" 2012).
27. Gel'man has received a Certificate of Merit from the Sevastopol City State Administration and a diploma from the municipal forum "Public Recognition." In recognition of his research and publications, Gel'man was awarded a diploma from the Jewish Council of Ukraine and an honorary diploma from the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial Museum in Jerusalem.
28. Initially the SS officers were unsure as to whether the Karaites and Krymchaks were Jews, and had to write to Berlin for clarification. Although the Karaites were in some cases murdered as Jews due to the lack of clarity, it was decided that they were of Turkish-Tatar origin and therefore exempt from the Nazi race laws, unlike the Krymchaks, who were considered racially Jewish. See Gel'man (2004: 4) and Arad (2009: 202–204).
29. Oral communication from Sevastopol's *Chabad* community representative, from 30 May 2012.
30. For an in-depth review of twentieth-century Crimean Tatar history, see Williams (2001: 334–464); for a discussion of how Crimean Tatars came to be labeled as "traitors," see Uehling (2004: 49–78).
31. The "Friendship of Peoples" paradigm was introduced by Stalin in the mid-1930s and popularized thereafter as the Soviet Union's "imagined community"; see Martin (2001: 461).
32. Located on a square in a wooded area opposite the train station, this obelisk has five commemorative plaques at its base, on which is written: "Your sufferings will never be forgotten in the name of life and justice" in Armenian, Bulgarian, Crimean Tatar, German, and Greek; the lower half of the obelisk is white and the upper half is black, representing life before and after deportation.
33. Crimean Tatars have marked Deportation Day in Crimea since 1991. However, this commemorative event was surrounded by controversy in 2014 when, on 16 May, de facto Prime Minister of Crimea Sergei Aksenov banned public rallies for three weeks on account of the unrest in eastern Ukraine. This ban was widely interpreted as targeting the

Crimean Tatar commemorations, which were planned to mark the 70th anniversary of the deportation. Those who defied the ban to meet in public places were hindered by the heavy security presence and the flying of helicopters over Simferopol, drowning out the sound of speeches ("Seventy Years" 2014). Public rallies were likewise banned in Sevastopol in May 2014 and thus Deportation Day was not marked.

34. The resolution was that Ukraine should: quickly introduce legislation to re-establish the rights of deported peoples and their children and the status of the Crimean Tatar people; give individual land plots to deported peoples within the borders of Sevastopol city; return historical names to villages and populated areas in the Sevastopol region; introduce a new program by 1 November facilitating improvement (*obustroistvo*) for deported peoples for the year 2013; give money from the city budget to finish construction of the building in Kamyshovaia Bay; return to the mosque its former land on Ochakovtsev Street.
35. See Esbenshade (1995: 72–96).
36. "9 May: a day without which we would not exist" is a popular slogan of Victory Day ("9 Maia: den' bez kotorogo nas by ne bylo" 2012).
37. Note that the Crimean self-defense militias and "Night Wolves" bikers took part in the military parade through Sevastopol on Victory Day in 2014 (Pchelkina 2014).

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CHAPTER 15

On Victims and Heroes: (Re)Assembling World War II Memory in the Border City of Narva

Elena Nikiforova

Borderlands have a special fate: the fate of nomads—they change their allegiance more often, and they suffer the most in times of war. The nomadic war machine (Deleuze and Guattari 1987) with its drive to reterritorialize space, to cleanse it of the old order and impose upon it a new structure and new order, or to hold on to the given space at all

This chapter draws upon fieldwork conducted in Narva by the author together with Robert Kaiser, University of Wisconsin-Madison, since 2004. Many of the observations and ideas expressed in the article belong equally to Robert Kaiser; any errors and imprecisions are all mine. Work on this article was carried out as part of the research project EUBORDERSCAPES financed through the EU's 7th Framework Programme (contract: SSH.2011.4.2-1-290775). I would like to express my deep gratitude to the editors of this volume Tatiana Zhurzhenko and Julie Fedor for their thoughtful and tactful work with the text and—separately—for their patience.

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costs, operates with a particular ferocity in borderlands, leaving a deep bloody trace and large-scale destruction in its wake.

The past and present of the city of Narva, located on the border of Estonia/the European Union and Russia, provides a vivid confirmation of this thesis. No major war in the region has passed Narva by. The name of this small city has gone down in history as a site of important battles defining the outcomes of wars and the course of historical development in the Baltic region and Northern Europe for centuries. Two regional wars (the Livonian and Northern Wars); the two twentieth-century world wars, including their regional versions, the Civil War in Russia and the Liberation War in Estonia; and two cases of radical socio-political upheaval (the 1917 revolution and the 1991 Soviet collapse) determined the course of Narva's history and lent Narva a distinctive fate and identity which even today distinguish the city from others in the region. Re-territorialized from one political formation to another, the city has changed its "citizenship," its architectural face, and its territorial borders many times, now leaping across the Narva river and incorporating neighboring Ivangorod, now losing it, as happened in the 1990s. Narva has also changed its population, losing residents and acquiring new ones. These numerous political perturbations and upheavals, heralding ruptures in Narvitian space and time, changes of regime, and the ends—and beginnings—of the different periods in Narva's history, have laid the foundation for Narva's history today as a city with a special fate and identity. They have also been reflected in the material space of the city and its outskirts in the form of a divaricated memorial landscape comprising a dense and diverse network of monuments and sites of memory.

In this chapter, I examine one of the "layers" of Narva's history via a study of a particular fragment of Narva's memoryscape, linked with what is currently the most painful, "burning" historical rupture in Narva's time and space: World War II. World War II and the post-war period played a special role in the biographies of both the city itself and its residents. In 1944 the city was destroyed and then rebuilt anew with an entirely new architectural and social face: due to the Soviet migration policy, Narva became almost entirely non-Estonian and Russian-speaking. In the Soviet period the memory of the war was one of the foundational pillars of the identity of the city's residents. Today the discourse of the war and its outcome, together with the local memory of the war, continue to occupy one of the most important places in the

referential space of Narvitians and play a key role in the process of formulating all the components of the spectrum of their identities—local, ethnic, national, and supranational. Yet the memory of the war in Narva, which in Soviet times was monolithic and coordinated (at least at the level of public discourse), today represents a dynamic semantic space, a zone of discussion and reflection. In this chapter I explore the distinctive forms of the everyday existence and the spatial transformation of the Narva World War II memoryscape, with a focus on those sites of memory which are key for different Narva local (memorial) communities. We shall examine the specificities of the formation of Narva's memoryscape as a border hybrid memoryscape, shaped through constant dialogic relations with the space of memory and identity of Estonia, Russia, and Europe, but also preserving its own unique face, reflecting the specifics of Narva's history and of the ethnic and social composition of the city.

The main section of the chapter is devoted to examining the complex interplay in Narva's memoryscape between the images of "heroes" and "victims" as the central figures in the Russian and Estonian national memoryscapes. I consider examples of *Aufarbeitung der Vergangen* (working through the past) at the local level and demonstrate how multidirectional national narratives can be refracted, transformed, and reconciled in this highly specific border space of memory.

Conceptual Remarks: Memoryscapes—Collective Memories "Unbounded"

The cultural and spatial turns that have deeply affected contemporary social studies have not bypassed the research field of memory studies (Wertsch 2002; Zerubavel 2003; Booth 2006). Recently, there has been a growing discussion in memory studies concerning the relationships between collective memory and territoriality. As in other fields searching for new ways to look at social realities changing under the onslaught of a glocalizing and interconnected world, the starting point of this debate has been a critique of the nation-state as the fundamental paradigm of collective memory. In contrast to assumptions about the fixity, homogeneity or boundedness of collective memory within the nation-state framework, many scholars have come to analyze memory as it travels, transgresses, and at times unsettles national borders (see Levy and Sznaider 2006; Rothberg 2009; Assmann and Conrad 2010; Creet and Kitzmann 2011).

One attempt to address collective memories which are no longer (and in fact have never been) constrained by national borders, has been made by Kendall Phillips and G. Mitchell Reyes in their edited volume *Global Memoryscapes* (2011). With reference to the term "-scape" introduced by Arjun Appadurai in relation to complex cultural processes caused by total mobilities, they coin the notion of "global memoryscape" imagined as "a complex landscape upon which memories and memory practices move, come into contact, are contested by, and contest other forms of remembrance" (15).

While Phillips and Reyes employ the notion of memoryscape in order to withdraw memory from the nation-state grid and emphasize its mobile and global character, I find this notion heuristic and relevant for my argument because of its analytical capacity to embrace both sedentary and nomadic qualities of memory, as well as its plural character and potential to change. The notion of memoryscape grasps the mobility and dynamism of memory, which moves together with people and information, and the "sedentarizing" memory politics of territorialized entities such as nation-states, which orders mélange and complex fields of collective memory/memories and fixes selected memory narratives in a geographic and semantic space through the nets of monuments, commemorative events, and other memorabilia. In addition, this notion makes it possible to destabilize the picture of national "mnemonic communities" suggested by the traditional political map, and to reimagine the world as a network of collective memories—a constellation of memoryscapes, spatially anchored in commemorative landscapes and national territories but not confined by their linear borders. These multiple memoryscapes are linked by a complex net of relationships, dependencies, mutual penetrations, and contestations, and are produced and reproduced in these relational interplays. Analytically, we might categorize memoryscapes using the criterion of scale, following the traditional geographical classification (for example, global, national, local). We can also apply a sociological lens and examine the processes through which the memoryscapes of different groups are formed. These groups need not necessarily be territorialized (possessing their "own" territory), but they will probably have in common sites and memory landscapes that are important for the group. In addition, memoryscapes obviously differ in terms of the amount of resources available for conducting memory politics and the number of "followers," that is, people who identify with the given memory narrative and who comprise the recipients, enactors

and makers of the memoryscape in question. In this sense, the most influential actors in the spaces of collective memory remain, undoubtedly, states and the memoryscapes they produce and preserve.

The Soviet memoryscape of World War II, or more precisely of the Great Patriotic War, as it was called in the USSR and as it is still called in Russia to this day, is one such example. The conceptual center of this memoryscape comprises the memory of the Great Victory and the heroic feat of Soviet people in liberating the world from fascism; the geographic and ideological center is Russia and Moscow in particular. After the end of the war for the course of almost half a century this memoryscape spread across the habitat of the socialist states. It was the object of a separate memory politics, and it had its territorialized embodiment in the form of a network of monuments praising the Soviet feat. In the early 1990s the territories of the newly independent states broke away from the Soviet mainland, and each of these new states now commenced constructing its own history of World War II, often in opposition to the narrative of the former metropole. Thus, the motif of "liberation" now faced a strong opponent in the form of the motif of "occupation," and the conceptual figure of the triumphant victorious hero as the dominant, desired, and celebrated image of self-identification now gave way to the figure of the victim and the tragic hero (Giesen 2004).

The Baltic countries have played a special role in the formation of both the global and the Russian memoryscapes of World War II. As Eva-Clarita Onken (2007) has argued, collective memory in Estonia, as in the two other Baltic states, is today fundamentally determined by the notion of lost statehood and of a Soviet-Russian occupation following the pact between Hitler and Stalin in 1939 and the subsequent invasion by the Red Army in 1940. After the collapse of the USSR it was precisely the Baltic countries, and Estonia in particular, that acted as the key promoters of a conceptual shift aimed at changing the emphasis in evaluating the Soviet role in World War II from liberation to occupation. Meanwhile, the presence on the territory of these countries of both Soviet monuments and large Russian-speaking ex-Soviet populations who shared the Russian narrative of the war ensured that the Russian narrative would maintain a strong presence throughout the Baltic region as a contested counter-memory. In the 2000s, the clash of the two master-narratives broke through from the realm of the discursive into real space and time, in the form of the "monuments war" that now unfolded on the territory of Estonia (Brüggemann and Kasekamp 2008). The culmination

of this clash were the dramatic events of April 2007 in connection to the relocation of the monument of the Soviet soldier in Tallinn and the events of the so-called "Bronze Night" (see, for example, Lehti et al. 2008; Kaiser 2012).

The purpose of the memoryscape concept is to de-territorialize and reterritorialize our optics in order to make visible the signs of national memory narratives, their enactments and mechanisms of their maintenance and reproduction not only within national territories but all over the world, wherever the bearers of these narratives, both human and non-human (such as monuments) happen to be located. However, memoryscape as a concept is much too abstract and theoretical, and needs to be made more specific when we talk about particular empirical contexts. Border locales represent one such context. Due to the nomadic character of border territories and the interaction and intermingling of the people who inhabit them, the memoryscapes of border locales can carry the traces of two or more national memoryscapes. Moreover, it is not rare for a border population to represent an ethnic and cultural minority that does not necessarily share the memory narrative promoted by the national center, referring rather to the narrative promoted by their external mnemonic homeland and speaking the same memory language as border communities on the other side. All of the above is characteristic of Narva.

Narva as a Site of World War II Memory in the Soviet Memoryscape

Whenever tensions rise in Russia's relations with Estonia or other former Soviet countries, the bordertown of Narva invariably finds itself at the forefront of media attention. This was so during the "monuments war" and "Bronze Night" of 2007, the war with Georgia in 2008, the Russian annexation of Crimea, and the war in Ukraine. As a city with a predominantly Russian and Russian-speaking population, with only a river separating its territory from Russia, Narva is frequently represented in the Estonian and international contexts as the home of a "fifth column," and a "potential separatist region" (Vikulov 2014; Panchenko 2015). From the Russian perspective, Narva is the place of residence of a concentrated population of "compatriots" and hence also the object of related ex-territorial policies. These include the support of compatriots abroad, and

the preservation of historical-memorial monuments and burial sites of significance for Russia. There are a large number of such memorial sites in Narva and its surrounds, and the majority commemorate events from the USSR's Great Patriotic War with the Nazi coalition.

The close attachment of Narva to Russia, social and cultural, and—importantly here—territorial, makes Narva a special place in view of my conceptualization of Russia's World War II memoryscape. Unlike many other geographic sites hosting the carriers of Soviet-Russian World War II narratives, but located at a distance from mainland Russia, Narva, being territorially adjacent to Russia, is inseparably linked with neighboring Russian territories, and not only through everyday connections, but also through the shared memories of the war events.

During the war, the nomadic war machine not only rolled through, but stopped and stayed in Narva and Prinarov'e (the area around the Narva river, which now forms the Estonian–Russian border) for a long period of time, leaving a deep mark on these lands and local memories. Narva was one of the most important battle sites in the region. The city, which was part of the Soviet Union at the time, was taken by the German army as early as August 1941 and remained in German hands right up until July 1944. In its striving to hold on to the Baltic states at all costs, the German command exerted maximum effort to strengthen its positions in the Baltic direction, and in the Narva region in particular. By 1944 a complex defense system had been constructed on the Baltic front. The northern sector of the "Panther" defense line ran along the Narva River.

The Narva isthmus, forested and swampy, surrounded by water barriers—the Narva river to the east, the Gulf of Finland and Lake Peipus to the north and south—was itself a serious obstacle when it came to moving military equipment, but once combined with engineering works and the exceptional density of the German defense infantry it became to all intents and purposes unassailable. German propagandists dubbed the Narva River "Germany's eastern border;" in April 1944, after personally inspecting the state of affairs on the Narva sector of the front, Hitler called this place the "gate to Germany." Consequently, the German army was prepared to defend Narva to the last (Krivosheev and Kostin 1984: 14–15).

The Soviet offensive against Narva began in January 1944 with the Leningrad-Novgorod Offensive aimed at the definitive lifting of the

Leningrad blockade and the liberation of the Leningrad region. But the offensive halted on the approaches to Narva after meeting fierce resistance from the Germans, and for the next six months the opposing armies were engaged in heavy battles in various sectors on the Narva isthmus, with both sides sustaining huge losses. The Red Army only succeeded in taking Narva on 26 July 1944. The ensuing celebrations illustrate just how much significance this event was given: a military salute was held in Moscow to mark the taking of Narva. In September 1944, units taking part in the offensive were given the honorable title "Narvitian."

Despite the importance of the fighting near Narva and the taking of the city for the Soviet advance, in the military communiqués the actions around Narva were referred to as "locally significant battles." Nor did the battle for Narva receive the attention it deserved in Soviet military historiography, given its significance and scale: in the course of over half a year of fighting the Red Army lost, according to various estimates, around 60,000 men. As military historian Vsevolod Abramov has observed, "the 12-volume *History of the Second World War 1939–1945* contains only a few lines on the liberation of the Narva district…, and even then only in passing. The reason for this, obviously, is the failures in conducting the operations and the incomplete achievement of the goals set by the Supreme Commander-in-Chief" (cited in Yevgen'ev 2014a).

Vadim Aristov, journalist, writer and president of the Historical Society of Yamburg-Kingisepp, a city in Leningrad region that neighbors on Ivangorod and Narva, agrees with Abramov:

> for a long time the battle for Narva, one of the bloodiest of the entire Second World War, was forgotten altogether. The first books about the battle on the Narvitian line only appeared in the early 1980s, but even despite this, encyclopedias on the Second World War remained silent on the battle for Narva. To this day there is no understanding in mass consciousness of the scale and significance of the events that happened here at that time. (cited in Yevgen'ev 2014b)

Underestimated on a national scale, the six-month-long battle near Narva became an important *lieu de mémoire* on the regional scale, and was inscribed deeply in the memory of events on the Leningrad front. In the Soviet historiography of the Great Patriotic War and in the local memory, the Narva events were linked inseparably with the military actions in the nearby cities of the Leningrad region—neighboring

Ivangorod, and Kingisepp. In this sense, there was no Russian–Estonian border in the memory narrative constructed in the Soviet times. Borrowing a metaphor from the contemporary discourse on borders in the Arctic, we might say that the memory of events near Narva was constructed as a part of the Leningrad–St Petersburg memorial shelf.[1]

On 26 July 1944 the Red Army entered Narva. One of the key features of memory about Narva from that period, translated both by sources and by the residents themselves, is the fact that at the moment when the Red Army entered the city, there were said to be only two persons left in the city. Narva itself presented a sad spectacle: the medieval city, previously famed as a baroque pearl of the Baltic, lay in ruins. Thus, like Berlin, Warsaw, Rotterdam, and many other cities, in 1944 Narva began a new life. In this case, this was a new life as an industrial Soviet city—new both in architectural form and in social and cultural content. In 1991 this life too essentially came to an end, as the dramatic changes of the new era reached Narva.

Initially the Soviet government planned to rebuild the old Narva. In 1947 the Old Town came under state protection, and 31 destroyed objects were classified as architectural monuments. But in 1950 the Narva city executive committee passed a decision to demolish the ruins of the buildings on the territory of the Old Town, and the number of heritage-listed buildings was reduced to just four (Kochenovskii 1991).

The city was destroyed not just architecturally, but also socially. Essentially the entire population of Narva was evacuated by German troops in 1944. In the initial post-war years the Soviet government not only failed to support but in fact openly acted to prevent Narvitians from returning to their native city.[2] Later, too, in 1948–1949, people were deported from Narva without the right of return (Raik and Toode 2004: 9; see also Ratsevich 2006). Meanwhile, there was an urgent need to restore the textile industry, for which purpose workers were brought to Narva *en masse* from Russia, such that the city population began to grow rapidly: in late 1944 Narva had a population of 550, but five years later, it had risen to more than 15,000 (ibid.).

The new city residents, coming from various parts of the USSR to build the new city, had no knowledge of the previous Narva, and hence obviously they experienced its loss in a different, and much less personal way than did the pre-war population of Estonia. And on the whole, against the background of gigantic human losses and destruction across the whole Soviet Union, the destroyed city became just one of

a vast multitude of wartime sacrifices—bitter, but, in those circumstances, seemingly inevitable. In addition, there was simply neither the time nor the space for deep reflection on the loss of one of Northern Europe's most beautiful cities—"immediately after the war … the past was of minor importance compared to the urge to build new houses and to reconstruct the economic heart of the town, the Kreenholm manufactory" (Brüggemann 2004: 437).

The heroism of Narva's new residents, who had won the war against fascism, was supplemented in the post-war period by the "labor heroism" of those who had toiled to build a new city. Narva became a Komsomol construction project, in the course of which there rose up a new industrial city that came close to being the ideal embodiment of the Soviet idea. The city's Soviet-era narrative comprised a song of praise glorifying the war heroes, together with works in a minor key, devoted to the city that had perished during the war.

Two Narvas: Finding an Identity Between "Heroes" and "Victims"

The restoration of an independent Estonia and the separation from Russia and the Soviet past signified, among other things, a radical break with the Soviet commemorative narrative of World War II and a departure from the idea of the Soviet liberation of Estonia. It is the lost national independence and continued occupation by the Soviet Union that has become a constitutive element of national identity in Estonia and two other Baltic States (Onken 2007).

It is important to emphasize here that the contemporary evaluation of the events of the late 1930s–1940s and the "memory regime" based on this evaluation have predetermined the vector of development of Estonian foreign policy, in relations with Western countries and Russia, and domestic policy, oriented towards the non-Estonian population. One of the most obvious examples here is the law on citizenship passed in the early 1990s, which excluded "Soviet immigrants" who had moved to Estonia after June 1940 and their descendants (about 30% of the total population of Estonia) from automatically being granted citizenship in the re-established independent state. Other policy areas such as language, education, and social integration policies, were "equally strongly shaped by the historical notion of state continuity and illegal occupation by the

Soviet Union" (Onken 2007: 33). As a result, in the early 1990s a large part of the population of Narva, 96% of which comprised Soviet citizens from across the USSR who had settled in Narva several decades earlier, or who had been born and grown up in Narva and had no other home, now found themselves outside the borders of Estonian citizenship,[3] in a state of identity limbo. This would have been daunting enough on its own, but was exacerbated by nationalist anti-Russian rhetoric which labeled Russian-speaking non-Estonians of all ages as migrants, illegal migrants, and occupiers. For Narvitians, geographically removed from the Estonian capital and socially excluded from the Estonian polity, the response to this situation became actualization of a local identity, expressed in phrases that we heard often in the course of our fieldwork: "We are Narvitians, Narva is our home" (*My—narvitiane, nasha rodina Narva*) (Kaiser and Nikiforova 2008). Narva has now become "one of the few unambiguous bases for self-identification available to residents" (Smith and Burch 2012: 420) and, it seems, is the last remaining place where one might feel relatively safe and secure, "at home."

But this domestic space, too, identification with which has turned out to be so crucial for its residents in the new national context, has also become an object of change, reflected in both its physical and discursive space. In light of the domestic politics of the republic and the de-industrialization of Narva and of northwestern Estonia as a whole, we have seen a drastic decline of the post-war image of Narva, constructed around the idea of a dynamically developing international city capable of providing its residents with work and with everything necessary for a happy life in the Soviet understanding. (See for example a very emotional account by Khrabrova (1973)). In the framework of the new national ideology, the achievements of Soviet Narva, like the city itself with its Soviet architecture and Soviet population, have lost their meaning and legitimacy.[4] At the same time, there has been a dramatic rise in the value of the city that perished in the war, since this is crucial from the viewpoint of the policy of restituting Estonia in its pre-war form and also for Estonia's movement "back to Europe." Thus, if one compares older Soviet publications about Narva to those from the late 1980s onwards (Krivosheev and Mikhailov 1960; Efendiev 1990), one finds a noticeable shift, whereby the optimistic tone of the earlier Soviet texts on Narva, with their striving towards a "bright future," later gives way to a nostalgic view of the past, marked by bitter regret over the loss

of the old Narva, and a drive to reconstruct it, if not in reality, then at least discursively and visually.[5] Throughout the 2000s a diverse series of visually oriented projects aimed at the reconstruction of old Narva were produced in the city. These ranged from the publication of a series of postcards featuring photographs of Narva "before the war" and in the present, to the creation of a paper model of the Old Town, as well as the film *Virtual Narva*, enabling one to stroll through the non-existent city.

The notion of the past as constructed in order to meet the demands of the present is one of the axioms of memory studies. For instance, as Yael Zerubavel (1997: 5) puts it, "(c)ollective memory continuously negotiates between available historical records and current social and political agenda. And in the processes of referring back to these records, it shifts its interpretation, selectively emphasizing, suppressing, and elaborating different aspects of that record." In the post-Soviet era the question of how exactly the old city was destroyed and who should be held responsible for the demise of the old Narva was put on the agenda both for the professional community, and in Estonian public discourse. In the Soviet period the German army was blamed for the city's destruction. "The Hitlerites deliberately destroyed old Narva," writes P.Ya. Kann (1979) and, citing documents, quotes evidence of the destruction and devastation of the city by Nazi troops. As Tony Judt (2002) has noted, in post-war Western and Eastern Europe the collective memory was frozen into rather simple schemes of good and evil. In the Soviet hemisphere, the official image of the war was unambiguous: there were perpetrators (the Germans, or more precisely, the fascists), there were victims (the Jews, the Poles, and the Soviet people as a whole), and there were the victors (first and foremost the Soviet army). Obviously, the very construct of the dominant discourse, which positioned the Soviet army as victors, as a liberating army, and the embodiment of good, did not allow for anyone other than the army of evil, the retreating Nazis, to be held guilty for the losses and destruction.

In the Estonian national memoryscape, the responsibility for the destruction of the Old Town has now been fully transferred onto the Soviets, with a focus on their bombardment of Narva on 6–7 March 1944. In the official Soviet version of the 1944 Narva events, the very fact that these bombardments took place was totally suppressed, including in the sources produced by local authors. The book *The Battle for Narva* (1984) by Yevgenii Krivosheev, then director of the Narva museum, and Nikolai Kostin, participant of the 1944 Narva battles,

gives a thorough description of the course of the events, saturated with eyewitness testimony and references to other (Soviet) sources, but leaving the bombardments entirely outside of the narrative. Furthermore, at least some of the literature published in contemporary Russia reproduces the Soviet script of the Narva events in both tone and content, grieving for the city "murdered by the Nazis" and making no mention of the bombardments whatsoever (see for example Petrenko 2010).

The most prevalent contemporary Estonian public narrative about the Soviet bombings foregrounds the notion that "they were unnecessary." At the local level, this argument was articulated in a long article in the regional Ida-Virumaa newspaper *Severnoe poberezh'e* written by *Jüri Tõnisson,* local historian, activist, and then head of the "Memento" society, an association of the victims of Stalinist repressions (Tynisson [*Tõnisson*] 1994*)*. Admitting the fact that Narva had been an object of bombardments from both sides since the beginning of the war, *Tõnisson* argued that the bombardment of 6–7 March 1944 did not have a "direct military motive." The front line had been stabilized by this time and the Germans had almost entirely left the city. So, in his opinion, the goal of the bombardment was in fact to destroy the city (ibid.). On the side critical to the liberation narrative, there is also a popular public argument that "there was no one to liberate," referring to the emptied city found by the Red Army upon entry.

The local version of the story of the city's destruction, on the other hand, might be called a compromise version, which accepts both positions. As the city's official website proclaims, "Narva's old town shared the fate of Warsaw and Dresden: it was destroyed as a result of Soviet air raids, artillery fire, and also explosions and arson, organized by the retreating German troops" ("Staryi gorod" 2008). Recently the compromise version also received support from the director of the Narva Museum, Andres Toode, a fact which was viewed by local observers as a truly revolutionary development given that Toode is seen as a promoter and agent of the dominant Estonian narrative on the city scale.[6]

Actualization of the issue of the destruction of Narva and the quest for a "main culprit" are part of a broader Europe-wide trend in the contemporary construction of collective memory. In contemporary Western societies, one result of working through the memory of the tragic events of the twentieth century, and first and foremost of the Holocaust, has been the discrediting of heroic memory narratives and of the figure of the triumphant hero; instead, images of historical trauma and the figure

of the victim have taken center stage (Bruckner 2010). The German sociologist Bernhard Giesen calls this trend the transition from triumph to trauma and argues that "in modern western nations, the triumphalist founding myth is increasingly being replaced by reference to a traumatic past, to the collective memory of victims and perpetrators. New national memorials and museums rarely commemorate triumphant victories, but recall the victims of the past" (cited in Zhurzhenko 2012). Looking in particular to the example of Germany, Giesen (2004) identifies four key figures in the contemporary collective memory of World War II: the triumphant hero, the perpetrator, the tragic hero, and the victim. Giesen argues that it is precisely the tragic hero and the victim that are currently the most urgently needed and most legitimate in the contemporary memory of the war.

Tatiana Zhurzhenko (2012) applies Giesen's formula to the post-Soviet space. As she argues, the transition from triumph to trauma, manifested in "a shift from the dominant narrative of heroic mass sacrifice and courage to multiple narratives of victimhood and suffering" characterizes most of the national commemorative cultures that emerged after the disintegration of the Soviet one: "With the exception of Russia, post-Soviet nation building is based on post-colonial narratives of collective victimhood that allow the externalization of communism as an occupational regime and present the nation as a victim of both Stalin and Hitler" (ibid.: 6).

Russia stands aside from this general trend, being the case where the triumphalist narrative of World War II still dominates and even constitutes the foundation of national identity. Moreover, in recent years Russia has exerted considerable efforts with a view to strengthening and developing the state-sanctioned cult of World War II (Tumarkin 1994) on a new level (see, for example, Dubin 2008).

By contrast, the Baltic states represent exemplary cases of this shift towards an emphasis on suffering in collective memory narratives. As pointed out by Eva-Clarita Onken (2007), today, the collective memory of national "suffering and heroism" (Budryte 2002: 235) has been established quite successfully as the dominant memory regime in all three Baltic states. Although similar regimes exist in most of the post-communist new member states and are also being brought into the European political debate, only in the Baltic states do they clearly form the dominant narrative and state-supported memory regime (Onken 2007: 31).

The specificity of Narva's situation as a border region can also be described via the "victim"/"hero" dichotomy. The Narvitian borderland World War II memoryscape is today distinguished by a dynamic coexistence of narratives of heroism and victimhood, characterizing the Russian and Estonian memoryscapes respectively. In particular, the narrative of Estonia and "old Narva"—the city and its dwellers—as victims is located in a complex relationship with the narrative about the feat of Soviet soldiers fighting for the liberation of Narva. At the same time, we might note that of the glorious feats of the city's residents that formed the basis for the Soviet text on the city, it is the Victory narrative that has not only survived but has also taken on new relevance, new meanings and significance today. By contrast, the history of the post-war labor effort to build a new city and new industry—an effort which can be considered truly heroic, given the circumstances in which it was carried out, especially from the perspective of the individual personal biography, has moved into the background, driven out by the narrative of Old Narva as victim of the war.[7]

Both these narratives are today represented in Narva's material landscape of memory, and also in the local calendar of memorial dates and related public events. In the remaining section of the chapter we shall examine some key material sites and commemorative events supporting these narratives in the Narva memoryscape, and the ways in which these are appropriated by local communities.

Narrating Victimhood: "Enclaves" of the National Memoryscape in Narva

The narrative of Narva as victim—a narrative that links the local space of memory to the national Estonian memoryscape—rests on the history of the material and social destruction of Old Narva. The key moments in this history are the Soviet bombardments of the city in March 1944, the deportations of local residents, and the ban on their return to Narva after the war was over. In the 1990s, these events, whose history was suppressed during the Soviet period, were relocated from the realm of the silenced to the center of the national official debate, and made an appearance in the city's material landscape of memory. A stone of mourning was erected in the courtyard of the Narva City Polyclinic, located in the historical district of the Old Town. On 6 March, the anniversary of the

bombing of the city, now marked as the Day of Memory of Old Narva, people light candles at the stone and lay flowers. These commemorative ceremonies culminate in a concert, featuring appropriately mournful music, in Narva Castle.

In the mid-2000s, during the period of escalation of the "monument wars" in Estonia, on at least two occasions the memorial stone ended up in the news. Thus, in May 2005, a few days after the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the Soviet Victory in Narva, the monument was "toppled by vandals" ("Oprokinuli memorial'nyi kamen'" 2005); and on 6 March 2007, on the Day of Memory of Old Narva, the monument was smeared with red paint, and the surrounding territory left untended and covered with dirty spring snow.[8] Since the dramatic events of the Bronze Night and the subsequent lowering of the temperature of the debates around memory in Estonia, the monument's existence no longer seems to be under threat. But the Narva population's attitude to the monument remains ambivalent. This is exemplified by the following comment posted under an article about the 2013 Day of Memory, which collected quite a few "likes":

> I feel sorry for Old Narva, I really do! It's sad to walk around the old town and look at the faceless gray boxes on the site of treasures of ancient architecture…
>
> But I also feel seriously upset about the fact that this day of memory is celebrated. I swear to God! Because the subtext reads like this: "The bad Russian barbarians bombed a beautiful city for no reason." This smacks of some kind of feeling of national guilt, which in my view the Russian soldiers don't deserve. Not to mention contemporary Russians today. There is nothing constructive in this "day of memory." Nothing but hurt, accusations, and the fueling of ethnic discord. ("6 marta" 2013)

Another important monument that connects the local Narva memoryscape with the contemporary national Estonian memoryscape is the Memento Mori, a cleft stone, erected in 1992 next to Narva railway station in memory of the Soviet deportations of residents of Estonia on 14 June 1941 and 25 March 1949. For repressed citizens of Estonia, Narva railway station was the last stage in the journey to Siberia; it was also from this station that more than 1500 residents of Narva were sent into exile. At present, the date 14 June occupies a special place in the Estonian calendar as the Day of Grief and Memory. On this day,

commemorative events take place across Estonia, with the central event taking place in Tallinn and acting as the focal point for gathering together a unified memory narrative. Another date, 25 March, is designated the day of memory of victims of the March 1949 deportation. On these dates, "Memento," the local society of formerly repressed citizens, conducts mourning ceremonies at the monument. Here again it must be noted that these ceremonies, despite having been carried out for all these years, have not become a mass-scale or visible event on the city's memorial stage. Apart from the members of the "Memento" association themselves, representatives of the Lutheran Church and the city council traditionally take part. From year to year the local press and the chair of "Memento" have noted with sadness the shrinking number of participants and the absence among their ranks of young people, while in the same breath proclaiming the importance of preserving the memory of those terrible events.[9] There are several possible explanations for the lack of popularity of this commemorative event. Most important of these is the passing away of the people for whom the deportations represent part of their personal or their family experience. Also significant here is the shadow of accusation which this memory casts, intentionally or otherwise, over "Soviet" Narvitians. Will Narvitians manage to overcome the emotional boundary laid down by the national narrative, and to internalize this memory, and come to see it as their own? Will the carriers and the authorized guardians of this narrative wish to, and will they be able to, make this memory genuinely a shared one? These questions raise the important issue of the exclusive "right to memory" of a select group—the right to remember, and the right to empathize—and the struggle for ownership of this memory by the potentially excluded.

In this connection we turn now to an issue discussed on the pages of a local newspaper in the early 2000s. At that time the mourning ceremonies held in June to commemorate the mass deportations also served as the opening events for a more prolonged memorial celebration, the Days of Old Narva, hosted by a series of local Narva organizations, most of them Estonian. The ambivalent attitude of the city's residents towards this event and especially towards the logical connection drawn here between "the deportations" and "old Narva" was expressed on the pages of *Viru prospekt* by journalist Anna Orshanskaia in 2003:

> it's hard for me to understand why it should have turned out that the "Days of Old Narva" and of the old Narvitians have essentially become a

> purely Estonian festival, and on top of that one that is linked to the deportation. Yes, one might, perhaps, consider the deportation to be a kind of "concluding chord" in the existence of old Narva—the new residents built what was essentially an entirely new city on its ruins … I'm not saying that the "Days of Old Narva" is a bad festival. I'm saying that we should call a spade a spade. 14 June is a Day of Mourning, there is also the Day of Independence, when it's logical to lay flowers in an organized way at the monument to those who fell in the War of Liberation. But surely it would be better for the Days of Old Narva to be devoted precisely to old Narva. (Orshanskaia 2003)

In this passage we can discern hints of anxiety over rights in Narva and the right to Narva. In particular, the author clearly feels uneasy and constrained by the mourning framework put in place by this event: it is evident here that today's Narvitian has the need for a more capacious and complex memory of old Narva than merely the memory of the repressions and deportations, especially when the latter involves indirect (and sometimes direct) accusations being leveled at "unrepentant" Narvitians through the official discourse and via exclusionary political measures. But the main message conveyed by this text is the author's rejection of the boundaries laid down deliberately or not by the format of this event, boundaries separating "old Narvitians" from the city's non-Estonian, post-war population. We can also read here a rejection of the idea of restitution, even if only discursive in nature, of Narvitian society within the former, pre-war borders; and a rejection of what amounts to the both discursive and real alienation of today's mostly non-Estonian population, constructed as separate from "old Narva," from its image, its memory, and its heritage. Both then, in the early 2000s, and today, more than a decade later, I can say that, based on my fieldwork in Narva, there exists an extremely wide stratum of people for whom the "memory of old Narva," even though they never laid eyes on the old city, represents an internalized memory, generating deeply personal emotions, and also inspiring actions aimed at studying the past and working to restore the former prosperity and wellbeing of the city. To use the language of contemporary memory studies, the "myth of old Narva" is the grounding (Assmann 2004), "rooting in place" myth not only for the "old Narvitians," city planners and developers and various activist groups, but also for different populations of Narva, irrespective of ethnic origin or how long they might have lived in the city.

World War II Memory: The Russian–Soviet Canon, Local Applications

Reinhart Koselleck has written about the transformation of the meanings of war monuments with the passage of time and of world wars. He argues that the culture of commemoration in the period preceding World War II represented death in war in national categories. Monuments erected before and after World War I "nationalize" the dead and their deaths, narrating them as heroic deaths for the sake of the nation. After World War II, by contrast, these began to give way in Europe to negative and non-representative monuments which visualized death as loss, and no longer justified it through an appeal to national interests. Whereas World War I war memorials could still render military death as honorable, the motif underlying many war memorials in Western Europe after World War II was of incomprehensible senseless death (Koselleck cited in Kattago 2008.) In contrast to European war monuments, Soviet war monuments continued the tradition of heroic memorialization, translating the message that the fallen were heroes who had given up their lives for the Soviet Motherland and for communism (Kattago 2008: 185). It was precisely this hero-liberator narrative which came into conflict with the new national narratives and was subjected to correction throughout almost the entire post-Soviet space. Depending on the context, monuments were either destroyed, or their meanings corrected via relocation into different physical and/or semantic spaces. One example of semantic "relocation" of this kind is the practice of replacing the inscriptions, or of carrying out various transformations of the physical "body" of the monument in accordance with the new symbolic context. Using the language of contemporary border studies (for example, Brambilla et al. 2015), we might say that the ex-territorial Soviet-Russian memoryscape of World War II, whose outposts—Soviet monuments—are located on the territory of many countries, has in the course of the past two decades been undergoing serious rebordering, both in physical and in symbolic space.

As we have seen above (see also Kaiser and Nikiforova 2008), the main strategy used for the nationalization of Narva's World War II memoryscape has comprised not the destruction or the transformation of Soviet war monuments, but the supplementing of the memorial landscape with new monuments translating the national narrative. Meanwhile, by comparison with many other national and local contexts, the Soviet war memorial landscape in Narva has remained basically

unchanged. To be more precise, with a few isolated exceptions (such as the removal of a plaque on a tank), the Soviet-era war monuments, including their inscriptions, have been preserved mostly in their previous form (or with only minor changes).

The Soviet-Russian memoryscape's positions in Narva remain very strong and are literally rooted in the local soil: on the territory of the city itself and of the adjacent territory of Ida-Virumaa there are more than a dozen monuments and memorial sites fixing in stone the heroism of Soviet soldiers on the Narva bridgeheads during the war, mostly in 1944 in particular.[10] The majority of these monuments were erected in the 1970s and reflect the key events in the Soviet offensive towards Narva (Kattago 2008; Vanamőlder 2012).

A T-34–85 tank, standing on the bank of the Narva River seven kilometers from the city center on the road leading from Narva to the resort town of Narva-Jõesuu is perhaps the most famous of Narva's war monuments, not only in the region itself but throughout Estonia and beyond. The tank was placed here on 9 May 1970 in honor of the 25th anniversary of Victory, at the site of the fording of the Narva River by units of the 2nd Shock Army under the command of General Fediuninskii ("Tank T-34" n/d). The plaque on the base, which remains in place today, states in two languages, Russian and Estonian: "In this district on 25–26 July troops of the Leningrad front forded the river, broke through the defense of the German-fascist troops, and liberated the city of Narva."

A newer information board nearby, now in three languages, including English, informs us that this is the only memorial emblem of its kind still standing in Estonia, and also emphasizes the fact that the monument was erected in memory of those who fell in World War II. The English text reads as follows: "The monument to commemorate those perished in the World War II was opened on May 9, 1970. A T 34–85 has been stationed at the location of a battle over crossing the Narva River by Soviet Red Army troops under General Fedyuninsky in February 1944. The Narva Tank is an [sic] one-of-a kind memorial in Estonia today."[11] It is not difficult to make out here a shift in emphasis in the narrative at this site along a scale "from (Soviet) hero-liberators to (universal-human) victims"—a shift that is logical within the framework of the national rejection of the concept of "liberation."

The perceived imperative to underline the uniqueness of this monument for Estonia has to do with the specificities of the monument's

existence in the new national memorial context. In the early 2000s the tank was indirectly drawn into the "war of monuments" that broke out in Estonia during this period. The Narva tank played only a minor role in the discursive and later the real-life battles in this war, which were mostly focused on the monument to SS soldiers in Lihula and the Bronze Soldier in Tallinn. Nevertheless, at the time there were proposals calling for discussions to be held on the possibility of moving the tank-monument from its site on the riverbank. These included a high-level proposal put forward by Justice Minister Ken-Marti Vaher during his visit to Ida-Virumaa in 2004. The minister suggested that the monument could be moved to a proposed new museum of military hardware, a project being discussed at the time with the neighboring Vaivara municipality. The minister claimed that a Soviet tank gun pointing in the direction of Estonia offended the feelings of former victims of repression, stating that: "It would be impossible to imagine that in Europe, on the border between Germany and some other European country, the muzzle of a German World War II-era tank pointing in the direction of the capital city of that country" (cited in Ashikhmin 2004).

In the event, the idea of moving the tank went no further than this, although rumors around the possibility of a transfer and the consequences this might bring continue to circulate in online space to this day. Meanwhile, the tank continues to be a visible and prominent element in the Narva memorial landscape. This is a site that Narvitians visit enthusiastically, and for a range of reasons. The austere charm of an object of genuine military hardware plays a role here, as does the tank's picturesque location on the riverbank and on a busy road, such that the tank receives a great deal of attention from passing local residents and tourists alike—this is a convenient spot for a roadside break for drivers. And since one can touch the tank, climb on it (we witnessed people doing so on several occasions), and use it as a background for photographs (a factor especially important for tourists), the tank also serves as an attraction for both children and adults.

Alongside unplanned spontaneous visits, weekend trips, visits made with guests and so on, visits to the tank are also an obligatory part of a whole series of celebratory rituals and practices, at the level of the family, the city, and also among ethnic Russians at the national level. The most prominent aspect of the tank's "everyday" existence comprises its role as an obligatory site of pilgrimage for wedding parties: the Soviet-era tradition whereby newly weds lay flowers at the tank still continues

today. Newly weds and their guests also tie multicolored ribbons onto the tank's muzzle "for good luck" as part of the current wedding ritual. In general there are a series of practices linked to decorating or otherwise interacting with the tank, and this leads us to the theme of the sacred and the profane in the production and representation of war memory in present-day Narva. Where, for today's residents of Narva, does the boundary lie between sacred war memory and its representations? Is this boundary changing over time, and if so, how? How are the limits of acceptable interaction with memory and with monuments defined? Finally, what constitutes an acceptable way of treating monuments, and what constitutes "desecration"?

The following story offers intriguing insights into these questions. Since 2004 the tank has twice featured in the news, in October 2007 and October 2010; on both occasions after unknown persons painted its caterpillar tracks silver. Employing the usual rhetoric, the newspapers immediately branded these actions "desecration" and acts of "vandalism." But after one such report appeared in a local newspaper in 2010, it prompted an unexpected response from one reader. "But is this vandalism?," the reader asked:

> To what extent is this "tuning" the tank's wheels worse or more vandalous than young girls' ribbons on the muzzle of the combat gun of this same tank? Ribbons are constantly appearing on the tank gun. Is it not these ribbons, as a symbol of the hope of creating a family strong as an armored tank that inspired the external modernization by painting the tank with a view to enlivening it as an awesome combat machine, bringing it into our current peaceful civilian life? After all the tank has really become a place for gatherings and leisure, and not only for young people. (Bessonov 2010)

Apart from normalizing the notion of "tuning" the tank and indicating that this purportedly sacred object is in fact already effectively located in the realm of the profane, the letter also formulates the main tension in the local memory space, namely, the complex relations between the heroic Soviet-Russian narrative and the victim narrative in Narva's space:

> [I]s it possible today to explain to a teenager on a motorbike with a can of silver spraypaint in his pocket why respecting a Soviet tank is preferable to respecting a Soviet bomber, and why he, a young person, should in the first case feel pride in the power of Russian weaponry and not spoil it, but in the latter case should feel sorrow for the Old Town of his native Narva

> which was destroyed for no reason, and not rejoice in the very same military power?
>
> […] Narva has found its place in the textbooks only thanks to wars, [wars that were] fateful both for Estonia and for Russia. We should create a strictly military museum in Narva, where people could touch the displays with their own hands and via these sensations could penetrate the contradictory history of our city. The tank would become an exhibit in this museum. And to make sure that young people weren't left with the impression that in 1944 […] the tank on the left bank had an easy time of it and rolled wherever it chose, directly opposite it, across the highway, we must make sure to place a life-size model of a German tank with a gun raised to greet it. This symbolic juxtaposition […] would serve as a reminder of that cruel activity known as war. Well, and if girls, young wives, tie ribbons to the two gun barrels, then that means everything's in order: we have peace between ideologies and nations. And we'll rejoice in this. (Bessonov 2010)

Clearly, the author does not adhere to the official Soviet and contemporary Russian canon, with its emphasis on foregrounding the heroic feat of Soviet soldiers and its tendency to sorrowfully—or simply—remain silent on the issue of the gigantic price paid for Victory, including the loss of old Narva. Furthermore, with his suggestion that the opposing side in the war be brought into the composition of the new representation, the author is clearly pursuing the idea of shifting the emphasis away from the narrative of the greatness of the Soviet Victory and at the same time calling attention to both the specificity of local history and the universal concerns of humanity. However utopian, naïve, or provocative the idea of bringing the German side into the picture may sound today, the very fact of its appearance on the pages of the local press is itself significant and offers direct testimony to the polysemic and plastic nature of the meanings of the Soviet memorial heritage in the local context, and points to a process of working through memory that is now underway at the local level.

Finally, let us consider one more emblematic site of war memory in Narva, which comprises a whole cloud of meanings within it. This is "Fraternal Grave No. 1," as it is officially called in the documents, the site of a mass grave located on the Swedish-built Ravelin a little to one side of the old town, near the river. The gravesite is marked by an obelisk-stela erected in 1947, crowned by a five-pointed star.

In the 2000s the Fraternal Grave found itself, along with the tank, at the center of local memory debates, as one of the sites whose history, meanings and public usageswas contested. The history of the Fraternal Grave is one of the blank spots in the city's military history. To this day no public consensus has been achieved on the issue of exactly how many people are buried in this grave, and on who is buried—Soviet soldiers, Narvitian civilians, or inmates of the nearby camp.[12] The polysemic and "unstable" nature of the site within the field of the multitude of memoryscapes crisscrossing Narva renders it a true border zone of memory, and in this sense this is an especially "Narvitian" site. At the same time, as the site of a mass grave, and one holding not only soldiers, but also civilians, as well as, possibly, prisoners, including from a Soviet camp, the fraternal grave proves to be homologous with both the heroic and the victimhood narratives, and even more so with the latter. For this reason, in the present-day context this site of memory is one that everyone needs, as it were—both the carriers of the Soviet narrative in its contemporary and local variants, and also the carriers of the national memory politics. Since the Soviet period the Fraternal Grave has been the culminating destination for the mass processions held on Victory Day (9 May), serving in this way as a component of the local projection of the "Soviet-Russian" memoryscape. One of the attempts to reappropriate the monument, to adjust its meanings and to excise it from habitual memorial practice occurred in May 2005, when the local branch of the Party of Reforms lodged an application with the city council to hold a rally at the monument on 9 May to mark Europe Day. The organizers of the traditional 9 May rally in honor of Victory Day, in turn, proposed a compromise option: to hold both events, but to stagger their timing. At first it looked as though both events—the new Europe Day, originating in the European memoryscape and now perceived as Estonian, and the Soviet-Russian Victory Day—would find a time and a home at the monument on 9 May. An agreement was even reached allowing the Europe Day rally to make use of the Victory Day's rally apparatus. But on the eve of 9 May, the agreement collapsed, and in the event only one rally was held: the Victory Day rally, in line with the Narvitian tradition.

Two years later, in 2007, the special status enjoyed by the memorial at the Fraternal Grave within the city's memorial space was confirmed when it came to function as a space for translating the attitude held by the majority of Narvitians towards the issue of the relocation of the Bronze Soldier and the related events. Thus, after the Bronze Night, the chair

of the Narvitian city assembly Mikhail Stal'nukhin and the chair of the Narvitian Union of Compatriots Valerii Chetvergov announced an initiative for a public campaign to raise funds for renovating the Fraternal Grave memorial. Consequently, Narvitians celebrated Victory Day in 2008 at a renovated memorial site. In a manner that was highly characteristic of post-Soviet space, one of the intrigues surrounding the monument's renovation concerned the inscription on the obelisk. There were plans to remove the Soviet-era plaque proclaiming "Glory to the fallen heroes of 1941–1945" and to replace it with a more neutral text that would be better suited to the spirit of the time and the letter of the now dominant discourse, "to the memory of those who fell in World War II" ("Bratskaia mogila No. 1" 2008). This change never eventuated, however, the original plaque remains in place to this day.

Amidst all the diversity of Narvitian war monuments and the significance of the histories behind them, both from the period of the war and more recently, the central position among Narva's sites of memory and the gathering point of the entire Narvitian World War II memoryscape is without any doubt occupied by 9 May. Narva is one of two Estonian cities (the other is neighboring Sillamäe) where 9 May as the Day of the Victory of the Soviet Union and the Soviet people over Nazi Germany is celebrated at the city level, with the financial support and participation of the city authorities. There was no break in the annual 9 May celebrations either in the 1990s or the 2000s. From the mid-2000s, the city administration has begun to take an active role in the celebrations. During these annual celebrations, the sites of memory in Narva and its surrounds, while they are not neglected at other times of the year, now emerge into the foreground of the city's public life, becoming a stage for the performance of the organized collective and individual remembering of World War II and the fallen. The celebrations are carried out in accordance with the ritual that has taken shape in recent years. In the morning the city residents gather for a rally on Peetri Plats, the city's central square. The program features addresses by representatives of the city administration and of the Russian consulate in Narva, a festive concert and the laying of flowers at memorial slabs on the square honoring the "Narvitian units" that liberated the city. Next the column marches through the city in procession, to the Fraternal Grave, where a laying of wreaths also takes place, together with a requiem service. The rally and the procession and, in some years, the evening fireworks display, are the most mass-scale part of the festival and annually gather several thousand of the city's residents.

The Victory Day festival program also features a whole series of events designed for Narvitian veterans but open to all those who wish to take part. In particular, as a rule, each year on 8 May a tour of memorial sites of Narva and surrounds is organized. This includes a visit to the tank and other monuments marking key military episodes on the Narvitian bridgehead. Narvitian veterans also take part in ceremonies and events on the Russian side, including visits to graves and memorial sites around Ivangorod and Kingisepp, as well as events in Petersburg.

Among the local commemorative practices, the organized tours of war memorial sites, and especially the visits to the Russian side, are especially interesting. First and foremost, we might view these trips as an annually repeated re-experiencing of these events both by the war's participants and by those who only know the war through the stories serving to preserve and pass on its memory. These trips serve as a means to touch these events, imagine them vividly, relive them, and experience the momentum of historical continuity and belonging, both to these lands and to the grand territorial entities and historical narratives. Here the network of memorial sites acts as a conductor, a medium enabling the presence of the past in the present, and materializing stories and history and thus making them more "real," and also structuring them, marking them up, strengthening and reinforcing them via marks in space. Linking the monuments together into a trans-border network above the official (formal) border separating the territories of the two national memoryscapes, the trips serve as a mechanism for reproducing the shared memory of the borderlands—a memory formulated and inscribed during the Soviet period and within the channel of the Soviet canon, and which was once spatially integrated, but which now "stumbles" on the border, diverging, splitting into layers under the multidirectional pressure of the national and other memory politics.

For many Narvitians, as for thousands of people living around the globe but once socialized within the framework of the Soviet-Russian war narrative, the day of 9 May and the weeks leading up to it are without any doubt a time when identification with the "greater land" of the original mnemonic community is actualized. This identification takes both the positive forms of solidarity and commonality and the negative forms of denial and alienation. Like the material memorial landscape, 9 May as a symbolic site of memory, as a *lieu de mémoire*, is also in a constant state of flux.[13] Russia's global memoryscape has its own dynamic, reacting to changes in the broader context, such as

the anniversaries of the Victory or other patriotic events exploiting the Victory theme.

Conclusion: Are the Heroes Winning?

It would be impossible to embrace all the spaces of Narva's collective memory within a single chapter. When it comes to the politics of memory and identity, Narva is so complex that an entire monograph would struggle to cover the Narvitian memoryscape and its dynamics over the past twenty years. In this chapter we have sought only to analyze the interplay on Narvitian soil between two national memoryscapes, those of Estonia and Russia—territorially, the closest of neighbors, but semantically, antipodes. We have done this via an examination of selected sites of memory as sites of concentration of borderzone local debates on World War II and as major platforms for working through the memory of the war in Narva.

The seemingly unchanging physical face of individual monuments and of the Soviet memorial landscape as a whole, with its unchanged commemorative rituals repeated year in year out, is deceptive. In fact, as a semantic space, the Narvitian (ex-)Soviet memoryscape of World War II is undoubtedly constantly changing, reacting to the dynamic of the discussions around memory being conducted at the inter-state and global levels. This memoryscape is also changing when it comes to the modes of its everyday interaction with other memoryscapes, revealed at the local level, in Narva, and the Estonian national memoryscape is not its only interlocutor. In particular, Narva is an important site of World War II memory in Germany, too: thousands of German soldiers were killed and buried near Narva. But the majority of German burial sites were destroyed during the construction of the new post-war Narva, and in the Soviet period, while this memory was preserved by local residents, there was no place for it in either the public discourse or the memorial landscape of the city.

In 1999 one such site of memory did appear. On the high bank of the Narva River, at a site known by Narvitians as that of the former Sutgofskii Park, a German memorial cemetery was restored. As Narva's chief architect and the director of the German cemetery have recounted, a huge amount of work went into the process of opening this cemetery, both technical work and explanatory work:

> Conferences were held in the castle with war veterans invited, it was explained that this was not a monument to any ideology, but a burial site, and the dead soldiers were no longer enemies, but simply people who had died, so that their relatives should have the possibility to come and pay tribute to the memory of their ancestors. And if you look at how it was designed, this is simply a cross, there are no ideological symbols. (interview with Narva's chief architect, October 2004)

> The Germans have a phrase, "Learning from the past"—so that every person, let's say he comes to the cemetery and sees the rows of these crosses with dates of birth and death, and he's horrified by the fact that war is a terrible thing, and he decides that this should never be repeated … And it was very difficult when we started, we put this cemetery under guard for a certain period. Because at first people were thinking, what's going on here? They're honoring fascists, they're restoring graves… And you know, all kinds of things happened, people came and vandalized the crosses… But now I look and I see that there has been progress over these years… People have realized that this is not a monument to the fascist-heroes—no. This [cemetery was built] in the name of preventing this from ever happening again. (interview with cemetery director, 2005)

While this cemetery is certainly part of the German memoryscape, it has also essentially become the first "European" site of memory in the city, created with the idea of translating the European narrative of World War II, with its emphasis on the universal value of human life and the pain of loss outside of the frames of national ideologies. The striving to reconcile different narratives and to create a humanist memory of the war freed of the national idea can be read both in remarks about possible new interpretations and in the messages carried by the "old" Soviet monuments discussed above. While at first glance the striving to rechannel the conversation about death in war onto a universal human plane may seem to be a humanist premise with the potential to be shared by everyone, upon closer examination, we can see that this carries a potential threat for the construction of the Soviet-Russian memory narrative which is built on the idea of death as an heroic act. The semantic inversion whereby the World War II dead become not liberator-heroes fallen in the struggle with fascism but victims fallen in war deprives the narrative of its "heroic" foundation and weakens its position with regard to the dominant narratives—indeed, it is no accident that the method of re-narrating monuments has been used everywhere in post-Soviet space. The case of

the Bronze Soldier in Tallinn, from the change in its plaque inscription in 1993 from "to the fallen heroes, who have fallen for the liberation and sovereignty of our land" to "to those killed in the Second World War," and ending with its relocation in 2007 from the city center to the military cemetery, a space for grief and gradual forgetting—is only the most prominent example here (see Brüggemann and Kasekamp 2008; Kaiser and Nikiforova 2008; Kattago 2008).

The re-narration of monuments has touched Narva, too—let's recall the plaque on the Tank discussed above. But we might also note that in recent years the context has changed. The kind of direct moves aimed at changing the messages transmitted by monuments that were so common ten or fifteen years ago are scarcely possible today.

As we can see from the comments on one article devoted to the 8th anniversary of the Bronze Night (Kollane 2015), one of the consequences of this event was a strengthening of the boundaries of both of Estonia's communities (see also Tuur 2012). Relocation of the Soviet monument did not solve the problem of the gap between the two memories, but merely moved it onto a new level. In the Narvitian local context, the memory of the bloody fighting in the Battle of Narva is a memory shared by everybody. The recognition of the heroism of the fallen and the grief for the dead coexist in the Narvitian context. The fact that the inscription on the plaque of the obelisk at Fraternal Grave No. 1 in Narva with its reference to "glory to the fallen heroes, 1941–1945," has remained in place despite plans to replace it during the monument's 2008 renovation, testifies to the persistence of the heroic narrative in the Narvitian context. Likewise, a column in the park at the gates of Narva Castle, which underwent complete reconstruction in 2014, has also been preserved in its previous form and with its previous inscription intact.

At the same time, a huge place in the Narvitian memoryscape is also occupied by grief for the lost city, and the dream of reconstructing this city animates the Narvitian present and defines the vector of the city's future development. The rumors circulating at the national/ethnic level about possible semantic ruptures and clashes are smoothed out and reconceptualized at the local level via references to the unique nature of Narva's history and society. All of this serves to prove yet again that borderzones are a site not only of rupture, but also of merging, of the creation of new narratives and subject positions—a territory of emancipation and development.

Notes

1. In the 2000s the broad Russian and international public learned of the existence of the Barents Sea shelf, and also of the unresolved nature of its borders; in the mid-2000s, Russia undertook a series of actions aimed at proving its rights to part of the territory of the sea shelf, which is rich in natural resources. In this issue the question of the preservation of the influence of the Soviet memory narrative, of the territorial preservation and accretion of memory for Russia, is arguably no less important than the issue of access to raw materials. Russia conducts an active memory politics abroad, aimed at preserving both the Russian memory narrative and the material memory landscape. From this perspective, especially important are those territories which border on Russia, which were significant sites of battles in the Great Patriotic War and have been inscribed into the war's history and historiography, and which also have large Russian-speaking populations who have been socialized into the Soviet/Russian memory canon. Divided geography and a shared history constructed within the framework of the Soviet canon are important factors here. Drawing an analogy with the Arctic region, we might think of these territories as a "memory shelf," on which a struggle for influence is underway.
2. One explanation given in the sources links this policy to plans for building a secret uranium-enrichment facility in neighboring Sillamäe for the Soviet atomic bomb project; on this account, Narva was to become a district housing Sillamäe workers (Raik and Toode 2004: 9).
3. As of 1 January 2014, of Narva's total population of 62,100, 46.67% (29,870) have Estonian citizenship; 36% (22,561) have Russian citizenship; and 15.36% (9475) hold the so-called "gray passport" belonging to persons with undefined citizenship (*Narva v tsifrakh* 2013).
4. For Narvitians' reflections on the transformation of Narva and their sense of place see the ethnographically rich and insightful work of Alena Pfoser (for instance, Pfoser 2014).
5. Romanticization of the past and turning to the past in search of an alternative trajectory of development to substitute for romanticization of the future is not unique to Narva, of course, but is characteristic of postmodernity more broadly.
6. See "Kto zhe razrushil Narvu?," *Narva*, 30 September 2015; retrieved on 18 February 2016 from http://www.narvaleht.eu/narva/society/kto-ze-razrushil-narvu.html.
7. Or, to be more precise, the history of the post-war labor feat has broken up into separate fragments, which appear from time to time in the city's public space. It surfaced in the form of a photographic exhibition

in Narva Castle ("Narva in the 1950s"); and it can be discerned in the city motto, "Narva—a city of good energy"—a reference to the Narva electrical plants built during the Soviet period and also aimed at opposing Narva's negative image in Estonia. From the perspective of the tourism industry, towards which Narva is increasingly oriented today, the city's Soviet heritage, both narrative and architectural, so far remains undesirable, lagging far behind the heritage linked to the city's medieval history, the latter being not only genuinely vivid but also well-matched to the needs of the current political and tourist climate. This shift in emphasis might be considered entirely natural, were it not for the fact that "the Soviet" comprises an important part of the life baggage of thousands of Narvitians and were it not for the experience of neighboring Sillamäe, built during the Soviet period, lacking a medieval past, and frankly reflecting "the Soviet" as a foundational component of its identity, using this to form its tourism brand (Brednikova 2012).

8. N. Soboleva, "6 marta pamiatnyi kamen' byl obezobrazhen vandalami," *Viru prospekt*, 14 March 2007. Retrieved on 3 March 2016 from http://old.prospekt.ee/old/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=1121.
9. G. Romanovich and I. Tokareva, "Narva: Na sviashchennoi gorke v Den' skorbi zvuchal kolokol pechali," *Severnoe poberezh'e*, 16 June 2005. Retrieved on 1 March 2016 from http://www.seti.ee/modules/news/article.php?storyid=11549.
10. For English-language publications on Narva's commemorative landscape, see for example Brednikova (2007), Burch and Smith (2007), Kaiser and Nikiforova (2008), Kattago (2008). The commemorative landscape of Narva and its surroundings has also been studied by Kaarel Vanamőlder (2012).
11. Image showing text is available at http://wikimapia.org/3759423/ru/%D0%9F%D0%B0%D0%BC%D1%8F%D1%82%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%BA-%D0%A2%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%BA-%D0%A2-34.
12. These issues were the subject of a journalistic investigation carried out by *Narvskaia gazeta* and published in 2008 ("Bratskaia mogila No. 1" 2008).
13. On the meanings and practices linked to the celebration of Victory Day in various cities and countries, and also on the role played by war monuments in these celebrations, see the collection of articles in the journal *Neprikosnovennyi zapas* 3(101) (2015). This collection presents the findings of the international project "Soviet War Memorials and Victory Day," conducted on 9 May 2013 by a team of researchers led by Mischa Gabowitsch (Gabowitsch 2015).

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CHAPTER 16

War Memorials in Karelia: A Place of Sorrow or Glory?

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During World War II, two major military conflicts took place on the territory of what is now the Republic of Karelia. These conflicts changed both the territory and the status of the republic. The first of these conflicts was the "Winter War," which began with a Soviet offensive on 30 November 1939. The pretext for the Red Army's launching of combat actions was the Finnish government's refusal to agree to the Soviet government's proposal for a territory exchange, aimed at moving the Soviet–Finnish border away from Leningrad (now St Petersburg). After brutal and bloody fighting, the Red Army conquered Finnish territories on the Karelian isthmus and in the Northern Ladoga region. Under the Moscow treaty of 1940 these districts were transferred to the Soviet

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Union. Most of this territory was annexed to the territory of Karelia, which now became the Karelian-Finnish Soviet Socialist Republic (KFSSR), the eleventh of the Soviet republics.[1]

The process of commemorating the Soviet soldiers killed in the war began immediately after the war was over. In autumn 1940, a granite marker in memory of fallen sailors was erected in the village of Seivasto by the Baltic Fleet command. In Leningrad, an open contest was announced for the design of fifty different monuments at the sites of battles and fraternal graves. An open-air museum was planned to mark the "Mannerheim line" (Sudakov 2008: 421–422). But a new war soon interrupted this ongoing process of monumental memorialization.

On 22 June 1941, German troops invaded Soviet territory. Three days later, the Finnish government declared war on the Soviet Union. For Finland, this was the "War of Continuation." After a successful offensive, Finnish troops not only won back the territory lost as a result of the Winter War, but also conquered East Karelia and captured the republic's capital. Ideologically, the war was based on the idea of creating a Greater Finland, which was to include Karelia together with the Finnic peoples, the Karels and Vepsians. So-called "non-national" people—first and foremost, the ethnic Russian population—were to be moved out of the area once the war was over. During military actions a significant number of Russian civilians were interned in concentration camps set up across the entire region, and also in Petrozavodsk, now renamed Ääneslinna by the occupiers.

For the population of Karelia (then the KFSSR), this was a Great Patriotic War, in which Nazi Germany featured as the main foe. But at the same time, a Finnish occupational regime was in place on the territory of the KFSSR, and German troops were acting as allies of the Finns and waging combat only along the northern sector of the Karelian front. In this way, the Karelian regional experience of World War II, and in turn, the Karelian memory of the war, are highly specific. It should further be noted that during the post-war period, Soviet–Finnish relations underwent a substantial transformation: in 1948 the former enemies concluded the Soviet–Finnish Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance, which was to become the foundation for the development of good-neighborly relations from the late 1950s onwards. Under these circumstances, forgetting past grievances became essential. All of this raises a series of questions regarding the specificities of the monumental memorialization of World War II in Karelia. Most importantly,

how did policy on the memory of the Great Patriotic War influence the remembering and/or the forgetting of the Winter War and the erasure of the image of Finland as the occupier of Karelia from officially constructed memory? And, later, how was the break with the Soviet past in the early 1990s reflected in monumental memorialization of World War II in this region?

In our effort to answer these questions, we have used a variety of sources. These include official documents from the National Archives of the Republic of Karelia, which expressed the government's viewpoint. Publications in newspapers, which promoted the official view during the Soviet era, began to represent different approaches to the problem in the post-Soviet period. Finally, the perception of monuments by inhabitants of Petrozavodsk and Karelia were recorded in two polls carried out by a team of researchers in 2009–2011.

The collected material was studied within the framework of historical narratology and applying a deconstructivist approach. According to this approach, monuments and memorials are "signs" pointing in the direction of a particular person, event, or process in the past. They do not define the meaning of the past. Frank Ankersmit has underlined the "indexical function" of monuments that "contrasted with the referentiality of history" and made them a clear expression of memory:

> The monument does not tell us something about the past, in the way that the (metaphorical) historical text does, but functions rather like a (metonymical) signpost. Put differently, the monument functions like an index: it requires us to look into a certain direction without specifying what we shall ultimately find in that direction. (Ankersmit 1999: 94–95)

Meaning, which expresses what we value in the past, is made in the conversion of monuments and memorials into "sites of memory" or "*lieux de mémoire*," to use Pierre Nora's original definition, when they are used as "ritual sites," the notion proposed by Svetlana Adon'eva (2001: 134), for ceremonies associated with the commemoration of those persons or events that are "immortalized" in the monuments and memorials. When it comes to war memorials, it is precisely commemorative practices that express the attitude of the surviving observers or descendants of those who fell on the battlefields. As Reinhart Koselleck notes, this enables these memorials to create identity, not only for the dead, but for the living. "Their cause is also ours," he writes. "The war memorial does not

only commemorate the dead; it also compensates for lost lives so as to render survival meaningful" (Koselleck 2002: 287).

This approach allows us to make a crucial link between commemorations, which take place at "ritual sites," and historical narration. Therefore, a researcher can deconstruct these themes with historical narratives' functions—the formation of the meaning of past events or processes; the creation of identity; and the detraumatization of the traumatic past in mind.

We shall pass along this way following Jörn Rüsen. His ideas on political, epistemological, and aesthetic strategies in the process of historical meaning making by narrating (Rüsen 1996: 501–504; see also Rüsen 2005: 38–62) and can be applied to this project's material. In our case, to deconstruct the political strategy means to identify which social actors and in what order perpetuated the memory of a particular past event. The next step in deconstruction is the disclosure of the embodiment of abstract ideas about the past events into artistic images of the monuments or memorials. The last step considers the way in which the ideas of "politicians" (generally speaking, social actors who wish to immortalize some past for a particular purpose), transformed by artists, were perceived by participants of the opening ceremonies and changed by new percipients during some period of time. Ultimately, doxa becomes episteme, as a result of such a process of transformation.

Taken together, "sites of memory" form the commemorative landscape, which can acquire a particular configuration depending on the relationship and hierarchy of these "places." This space corresponds to a real physical territory, but is not identical to it. The concepts "center" and "periphery" can be applied very fruitfully to the studies of memory spaces (Antoshchenko 2010a: 196–198). The transfiguration of the commemorative landscape as old centers are devalued and new centers appear leads to a change in the meaning of the past. This approach enables us to "hear the voices" not only of political leaders, but also of those who have been brought together by a shared experience of war trauma into, to use Jay Winter's expression, "fictive kinship groups" (Winter 1999: 1–2). Examining the correlations between various levels of the hierarchy is important for determining the stabilizing influence of war memorials, which in our case presupposes taking into account the interaction of "communicative" and "cultural" memory, as theorized by Jan Assmann (2004 [1992]).

Last but not least, the creation of new meanings takes place on the "periphery," while their affirmation takes place at the "center," which, as a result of this affirmation, subordinates the "periphery," depriving it of particularity. We have structured this chapter's narrative accordingly: standard data for all of Karelia will be cited only briefly where they do not reflect any new tendencies but merely illustrate an already established significance. More attention will be devoted to Petrozavodsk by virtue of its central position as the republic's capital.

The Soviet Period: The First Sites of Memory

The issue of the monumental memory of the war was raised in Karelia in 1944. A Special State Commission for the creation and protection of monuments of the Great Patriotic War and perpetuation of the memory of the heroes who died in battle for their country, was established by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the KFSSR on 18 October 1944. The Commission planned to build three monuments: in Petrozavodsk, near the village of Kesten'ga, and in Medvezh'egorsk. In the event, however only the monument near Kesten'ga was actually ever constructed. This monument was stern, impressive, and awesome in its design, which combined the ideas of a triumphal arch and a fortress. The builders used guns and bombs as the styling elements. All guns were turned to the west, in the direction of the enemy. Thus, the monument was intended to create the image of the invincible Soviet Army, to give confidence in the coming victory ("Ispolkom" 1945 cf. Antipenko 2012: 151–154).

The monuments planned for Petrozavodsk and Medvezh'egorsk were never erected, but a description of the project designed by sculptor Matvei Manizer[2] for Petrozavodsk has been preserved in the archives. The project's main idea was the heroism of the liberators, which was to be emphasized through imaginative solutions and through the scale of the monument. To be executed in white stone, the monument design represented huge figures of the soldiers and partisans who defended Petrozavodsk in 1941, together with the text of the order, signed by Stalin, to liberate the city in 1944 ("Protokol" 1945; cf. Volokhova 2007: 28). Another grandiose design for a Victory memorial was also proposed in 1946 in connection with the completion of the restoration of the Belomor–Baltiiskii Canal. But despite the fact that this design included a monument to Stalin, the project was never realized, reflecting



Fig. 16.1 Monument at mass grave near the town of Povenets, Medvezhiegorsk region. Collection of the National Museum of the Republic of Karelia

the general tendency in the Soviet Union towards the de-emphasizing of the war at the time (Palmer 2009: 381).[3]

During the two decades after the war, mass and individual graves were places of private remembrance in Karelia, as was the case elsewhere throughout the Soviet Union. In the post-war years, the remains of the partisans and soldiers were moved from remote locations to the cemeteries of villages and towns. Small obelisks and plaques covered the country. Made from cheap materials and in accordance with a standard model, these monuments were not very expressive from the aesthetic viewpoint. Even in those rare cases when graves were marked by sculptural groups expressing grief and loss, these were created based on standard models and lacked suggestive charge (Fig. 16.1). They effectively never served as sites of commemoration; only occasionally were they visited by the relatives of the soldiers buried in the graves. At these sites, “the dead

[were] remembered—as dead," as Reinhart Koselleck (2002: 287) has characterized such cases. Retired military hardware used as decoration for the monuments' pedestals represented another category of memorial emblems that were relatively cheap to produce.

In Petrozavodsk, the main graveyard of honor was located in the city center (near Lenin Square), while other mass graves were situated on the outskirts of the city or outside the urban area, in Zaretskoe Cemetery and the "Peski" ("The Sands" Cemetery). The remoteness of the cemeteries and the traditional character of the burial arrangements there, often featuring wooden Orthodox crosses erected on the graves after the funeral, made them places of mainly individual, personal grief. Only on special commemorative days and holidays did displays of sorrow become public, when the representatives of state enterprises and institutions, and Pioneers held rallies and laid flowers at the graves. A central place in the emerging commemorative landscape belonged to an obelisk in the center of Petrozavodsk. The obelisk was originally installed to mark the grave of Red Army soldiers killed in the Civil War. After the liberation of the city in 1944, the bodies of Soviet officers who died of their wounds in hospital were also buried here. In this way, the victory in the Great Patriotic War and the establishment of Soviet power were tied together: the Great October Revolution was presented as a source of the Great Victory in 1945.

Immediately after the war, the main method used to construct the regional memory of the war was the naming of collective farms, streets, and schools in Karelian towns and villages after heroes ("Spravka" 1948). The identification of the special group of Heroes of the Soviet Union was important for the regional authorities, because these names marked the special contribution made by the Karelian population to the common cause of liberating the Motherland from the occupiers. Three Heroes of the Soviet Union born in Karelia were honored in the late 1950s–early 1960s with bronze busts, erected in their native villages and towns. This honor was highly symbolic. Two young women, the Vepsian Anna Lisitsyna and Karelian Mariia Melent'eva, partisan messengers who perished during the war, symbolized the heroic struggle of the autochthonous ethnic minorities against the Finnish occupiers. Achieving this symbolic recognition of their heroism was especially important for regional political leaders, since even while the battles to liberate the region were still underway, some commanders of the Karelian front had proposed deporting the Karelians and Vepsians for collaborating with the

occupying authorities (Kupriianov),[4] as had been done in the case of the Kalmyks, Chechens, Ingush, Crimea Tatars, and several other nationalities accused of treachery during the Great Patriotic War. Although the danger of deportation disappeared after Karelia was liberated, the symbols of the struggle with the occupiers remained; their content simply became increasingly abstract. Meanwhile, the tanker and Komsomol activist Andrei Pashkov, who was killed in Poland, became a symbol of the Karelian contribution to the Soviet army's liberation of Eastern Europe.

Recognition of the heroism of the dead could play a de-traumatizing role, enabling their loved ones to handle their grief since their lives had been sacrificed on the altar of freedom. However, the identification and selection of heroes was determined by politics, the essence of which centered on the construction of a hierarchy. The top positions in the hierarchy were not open to everyone who had died or lost loved ones in the war. This selective approach was particularly inappropriate from the point of view of the war veterans, who knew all too well the equalizing effect of death. The Gallery of Heroes created in Petrozavodsk in 1977 was visited more often by communist party leaders than it was by residents of the city, for whom this pantheon became an ordinary element of the everyday urban landscape. Only recognition of the mass nature of wartime heroism was capable of serving as a foundation for the formation of the identity of Soviet people.

Inventing the Tradition of Heroism *En Masse*

From the mid-1960s, as the generation of war veterans was replaced by the next generation, there was a need for a new politics of memory that would be capable of linking together and unifying these two generations. The new politics was disseminated from above, from Moscow. Monumental memorialization now acquired a centralized and unified character all over the country. According to the pattern handed down by Moscow, the Memorial of the Unknown Soldier with the Eternal Flame of Glory appeared in Petrozavodsk in 1969 (Antoshchenko 2010b: 10). This resembled the Memorial of the Unknown Soldier in Moscow (1966–1967). The reburial procession in Petrozavodsk repeated the main elements of the ceremony in Moscow. In both cases, a flame was brought from the Field of Mars in Leningrad, where the revolutionaries who fell in battle for the Soviets in 1917 were buried. While

the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU Leonid Brezhnev lit an eternal flame in Moscow, the First Secretary of the Karelian regional committee of the party Ivan Sen'kin did the same in Petrozavodsk. In Petrozavodsk the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier was combined into a single complex including the graves of soldiers who died in both the Civil War and the Great Patriotic War, with a statue of Lenin in the center of the circle. A granite boulder, set into the western part of the memorial, clearly defined the meaning of the complex: "To the heroes—children of the October Revolution, who gave their lives for happiness of the people." While the memorial embodied the idea of the historical legitimacy of the Soviet regime, public remembrance ceremonies provided for the transfer of values from generation to generation, and strengthened the bond between them, creating a so-called "new historical community of the Soviet people".[5] Svetlana Adon'eva has demonstrated clearly the ritualistic aspect of this transfer and the role of the representation of heroism in it:

> Heroism ensured the imperative of social duty: with beating drums, a participant of the memorial ritual was charged with guilt forever: the person buried there died for a reason, he died for you, and you owe him. You must return the debt to the Motherland for which he gave his life: the freely chosen death of the hero became the duty of moral obligation for everybody. (Adon'eva 2001: 151)

Representatives of the younger generation now became responsible for continuing the older generation's work to build a communist society because they were alive, thanks to the deaths of their fathers, who had died defending socialist ideals during the Great Patriotic War.

Mass participation by city inhabitants in the public annual commemorations of Victory Day on 9 May (from 1965), as well as the Day of the Liberation of Petrozavodsk, which was celebrated on the last Saturday of June, made the monumental complex an effective means of maintaining the official memory of the war. A distinctive feature of this period of the memorialization of the war was the unification of rituals and ceremonies that linked all the central memorial sites together across the entire country. Often during this period it was the T-34 tank, demonstrating the power of the Soviet army and the superiority of socialist industry, which was used to mark Soviet memorial sites. One such tank appeared on the plinth in Petrozavodsk in 1969. In addition, this period also saw

the creation of memorial sites related to regional history, such as the Memorial to the prisoners of fascist concentration camps, the Memorial Wall at the Peski military cemetery, and a monument at the mass grave of 15 unknown Soviet soldiers in Solomennoe village, now a district of Petrozavodsk.

When constructing new monuments, local authorities continued to emphasize the fact that the origins of the Victory in May 1945 were in October 1917. Consequently, new monuments were usually unveiled on the eve of the anniversary of the October Revolution, during the November holidays. New memorials were located on the outskirts of the city. They seem to have marked the boundaries of the memorial landscape, aimed at holding together its unity. Symbolic rituals of remembrance supported this unity of remembrance of the war. The set of related rituals were rather homogeneous: the laying of wreaths and flowers at the graves of fallen soldiers, the minute of silence, joint marches by veterans and young people, the swearing of an oath of allegiance to the precepts of the fathers by the representatives of the young generation. These ceremonies were repeated every year, during the celebration of Victory Day and the city's Liberation Day, and they took place not only on Lenin and Kirov Squares in the center of Petrozavodsk, but also on the streets named after the heroes. Similar but smaller-scale celebrations took place in all towns and large villages in Karelia.[6] This inclusion into the broader scenario of the celebration and its uniformity joined together the sites of memory located in different parts of the country.

The protagonists of these celebrations became the veterans whose images appeared during the holidays in newspaper reports, and at gatherings in schools and other educational institutions. Meanwhile, however, the image of the defeated enemy lost its shape and definition, and the "German–Finnish occupants" were transformed into the amorphous "Fascist invaders." This shift was a response, on the one hand, to the process of unification of commemorative practices and symbols across the country, which dictated that the image of the enemy should be the same everywhere. At the same time, it was also a response to the change in relations with former adversaries in the war. From the 1960s relations with Finland came to be regarded as a model for how a mutually beneficial relationship might be built with capitalist countries as embodied in the concept of *détente* from the 1970s.

In this way, from the late 1960s to the 1980s war memorials became the material foundation for a politics of the memory of the war, whose

aim was both legitimation of the Soviet system and of the leading role of the communist party, and the formation of a Soviet identity. The invented tradition of Soviet heroism *en masse* served as the backbone to this politics. This tradition raised the status of veterans in society and linked together as one the generation that had lived through the war and the post-war generation, ensuring the transfer of socialist ideals to the younger generation. The legitimacy of this tradition was based on terrible sacrifice, which testified to countless but not meaningless losses. In its turn sacrifice *en masse* served as obvious evidence of the peace-loving nature of Soviet foreign policy. Meanwhile, those aspects of the past that might complicate contemporary good relations with neighboring countries, especially military conflicts and questions linked to interpreting and narrating these, were now to be forgotten.

The Post-Soviet Period: Renewing Invented Tradition

Benjamin Forest and Juliet Johnson have described the last decade of Russia's twentieth century as a "critical juncture" in the transition from socialism to capitalism. Via their discussion of the case of Moscow they present the break with the Soviet past as the result of a struggle between political elites over monuments as symbolic capital with the aim of exerting influence for the formation of a new Russian identity (Forest and Johnson 2002: 524–547). Analogous processes were also underway in Petrozavodsk during this period, although here we can also note certain particularities.

From the late 1980s, the process of reappraisal of the Soviet past affected the Great Patriotic War as well as the entire Stalinist period more broadly (see Koposov 2011: 123). In the early 1990s, emerging local businessmen, the so-called "New Russians," tried to "privatize" Victory Day. They sponsored the Victory Day celebrations in 1992, and newspapers widely touted this action ("Otdokhnuli" 1992). Soon, however, businessmen realized that veterans were too poor to make valuable customers, and they preferred to invest instead in politicians seeking to win the votes of those same veterans. The following year, the Communists staked their claim to a monopoly on the holiday but they lost their chance in October 1993 (Tikhonov 1993). Eventually, in 1995 the influence of the state became the decisive factor in the Victory Day celebrations, when the tradition of parades featuring military equipment was revived, in order to demonstrate the power of the state.

In Petrozavodsk, the central turning point in this chain of events was the unveiling of the monument to the soldiers, partisans, and underground fighters of Karelia in 1993 (for details, see Volokhova 2009: 3–11). The idea of such a monument dates back to the late 1970s and 1980s, when a stone for the monument was delivered to the site. Initially it was planned that this monument would mark the beginning of an Avenue of Partisan Glory and would form part of an expanded memorial complex with a Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and an eternal flame at its heart. Leaders of the regional branch of "Memorial" argued that it would be better to build a monument dedicated to the victims of Stalinist repressions in Karelia, but ultimately it was the idea of a monument to the heroes of the Great Patriotic War that prevailed. The unveiling of the Monument took place in 1993, at a time of conflict between the Supreme Soviet of the Republic of Karelia (headed by communist Viktor Stepan) and the Petrozavodsk City Soviet (headed by Aleksandr Kolesov), mirroring the conflict unfolding in Moscow at the time. The Karelian Supreme Soviet supported the Russian parliament in this conflict, while the city leaders supported Russia's first president, Boris Yeltsin. This conflict was played out and reflected in the local Victory Day celebrations that year: Viktor Stepanov took part in the wreath-laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, while Aleksandr Kolesov delivered a speech to participants of a gathering in front of the newly unveiled Monument nearby (about 600 meters away from the Tomb). As a result of this political rivalry, plans to join the two monuments together in an enlarged memorial space were never implemented.

The Monument was reopened in 2003 during the celebrations of Petrozavodsk's tricentenary. The stone slab was now decorated by depictions of a soldier, a partisan and a female underground fighter, executed in a style aesthetically reminiscent of socialist realism. The monument itself was placed on the periphery of a park known during the Soviet period as Pioneers' Park but now renamed the Gubernatorial Garden, as it had been in pre-revolutionary times. The bust of Lenin that previously dominated the center of the park[7] was replaced by a monument to Gavriil Derzhavin, famous Russian poet and first Governor of Olonetsk Province (1784–1785).[8]

The symbolic renunciation of the legacy of the October Revolution was also expressed in changes made to the main ceremonies associated with Victory Day and City Day. The ceremony of laying wreaths and flowers first at the sailors' memorial, and then at the monument to

Peter the Great now became a mandatory part of the City Day celebration. This ritual replaced the hitherto unchanged Soviet ceremony which had continued to be an obligatory part of the post-Soviet Victory Day and City Day celebrations, and which entailed laying wreaths first at the Lenin monument, and then at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. It is also noteworthy that not only has the center of the City Day celebrations moved from Lenin Square to the waterfront of Onega Lake, but the meaning of the celebration also changed over the two decades (Antipenko and Antoshchenko 2010: 5–18). In the Soviet period the main events and rituals were aimed at recalling the liberation of the city from the invaders as well as the city's post-war reconstruction and development. Now, by contrast, the core organizing idea in the commemorations is the birth of the city in accordance with Emperor Peter the Great's decree. Consequently, the central site of the celebrations is now the statue of Peter the Great instead of the Lenin monument. Thus, the war has been moved out the context of Soviet history into the new wider context of Russian history.

As a result, there have been changes in the meanings produced by the war memorials used as ritual sites. For decades, Soviet power used images and rituals in order to posit a connection between the events of the Great October Revolution of 1917 and the Great Victory of 1945. It is difficult to say what proportion of Petrozavodsk inhabitants subscribed to this notion in the 1980s and 1990s, but today, only 9 percent of respondents polled named the political leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union as a decisive factor in the Victory. The majority (78 percent) named the heroism of ordinary soldiers as the main factor in achieving victory. Thus, the theme of heroism, embodied in the stone images and stressed during commemorative celebrations in the Soviet period, is in demand for Russian society now.

The celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Victory in 1995 was the beginning of a new wave of memorial construction in the region, which mirrored the general trends in the country. However, in this case financial constraints limited the creation of new monuments to the capital, Petrozavodsk. The new meaning of the Great Patriotic War was materialized in the Victory Memorial constructed on the initiative of Sergius Katanandov, Mayor of Petrozavodsk, and later Prime Minister of the Republic of Karelia (1998–2012). The design of the Memorial reflected the authorities' new attitude toward the Great Victory. Its central element was a metal Phoenix—symbol of the rebirth of a renewed

country from the ashes of war, and also symbolizing the emergence of a new democratic Russia. The monument also featured obelisks on which the names of Soviet wartime hero-cities were inscribed. Under the bases of these obelisks, capsules with soil from the hero-cities were laid on the eve of Victory Day celebrations in the second half of the 1990s. Subsequent ceremonies continued the traditions of the Soviet period. In front of the Memorial, a bust of Marshal Georgii Zhukov was constructed in 2000, for example.[9]

However, the Victory Memorial was subsequently appropriated or "occupied" by Sergei Katanandov's rival, Andrei Demin, the new mayor of Petrozavodsk (elected 1998). As a result of their personal rivalry the prime minister was forced to retreat to his former position—he delivered his Victory Day address at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. This meant that photographers were forced to go to great lengths when framing shots to make sure that the huge figure of Lenin was not visible behind the statesman. But while it was possible to exclude the Soviet past from photographs, it was harder to remove it from the reminiscences of veterans, which were now embodied in the form of new monuments. In 2004 a monument was created in Petrozavodsk to the young Yurii Andropov, long-time head of the KGB and briefly General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee. Later, in 2007, another new monument was erected, to Ivan Sen'kin, former head of the Karelian regional party committee (1958–1964). Speaking at the ceremonies held to unveil these monuments, Sergei Katanandov emphasized the fact that their construction by no means signified a return to the Soviet past—this past had gone forever. We might read these monuments as representing a kind of payment for the instrumental use of war memory, since it was by manipulating this memory that Katanandov had succeeded in gaining veterans' support during the elections. He paid for this by allocating budgetary funds to the construction of monuments erected at the initiative of veterans' organizations. Thus while the veterans gained no real dividends from this exchange, they did acquire symbolic capital in the form of monuments to Soviet-era figures at a time when the latters' status in society was high.

The celebrations marking the 55th anniversary of Victory Day led to a further expansion of the memory space, created by new memorial sites designed to commemorate the contribution of the inhabitants of Karelia to the common victory over the enemy. Thus, for example, as



Fig. 16.2 Bust of Marshal Kirill Meretskov. Petrozavodsk. 8 May 2005. Photograph by I. Stepanov

we have seen, the Monument to the soldiers, partisans, and underground fighters in Karelia was reopened in 2003. In addition, a monument to sailors of the Onega flotilla was created in 2004; and a bust of Marshal Kirill Meretskov, who commanded Soviet troops on the Karelian front, was erected on the street named after him (see Fig. 16.2). Today in Petrozavodsk there are more than twenty monuments and memorial sites related to the Great Patriotic War. Half of them have been created since 2000. However, a survey conducted in 2009–2010 in Petrozavodsk, showed that the majority of sites are unnoticed by residents.

New rituals in celebration of Victory Day appeared in Petrozavodsk during the 1990s. In 1994, the commemorations included a new element, expressing the search for a "national idea" that could replace the communist ideology. The Russian Orthodox Church and its representatives now became actively involved in community life. Thus in 1994 the Bishop of Petrozavodsk and Olonets Manuel participated in the wreath-laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.[10] The 50th jubilee Victory celebrations the following year consolidated this trend, creating a basis for updating the old tradition. In the morning of 9 May, after the Divine Liturgy, Bishop of Petrozavodsk and Olonets held a service at Saint Alexander Nevsky Cathedral for all those who died in the war.

The new commemorative ceremonies and rituals are still at the development stage and have not always proved to be attractive or effective. This is the case especially for the practices connected to religious services at sites of war memory, including the consecration of military sites. This practice appeared in Petrozavodsk in the early 1990s. This "ideological" substitution, associated with a reference to the Christian roots of heroism—sacrifice, has received very little attention from the actual inhabitants of Petrozavodsk.

From the late 1980s and early 1990s new actors, including not only the Russian Orthodox Church but also independent social groups and organizations have appeared in the memorial space. These include the relatives of those killed in local wars, the regional Committee of Soldiers' Mothers, and unions of veterans of the war in Afghanistan and the military conflict in Chechnya. Their emergence has manifested in the construction of new monuments and memorials, and in the performance of new rituals. This process has involved the public expression and representation of the suffering and casualties of wars, often with an emphasis on their meaninglessness. The most notable monuments expressing the idea of victimhood were the "Black Tulip" memorial to the solders from Karelia killed in Afghanistan, and the memorial to Karelian Interior troops killed in Chechnya (Figs. 16.3 and 16.4). The Black Tulip memorial design, a broken black flower amidst crimson tulips growing in a mountain setting, symbolized the pain of loss.[11] The Chechnya monument echoed this through the image of a bell, a symbolic allusion to the phrase "For Whom the Bell Tolls."[12] These memorials arose initially as a protest against the irrational and ineffective military responses to the external and internal challenges.[13] Later on they were bound to



Fig. 16.3 "Black Tulip" memorial. Petrozavodsk. May 2013. Photograph by Aleksandr Antoshchenko

the ceremonies of the Victory Day celebrations and became markers of respect for the courage of fallen soldiers and their loyalty oath.



Fig. 16.4 Memorial to Karelian interior troops killed in Chechnya. Petrozavodsk. May 2013. Photograph by Aleksandr Antoshchenko

New Trends

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the formation of an independent Russia as legal heir to the former state demanded that Russia's relations with former enemies from the World War II period be reconfigured. The early 1990s were characterized by a politics of reconciliation. On 11 June 1992 the Russian and Finnish governments signed an agreement on "cooperation in perpetuating the memory of Russian (Soviet) military servicemen in Finland and Finnish military servicemen in Russia, who perished during World War II." This agreement created a legal basis for the realization of proposals put forward from the late 1980s by veterans of the Winter War and the relatives of servicemen killed in this war, residents of Moscow, Karelia, and other regions, who were calling for a monument to be erected to the fallen (for details, see "Dokumenty" 2000). In October 1992 the decision was taken to build a monument to servicemen killed during the Soviet–Finnish war of 1939–1940. The site chosen was located at the junction of roads leading to the cities of Petrozavodsk, Pitkiarantu, and Suoiarvi. This had been a site of prolonged fighting during the war, and it subsequently housed the "Valley of Heroes" historical-memorial complex, known by local residents as the

"Valley of Death," since it contains 18 fraternal burial sites. The site's location on the "Blue Road" tourist route connecting Karelia to Finland was also taken into consideration in planning the site.

In the following year, a contest was held to select a design for the monument. The jury included two Finnish representatives, and the winning design was produced by Petrozavodsk sculptor Leo Fomich Lankinen. His design comprised the most precise expression of the idea of reconciliation, defined here as based on mourning and grief. "The cross of grief," as the monument was called, was made up of two female figures symbolizing a Russian and a Finnish mother whose sons had perished in combat with one another (Fig. 16.5).

The text explaining the concept behind the monument was proposed by its designer and is inscribed on a memorial stone near the monument:

> Russia and Finland—two sisters.
> Finland and Russia—two mothers.
> They are embodied in this Cross of grief.
> Their heads have merged as one
> Of their own accord.
> Their hands have joined
> In hope,
> That love might be victorious.
> And this depends on us. On every one of us.

Construction of the monument was carried out jointly by a Karelian republic government Organizational Committee and the Committee to Support the Erection of a Monument to Victims of the Winter War, created in the town of Kuopio. The Kuopio administration established sister-city links with the town of Pitkyaranta near the memorial site, and contributed 100,000 Finnish marks towards the cost of the monument. The Russian government and the government of Karelia contributed more than two million roubles.

The unveiling ceremony was attended by deputy chair of the Russian government Aleksei Kudrin and Finnish Prime Minister Paavo Lipponen. The speeches of the Russian officials in attendance emphasized the themes of heroism and loyalty to military duty, while the Finnish delegation leaders spoke of sacrifice and the guilt of the totalitarian regimes that had unleashed this war. Both speeches expressed the conviction that the time when military confrontation between the neighboring peoples



Fig. 16.5 "Cross of Sorrow" memorial. Pitkiaranta region. May 2014. Photograph by Aleksandr Khorkhordin

was possible had now faded long into the past, and that the future ongoing development of friendly relations was a certainty.

In addition to officials, the unveiling ceremony also featured veterans, and relatives of the dead, together with individuals who had helped to fund the construction of the Cross of Grief monument. But the symbolic reconciliation enacted at the Cross of Grief was limited to

the political sphere. Significantly, Russian newspapers reporting on the unveiling emphasized the fact that soon after the ceremony, the Finnish prime minister confirmed once again that this country had no intention of raising the issue of returning the territories ceded to Karelia after the Winter War.

The mismatch between the new symbols of cultural memory and the actual living memory of the particular groups of the Karelian population was demonstrated by the debate provoked by an absurd proposal put forward by Petrozavodsk city council deputy Vladislav Grin to erect a monument to Mannerheim in the village of Shuia/Suoju, not far from the Karelian capital. The proposal reflected complete ignorance of the historical context and a fundamental lack of understanding of the memorial and identity-building function of monuments, and sparked numerous comments in internet forums created to discuss the issue. The context in which the proposal was made, in the wake of wreath-laying by Presidents Putin (2007) and Medvedev (2009) strongly suggests that the "independent deputy" Grin was engaged in a public relations exercise designed to demonstrate his loyalty to the country's political leaders. Certainly this was the main interpretation of Grin's proposal put forward by online commentators, most of them from the young generation.[14]

But the fiercest response to the deputy's proposal came from the elderly representatives of the Union of Juvenile Prisoners of Fascist Concentration Camps in Karelia. This body arose in the late 1980s, when glasnost' provided an opportunity for discussing the traumatic experience that had previously been suppressed in the interests of maintaining good-neighborly relations between the USSR and Finland. These individuals had also been subjected to repeated traumas later in life. In the early twenty-first century they were denied compensation, first by the German government, on the grounds that the camps in question had been created by the Finns. Later, in 2004, the president of Finland responded to their compensation claim by declaring that Finland had already met all its obligations, including those related to compensating civilians for harm suffered, in full accordance with the 1947 peace treaty. Meanwhile, attempts to acquire compensation from the local authorities frequently came up against bureaucratic obstacles, such as the requirement that victims present documentary confirmation of their past status as camp inmates, and this gave rise to a series of controversial court cases.[15] In effect, the status of victims of fascism, which had been recognized in the Soviet period, was now being called into doubt.

The response was an active campaign to raise social awareness of this issue by publishing a series of reminiscences of the Finnish occupation regime in the mass media. As a result, this traumatic experience came to act as the foundation not only for the formation of social connections, but also group identification. Following Jay Winter, we might describe this group of agents of remembrance as a "fictive kinship group" (see further Winter 1995: Chap. 2). An important role is played here by "narrative fetishism" expressed in the striving on the part of "post-traumatic" communities to use narratives about traumas of the past in order to form collective identities in the present. As Eric Santner (1992: 143–154) has noted, "narrative fetishism" is a survival strategy, and it involves substituting analysis of the causes of the traumatic experience by narrating loss and suffering. As a result, instead of working through the past *(Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit),* an exclusive right is asserted to the validity and authenticity of the memories of this group alone, even though, in this case, oral history researchers working on Karelia have produced a different picture of the events in question (cf. Nikulina and Kiseleva 2006, and Kiseleva and Nikulina 2007).

Characteristically, this striving on the part of the members of the Union of Juvenile Prisoners of Fascist Concentration Camps in Karelia to place their own memories at the center of the meaning-making narratives of the war is also expressed symbolically in monumental practices. The Memorial to the Victims of the Fascist Concentration Camps (created 1969) has become a site of memory for this group. But it is located on the outskirts of the city, and only a small number of former camp inmates and their relatives have been taking part in the remembrance rituals performed at the site in the post-Soviet period. With a view to reinforcing its status symbolically, the Union of Juvenile Inmates has also erected two monuments at former concentration camp sites in Petrozavodsk itself. The first of these was unveiled on 24 June 2005 in connection to the celebration of Petrozavodsk Day linked to the 60th jubilee of Victory in the Great Patriotic War. A significant feature of the ceremony held to unveil the second monument in 2011 was the participation of Petrozavodsk Mayor Nikolai Levin, representatives of the Karelian Veterans' Council, and pupils from two local schools who had been studying the history of the concentration camps in Petrozavodsk. During the ceremony, the mayor offered an official acknowledgment of the work of the Union: "Heavy years of captivity fell to your share, you were deprived of a childhood, you grew up amidst hunger and

humiliation, but you survived. You, the real patriots of our Motherland, gave a worthy upbringing to your children and grandchildren, and you continue to pass on love for the Motherland to the rising generation. Thank you" ("V Petrozavodske" 2011).

Last but not least, from the aesthetic point of view, these new monuments are distinguished by their minimalism. They take the form of natural stone slabs to which memorial plaques are attached. On the one hand, this form testifies to the poverty of the camp inmates—during the unveiling of the first monument emphasis was placed on the fact that the design had been authored by former camp inmate and Petrozavodsk resident Aleksei Varukhin. On the other hand, the decision not to give aesthetic embodiment to the traumatic experience can be interpreted as a conscious decision to leave the obvious unspoken. In general both these monuments serve to reinforce a politics of memory based on the *devoir de mémoire* (duty of memory).

New prospects for transformation of the war image were opened up by the implementation of a new Russian–German memory policy during the so-called "Era of Reconciliation" from the early 1990s. The restoration of the graves of German POWs in the Peski cemetery near Petrozavodsk and in a rural cemetery near the village of Padany (1995–1997) prompted a public debate over how to treat those who are buried there.[16] The conclusive outcome of this debate is exemplified by the inscription that subsequently appeared on a tombstone in the Peski cemetery: "Remember them and the victims of all wars." It is significant that the initiators of the project to restore the POWs' cemetery included former camp inmates and POWs. Vadim Mizko, who passed through the horrors of several Nazi camps,[17] and Pastor Paul Zeller, who was a POW in Petrozavodsk, became symbols of the reconciliation policy.[18] Representatives of the younger generation—boys and girls from the Keppler College in Tübingen and the lyceum in Petrozavodsk—supported the initiative and worked together to put in order the graves of Soviet soldiers and German POWs, located not far from one another. The idea behind the project was engraved on one of the stones marking a mass grave: "Against war and violence, for reconciliation, peace, and a shared future." The notion that all wars bring not so much victory as victimhood was also fixed on the tomb erected over the remains of a young German soldier reburied in Petrozavodsk in 2007. The epitaph reads: *der Kriegsopfer—wermisst, aber nicht vergessen* (to the victims of war—disappeared, but not forgotten) (Verbin n/d). It is important to

note, however, that these policies are not supported by all residents of Petrozavodsk. In 2010 about 30 percent of respondents were in favor of creating memorial sites "*for all victims* of the war" (authors' emphasis). This number is lower in the towns and villages of Karelia.

For what purpose should war memorials be used? This was one of the questions that we asked in our polls. According to the majority of respondents, these memorials express "a sense of gratitude to those who gave their lives for their country." That is, memorial sites are necessary to preserve memory and gratitude to those who defended the Motherland and to displace the traumatic experience of war. In this sense, the most significant memorial—the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier—can also be considered as one of the ways to overcome the traumatic experience by the anonymization of the victims. It is significant that the monuments erected at the sites of mass graves at military cemeteries or at the locations of Finnish concentration camps are so little known among the general population in Karelia. War memorials in Karelia have become a memorial space which has proved a useful place for searching for a state ideal associated with the glorification of the past—but will this be enough to preserve the *true* memory of the war and *to prevent new memories from taking shape*?

Despite the fact that a significant number of new monuments have been added to the memorial landscape in Karelia and Petrozavodsk in the post-Soviet period, the challenge that these have made to the Soviet-era heroic traditions of war remembrance has been slight. The war remains the key foundational event supporting Russian identity, and the memorials continue to function as ritual spaces in which heroes are glorified and the rising generation inherits their glory. True, it is becoming increasingly unclear where the sources of the glorious Victory lie, since the symbols of the October Revolution are being excised from the ceremonies and rituals. The new memorials, with their mission to provide symbolic reinforcement for the politics of reconciliation, make for an uneasy fit with the former memorial landscape, resulting in a kind of bricolage effect.[19] To a large degree, the schizo-semiotic outcome can be linked to the instrumentalization of the war memory, which is being used by members of the regional administration as a vote-winning tool, and by veterans as a means of elevating their status. In the context of this opportunistic handling of memory, it becomes ever more difficult to discern what we should remember, and what we should consign to oblivion.

Notes

1. Until 1940 the Karelian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic was part of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, which was a full-fledged member of the USSR. The Karelian-Finnish Soviet Socialist Republic remained in existence from 1940 through to 1956, when it reverted to the status of an autonomous republic within the RSFSR.
2. Mattvei Manizer (1891–1966) was a Soviet sculptor from Moscow, supporter of socialist realism in art and winner of three Stalin Prizes. Monuments of Lenin (1933) and Kirov (1936) were erected in Petrozavodsk based on his designs.
3. Palmer suggests: "Perhaps fearful that celebrations of past martial victories would detract from the new battles being waged against emerging Cold War foes, Stalin quickly moved to refocus popular attention" (Palmer 2009: 380).
4. Gennadii Nikolaevich Kupriianov (1905–1979) was the first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Karelian Finnish Soviet Socialistic Republic in 1940–1950. For details of the planned deportation see Verigin (2013: 192–210).
5. Cf. general trends in memorial politics during the Brezhnev period characterized by Boris Dubin (2006).
6. This is evidenced by the annual reports on the celebration of the local newspapers.
7. Initially, in 1824, a bust of Peter the Great was placed in the centre of Gubernatorial Garden. After the revolution, in the 1930s, this was replaced by a plaster statue of Volodia Ul'ianov, Lenin as a boy, with a book under his arm, and the park was renamed Pioneers' Park. In the 1970s the temporary plaster figure was replaced by a bust of the older and wiser Lenin as leader of the proletariat. The bust was removed in 2002.
8. Olonetsk Province was the official name of Karelia before the 1917 revolution.
9. It should be noted that statues of Marshal Georgii Zhukov were erected in St Petersburg, Ekaterinburg, Omsk, Tver', and two in Moscow, in the year of the 50th anniversary of the Great Victory. Thus, the same type of sites continued to perform a kind of "bandage" for spaces of war memory across the country.
10. See photo report on the celebration in *Severnyi kur'er*, 11 May 1994. Cf. Antoshchenko (2010c: 198f).
11. Planes transporting corpses of servicemen killed in the war in Afghanistan back to the Soviet Union were referred to colloquially as "black tulips."

12. The proposed monument designs included one featuring the Christian idea of sacrifice: two halves of a pierced heart and a figure of Jesus on the cross.
13. "Pamiatnik" (1993); Doil'tsyn (1997); "Chechenskii tiul'pan" (1997); and Zhukov (1997).
14. See for example online discussions on "Pamiatnik Mannergeimu" at: http://vip.karelia.pro/viewtopic.php?p=3725938; and http://www.Karelia-life.net/main/viewtopic.php?t=492&view=next&sid=aec20cdec0048110414 01f63f5061b75.
15. All these documents are available at the Union's website: http://www.deti-uzniki.org/.
16. See Evseeva (1995); Kut'kov (1995a and 1995b); Gladkikh (1995); and Kladbishche v Padozere (1995).
17. Vadim Mizko (1926–2006) was a Chairman of the Union of former juvenile prisoners of German concentration camps and a Director of the Museum of Victims of Fascism named after Maximilian Kolbe in Petrozavodsk.
18. See Tsygankov (1995); Spektor (1999); and Tsypkin (2004).
19. For a definition of bricolage see Deleuze and Guattari (2004: 7–8).

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