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Rethinking the Soviet Memory of "Great Patriotic War" from the Local Perspective: Stalinism and the Thaw, 1943-1965



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Front cover: a group of pupils from the 6th form of Kharkiv secondary school number 99 has a meeting with a participant of liberation of Kharkiv in 1943 M. H. Vladykin. Photo from the article *Vstrecha s byvalym voynom* [Meeting with Experienced Veteran], “Krasnoe znamia” (Kharkiv, May 19, 1965. P. 4).

Back cover: exhibition of the military equipment from WWII in Rostov-on-Don, (fragment of the yard of the Rostov Historical Museum), 1954. Source: www.temernik.ru. Citation: O. Kashtanier. *Zdravstvui, plemia mladoe!* [Hello, young tribe!], “Krasnoe znamia” (Kharkiv, May 9, 1945. P. 4).

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Introduction

6 The Soviet politics of memory of the Second World War is a very important research problem, especially if we consider its symbolic significance in the Soviet society. In the postwar period, specifically after J. Stalin's death, the official version of the WWII memory became one of the factors cementing the Soviet polity. The official Soviet version of WWII facilitated the legitimacy of internal as well as international postwar policy of the USSR; it was exhaustively present in the everyday lives of the ordinary Soviet people. Heroic narratives of the Soviet "fighting family of the peoples" are very much alive now in the independent post-Soviet states. The study of historical roots of the WWII myth will open up a possibility to a better understanding of contemporary interrelations between social memory, power, and transformation of post-Soviet societies.

The studies of the Soviet politics of memory now are becoming more and more popular, however, there are few comprehensive works on the subject. One of the first books, "The Living and the Dead" by N. Tumarkin, though written in somewhat essayistic style on the base of most easily accessible sources and personal experiences of travelling to Russia, proposed the interpretation of the war memory as a tool of assigning the meaning to the Soviet ideology while the communist ideals, especially in the everyday life, were still unattainable.¹ N. Tumarkin proposed the idea that under Stalin the war memory has been gradually repressed and gave way to the personality cult, while since the Thaw the Victory in WWII has become a new cult. Another important researcher of the subject, A. Weiner, however, underlined the importance of the war memory not only as an ideological tool, but as a life experience delineating the Soviet socio-ethnic body in the new way and giving birth to new hierarchies and identities, providing access to privileges and life chances. It is important that his work was written as a case-study of Vinnyts'ka oblast' and demonstrated how the wartime past was included into the policy-making "from below".² Than, C. Mairdale analyzed the war memory

¹ Tumarkin N. *The Living and the Dead. The Rise and Fall of the Cult of WWII in Russia.* – New York, 1994. – P. 8.

² Weiner A. *Making Sense of War: The Second World War and the Fate of the Bolshevik Revolution.* – Princeton, 2001.

in terms of reworking of the trauma and creation of specific emotional regime in the postwar USSR.³ R. Bosworth put the Soviet war memory into the comparative context of other states that were key participants of WWII.⁴ V. Hrynevych showed the repression of the memory of the first period of war, marked with retreat and mass captivity of the Soviet soldiers. V. Hrynevych also considers M. Khrushchev as a key figure in the process of new glorification of the war, and especially the partisan movement in Ukraine, which served as a compensation for real lack of resistance during the war. General outline of the official state politics of war memory in the USSR was presented also in the works by T. Wolfe, P. Rudling, S. Kudriashov.⁵ Researchers mostly agree that the enormously heroic Soviet model of war memory that excluded the uncomfortable questions of collaboration, Holocaust, fate of the POWs from the public discussion, served for justification of the totalitarian ruling practices with the “universal historical achievement of Victory” (“*vsemirno-istoricheskii podvig Pobedy*”). There are also several works dealing with particular aspects of memorial culture in the USSR (memory of the siege of Leningrad⁶, Holocaust⁷, forced labor⁸, collaboration⁹). Some researchers paid attention to different

³ Merridale C. *Night of Stone: Death and Memory in Russia*. – London, 2000.

⁴ Bosworth R. J. B. *Nations Examine Their Past: a Comparative Analysis of the Historiography of the “Long” Second World War* // *The History Teacher*. – 1996. – Vol. 29. – №4. – Pp. 499–523.

⁵ Kudriashov S. *Remembering and Researching the War: The Soviet and Russian Experience* // *Experience and Memory: The Second World War in Europe*/Ed. by J. Echemkamp, S. Martens. Berghagen Books, 2010. – Pp. 86–115; Радлінг П. Вялікая Айчынная вайна ў сьвядомасьці беларусаў // *Arche*. – 2005. – №8. – С. 43–64; Wolfe T. *Past as Present, Myth or History? Discourses of Time and the Great Fatherland War* // *The Politics of Memory in Postwar Europe* / Ed. by R. N. Lebow, W. Kansteiner, C. Fogu. – Ducke University Press, 2006.

⁶ Kirschenbaum L. *Commemorations of the Siege of Leningrad: a Catastrophe in Memory and Myth* // *The Memory of Catastrophe*/Ed. by P. Gray and K. Oliver. – Manchester, 2004. – Pp. 106–117.

⁷ Лябтман И. Мемориализация Холокоста в России: история, современность, перспективы // *Память о войне 60 лет спустя: Россия, Германия, Европа*. – Москва, 2005. – Pp. 509–530; Bergman J. *Soviet Dissidents on the Holocaust, Hitler and Nazism: a Study of the Preservation of Historical Memory* // *The Slavonic and East European Review*. – 1992. – Vol. 70. – № 4. – Pp. 477–504; Himka J.-P. *Memorialization of the Jewish Tragedy at Babi Yar: Historical and Current Perspectives*. Paper presented at 40th Annual Conference of Association for Jewish Studies. Washington, DC, December 21–23, 2008; Mankoff J. *Babi Yar and Struggle for Memory, 1944–2004* // *Ab Imperio*. – 2004. – №2. – Pp. 393–415.

⁸ Грінченко Г. Г. Миж визволенням і визнанням: примусова праця в нацистській Німеччині в політиці пам’яті СРСР і ФРН часів «Холодної війни». – Харків, 2010.

forms of memorialization (monuments¹⁰, celebrations¹¹, fiction,¹² and school textbooks¹³).

However, most of the works mentioned in our short introduction dealt only with the official state ideology of the highest level and with its most well-known cultural products. Yet the very process of policy-making, agency, social relations behind this policy, the participation and attitude of the people on the grass-root level have not been scrutinized.

One of the important ways of studying the politics of memory is to pay attention to the changes in the cityscape. The urban memory is considered by some researchers as “kind of collective memory that is constituted by individuals’ experiences within the place itself and through its history and social environment”.¹⁴ Thus the creation of social consensus over the city’s past depends not only on the nature of the past itself, but is related to categories of experience and social frameworks. Seemingly monolithic in terms of time and space, the Soviet politics of war memory might be rethought while addressing the local context. Today the Soviet politics is more and more often seen as not an implementation of the “general line” imposed from above, but the creation of the concrete

⁹ Penter T. Collaboration on Trial: New Source Materials on Soviet Postwar Trials Against Collaborators // *Slavic Review*. – 2005. – Vol. 64. – № 4. – Pp. 782–790; Jons J. W. “Every Family Has Its Freak”: Perceptions of Collaboration in Occupied Soviet Russia, 1943–1948 // *Slavic Review*. – 2005. – Vol. 64. – № 4. – Pp. 747–770.

¹⁰ Конрадова Н. Герои и жертвы. Мемориалы Великой Отечественной // *Неприкосновенный запас. Дебаты о политике и культуре*. – 2005. – № 2–3 (40–41), <http://magazines.russ.ru/nz/2005/2/ko16.html>

¹¹ Келли К. «Было непонятно и смешно»: праздники последних десятилетий советской власти и восприятие их детьми // *Антропологический форум*. – 2008. – № 8.

¹² Кукулин И. Регулирование боли. (Предварительные заметки о трансформации травматического опыта Великой Отечественной/Второй мировой войны в русской литературе 1940-х – 1970-х гг.) // *Память о войне 60 лет спустя: Россия, Германия, Европа*. – Москва, 2005. – С. 324–336.

¹³ Радзивіл О. Війна за війну: Друга світова війна та Велика Вітчизняна у шкільних підручниках з історії України (1969–2007) // “Second World War and (Re)creation of Historical Memory in Contemporary Ukraine”, September 2009 [Conference proceedings], <http://ww2-historicalmemory.org.ua/presentation.html>.

¹⁴ Postalci I. E., Ada A. K., Eren I.Ü. The New Urban Memory. Paper presented to the 42nd ISoCaRP congress, http://www.isocarp.net/Data/case_studies/835.pdf

practices on the lower level of everyday interactions,¹⁵ however, this should be tested on a wider spectrum of source materials.

It is noteworthy that until now more attention has been paid to the regions and cities annexed by the USSR in the course of WWII¹⁶, where the memorialization of the war went hand-by-hand with sovietization, repressions against nationalist guerilla, and homogenization of the ethnic composition. The most important task of the state propaganda there was homogenization of the cultural space, repression of the memory of ethnic diversity which made up a specific character of the war memory in these cities. Th. Weeks described the reconstruction of the postwar Vilnius through analysis of official rhetoric, cultural policy, and city building. Lithuanization of the city, and, more broadly, usage of the communist rhetoric for nationalization, was an important feature of the western regions of the USSR, where the task of competing with the nationalist movements was of crucial importance. Another important point of Weeks's work is inevitable selectiveness of the memory of collaboration, when it was widely spoken about the small number of political collaborators but almost nothing was mentioned about the collaboration in Holocaust. The thesis about specific Soviet "nationalization" of the western cities as the most important component of the postwar politics is also supported by the works by M. Hirsch and

¹⁵ Day A. *The Rise and Fall of Stalinist Architecture // Architectures of Russian Identity. 1500 to the Present*/Ed. by J. Cracraft, D. B. Rowland. – Ithaca, NY, 2003. – P. 172.

¹⁶ Хоппе Б. Борьба против вражеского пришлою: Кёнигсберг/Калининград как место памяти в послевоенном СССР // *Ab Imperio*. – 2004. – № 2. – С. 237–268; Frunchak S. *Commemorating the Future in Post-War Chernivtsi // East European Politics and Societies*. – 2010. – Vol. 24. – №3. – Pp. 435–463; Amar T. C. *The Making of Soviet Lviv, 1939–1953*. PhD Dissertation. Princeton University, 2006; Dyak S. *The Second World War in Lviv Cityscape: Creating a Cornerstone for the City's Postwar Identity // ["Second World War and (Re)creation of Historical Memory in Contemporary Ukraine", September 2009, conference proceedings] // <http://ww2-historicalmemory.org.ua/docs/eng/Dyak.pdf>; Hirsch M., Spitzer L. *Ghosts of Home: The Afterlife of Czernowitz in Jewish Memory*. – Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2010; Risch W. J. *The Ukrainian West: Culture and the Fate of Empire in Soviet Lviv*. – Cambridge, Mass., 2011; Weeks T. R. *Remembering and forgetting: creating a Soviet Lithuanian capital. Vilnius 1944–1949 // Journal of Baltic Studies*. – 2008. – Pp. 517–533; Ackemann F. *Palimpsest Hrodno: Nationalisierung, Nivellierung und Sowjetisierung einer mitteleuropäischen Stadt 1919–1991*. – Wiesbaden, 2010; Marples D., Rudling P. *War and Memory in Belarus: The Annexation of the Western Borderlands and the Myth of the Brest Fortress, 1939–1941 // Białoruskie Zeszyty Historyczne*. – 2009. – № 32. – Pp. 225–244.*

L. Spitzer, as well as S. Frunchak:¹⁷ the most important direction of the Sovietization in cultural sphere was repressing of such aspects as polyethnic character of the city, considerable presence of the Jewish population and its extermination in Holocaust, predominance of the architecture close to that of Central and Eastern Europe.

10 S. Frunchak analyzed the official politics of memory of Holocaust and Resistance to the regime as represented in monuments, cityscape, and written narratives of the local history of Bukovyna.

However, today there are only few works related to the regions where communist transformations were carried out in the 1920–30s,¹⁸ with important exception of most mythologized “Hero cities” Odessa, Sevastopol, and Stalingrad.¹⁹

We have chosen Rostov-on-Don, Kharkiv and Hrodna as objects of comparison, three cities that represent a variety of ethno-cultural regions of the USSR, but are united by the experience of occupation and active warfare on their territory. We plan to base studying of city spaces of memory on the analysis of such practices as post war reconstruction of city landscapes, including toponymical changes, destruction of the traces of enemy’s military presence, dealing with tombs and individual burial places, and commemorative practices. The case of Hrodna poses especially acute question of dealing with the pre-Soviet past in the shaping the WWII sites of remembrance. We also pay attention to the construction of the past

¹⁷ Frunchak S. Commemorating the Future in Post-War Chernivtsi // East European Politics and Societies. – 2010. – Vol. 24. – №3. – Pp. 435–463; Hirsch M., Spitzer L. Ghosts of Home: The Afterlife of Czernowitz in Jewish Memory. – Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2010.

¹⁸ Ластоўскі А., Казакевіч А., Балочкайце Р. Памяць пра Другую сусветную вайну ў гарадскім ландшафце Ўсходняй Еўропы // АРСНЕ. – 2010. – № 3. – С. 251–301; Антощенко-В. Создание монументальной основы ритуализации празднования Победы в Великой Отечественной войне в г. Петрозаводске // www.petrsu.ru/Faculties/History/Lab_visual/CMO.doc. Some aspects of creation of Kharkiv city image in relation to its wartime history are described in: Кравченко В. Харьков/Харків: столица пограничья. – Вильнюс, 2010. – С. 262–264.

¹⁹ Day A. The Rise and Fall of Stalinist Architecture// Architectures of Russian Identity. 1500 to the Present/Ed. by J. Cracraft, D. B. Rowland. – Ithaca, 2003; Qualls K. From Ruins to Reconstruction: Urban Identity in Soviet Sevastopol After World War II. – Ithaca, NY, 2009; Richardson T. Kaleidoscopic Odessa. History and place in contemporary Ukraine. – Toronto, 2008.

in museum exhibitions, trying to analyze it in a wider social and ideological context.

11 Who were the most important actors of the process of memorialization of WWII? What were the interrelations between official politics sanctioned from above and activism of local institutions and individuals? Were there any considerable unofficial representations of the wartime past? What were the specific features of memorialization during Stalinism and the Thaw? What kind of specificities were present in the three cities under study and what factors gave rise to these differences? We are going to discuss these problems on the base of several types of sources. Local press and popular narratives of WWII in respective cities open the possibility to see common discursive strategies, as well as deviations from generalized schemes and forms of articulation of difficult past unwelcomed in the Soviet public space. Finally, archival sources allowed us to draw conclusions on the process of decision-making in the sphere of memory politics, as well as to study some non-discursive practices, related to everyday needs. Archival sources related to the policy towards cityscape, wartime burial places, commemorative rituals, also show the interrelations between the local and central administrative levels. Critical reading of sources, analysis of sites of remembrance, and analysis of museum expositions are useful methods for our study.

Comparative study of the politics of memory in Hrodna, Kharkiv, and Rostov-on-Don is useful not only for a better understanding of the respective histories of the three cities and the construction of their identities, but also for general understanding of the Soviet politics of war memory.

ROSTOV-ON-DON

General outline

12 Contemporary Russian research on the Soviet politics of memory usually focuses on the 1970s as the period when the monumental cult of the Great Patriotic War was formed.²⁰ Currently, the heroic narrative remains the main form of public statement on this subject, Victory serves as the cornerstone of multiple variations of patriotic ideology,²¹ and the massive memorial sites that were created in the 1970s–1980s still dominate Russian city landscapes²². At the same time, the processes of forming the memory of war in the initial post-war period are rarely the central subject of analysis, serving mainly the function of prehistory in respect to the “mature” memorial forms of Brezhnev’s era.

Rostov-on-Don, one of the regional centers of RSFSR that were under occupation during the war, can serve as a perfect example of how the government attempted to gain control of the past through reworking the cityscapes immediately after the war. One could point out such areas of the authorities’ symbolic activities as the elimination of traces of the enemy’s presence in the city; the work of the commission to calculate the damages and malfeasance caused by the Nazi occupation; regulation of the wartime burials; installation of monuments and other memorial sites; post-war reconstruction and city-building planning.

After Rostov-on-Don was liberated on February 14th 1943 and the Soviet government established in the city, the newly created Executive Committee (*ispolkom*) of the Council of the People’s Deputies was faced with solving a number of problems related to the rehabilitation of infrastructure, normalizing daily life in the city, as well as performing primary work on assessing population and material damages and planning the first stage of reconstruction.

²⁰ See Колюсов Н. Память строгого режима: история и политика в России. – Москва, 2011. – С. 102–105.

²¹ Ibid. – С. 162–168.

²² Русинова О. Долговечнее камня и бронзы: образы блокады в монументальных ансамблях Ленинграда // Память о блокаде: свидетельства очевидцев и историческое сознание общества. – Москва, 2006. – С. 335–364.

Order № 1 issued by Rostov's executive committee of the city deputy council on February 16th 1943 instructed to “organize the body clean-up in the local areas – bodies of fallen soldiers and executed local citizens to be taken to a mass grave at Budennyj park. Bodies of horses and killed Nazi bandits to be taken to the horse cemetery.”²³ Another order, № 7,

dated February 20th 1943, contained instructions “within a 5 day period, to restore previous street signs on city streets and destroy all German signs”, as well as remove all signs for Nazi offices²⁴ (see fig. 1).

All these pragmatic steps taken by the city authorities carry important political value. They were meant to restore symbolic control of the cityscape, mark the transition of the city into new status and fixate certain assessments of the occupation experience. Therefore, the work on creating a specific image of the war in mass consciousness began even before the end of the war itself, which greatly influenced the subsequent variations of the politics of memory.

Remembrance of War in the City's Post-War Era Reconstruction Projects

Post-war reconstruction in Rostov became the subject of discussions with the participation of not only architects, but also party and government figures. The discussion and public presentation of the city building projects became an integral part of the recovery process. They



Fig. 1. Entrance to Gorky Park, 1942.

Source: <http://rostov-80-90.livejournal.com/259868.html>

²³ GARO (Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rostovskoi oblasti). – Fond 1817. – Opis 3. – Delo 21. List 3.

²⁴ GARO. – F. 1817. – Op. 3. – D. 21. – L. 18.



Fig. 2. House of Soviets (project by V. N. Semenov)

helped form a certain virtual landscape that to some degree served as compensation in the post-war wasteland conditions²⁵.

One of the discursive strategies that shaped the first collective reflection regarding the partially lost city environment was

in keeping detailed accounts of buildings and sites that have been destroyed. Much like in the case of victims, the documents that set the standard were created by the Commission on Damages and Malfeasance in Rostov region that were composed immediately after the liberation of the city in 1943. The detailed list of the destroyed public, industrial and residential buildings that was first seen in the “Act of the Commission of the Executive Committee of Rostov City Council on the atrocities and murder of the civilian population in Rostov-on-Don”²⁶ later became one of the favorite methods of representation of the occupation period in local press.²⁷

The attitude towards perspective reconstruction of the semi-destroyed city in the years immediately following the war was a determining factor in the perception of war time itself. One of the options for reconstruction was to renovate the destroyed buildings and return them to their original, pre-war state. At the regional meeting of members of the Rostov chapter of the Architect Union of the USSR in 1948, this option was voiced by comrade Babadzhian:

“Those who’ve crossed the Don know that you used to be able to see the bell tower of our Rostov cathedral. This bell tower was destroyed in the war. This is a known

²⁵ The city lost about 70 % of the housing stock and almost all of the industrial potential.

²⁶ GARO. – F. 3613. – Op. 1. – D. 441. – L. 7.

²⁷ Юдович И. Душелубы // Молот. – 1943. – № 34 (6402). – 5 марта. – С. 2; Ребайн Я. Поднявшийся из пепла // Вечерний Ростов. – 1963. – № 38 (1413). – 14 февраля. – С. 3.

contradiction to the general style of Rostov's skyline. I believe that the Soviet Architect Union must influence the decision to restore this bell tower.²⁸

However, this line of thought that could be interpreted as an attempt to erase the traumatic experience of the war both from the cityscape and people's memory, remained marginal. The authorities preferred to use this opportunity to correct the mistakes of the earlier city planning, in order to modify Rostov in accordance with the modern ideals of the Soviet urban development. At the First Architectural conference that took place immediately after the departure of the occupational forces, the chairman of the City Council ordered the destruction of all the burnt buildings, "to clear up space" – as a result of which even those building remnants that could've been restored were demolished. The motivation behind such decisions was often clearly ideological in character and reflected the contemptuous view that the Soviet architects held concerning the pre-revolutionary ("bourgeois") development and the attempt to use newly found opportunities for systematic project development. At the same time, many projects that were discussed at the end of the 1940s – beginning of the 1950s never saw the light of day – both because of lack of funds and changes to the architectural styles after Stalin's death (see fig. 2, 3).

It is interesting to follow how the perpetuation of war memory became the subject of imagination of city architects, most of whom had actively fought in the war, in the context of unrealized projects. Competitions for best memorial/monument became a highly important social practice



Fig. 3. Project of the buildings on the Don wharf by V.N. Razumovski, N.N. Semenov, V.S. Shyriæv. Source: МОЛОТ. - 1953. - February 14th. - P. 3.

²⁸ GARO. – F. 4328 (Rostov branch of the USSR Union of Architects). – Op. 1. – D. 58. – L. 50 (Proceedings of the regional meeting of RB UA USSR members, 1948).

that created a space for communication issues related to the recent past. The first such competition took place in 1944, under the subject heading “For the perpetuation of memory of those who have fallen in the fight for Rostov’s freedom against Nazi occupants, city citizens who were shot by German aggressors, and the commemoration of historical battles and victories of the Red Army.”²⁹ Although 5 projects were selected, the work on them did not begin in 1944, as was planned. Similar contests also took place in subsequent years.

Already by 1947, a document created by the Administration of the Chief Architect of Rostov-on-Don, with the modernist title “In reference to the future of Rostov-on-Don”, assumed that the topic of war and Victory would become central in the city’s architectural guise. It stated that Victory park would be created on the Green Island, while the central square, right by the House of the Soviets, would be the home to the “Victory monument consisting of a tall white marble statue of a woman carrying the flag in one hand, and the golden USSR crest in the other. On the head of the statue would be a crown of laurel made from glowing bronze. Bas-relief, the statue, and haut-relief would all be one composition, reflecting historical dates of battles and victories.”³⁰ The text of this document set example for publications of local periodic press, even though the monument it described was never created.³¹

An important shift in the ideology of commemorative design after 1945 was in the changes of the monuments’ format (instead of monuments to the victims of war – monuments to the triumphant victory of the Soviet army). In this sense, “memorial relief” of the city looked inhomogeneous – on the one hand, it was composed of real monuments that were erected at grave sites and communal graves and thus fixed the tragic moments of the recent past, on the other – there were fantastic in their magnitude

²⁹ GARO. – F. 4329 (Office of the Chief Architect of Rostov). – Op. 1. – D. 3. – L. 7 (rev.).

³⁰ GARO. – F. 4329. – Op. 1. – D. 24. – L. 4–5.

³¹ Later the place for the main city war monument was changed. It was placed not in the political centre of the city (square near the House of the Soviets), but at the Theatre Square. The vast open space near the theatre was appropriate for monumental projects, while on the Square of the Soviets the monument to First Cavalry Army was erected. It is noteworthy that this monument was also indirectly related to the memory of WWII because it confirmed the myth about wholeheartedly loyal “red Cossacks” and competed the memory of Cossack collaboration with the Nazis during WWII.

projects of the central city monument to victory, that were for a long time unrealizable.

Characteristic examples of how commemorative conventions were developed at the juncture of art and ideology during the late Stalin's era can be seen in "Materials on the results of the competition for the "Victory" monument project in honour of the liberation of the city of Rostov by the Soviet army from Nazi aggressors" (1953). The most important element of most of the projects that were submitted to the competition was the figure of I.V. Stalin. One of them – "Victory Star" – offered the following:

*"This composition includes a sculpture of the Great Stalin I.V., based on the thesis – 'Victory is where Stalin is!'... The base of the monument is a pentagram (pentagon) that further on becomes a five-point star which completes with a representation of the Order of Victory. At the base of the obelisk there is a statue of the Great Stalin Iosif Vissarionovich... The eternal words of the Great leader I.V. Stalin 'Our cause is just, we have won!'"*³²

At the same time, with the symbolic and ideological domination of Stalin's figure in the background, a number of socially important problems that defined the landscape of collective memory in the first twenty years after the war were expressed in the projects. One of them – the development of an acceptable mechanism that would join the direct material traces of war, impossible to erase from the city, private ritual practices that expressed family and group memory, and "higher" ideological dominants, which even back then used the war experience to cement the national Soviet identity. Thus, the "Victory Medal" project used authentic remains of fallen soldiers as framework, giving the memorial complex a sacred status:

*"According to the overall composition idea, at the base of the monument, on the left and on the right sides, are tombs with the remains of valiant protectors and liberators of the city, soldiers in the Soviet Army who fell in battles for Rostov. Tombs will be moved from Kirov park."*³³

³² GARO. – F. 4328. – Op. 1. – D. 125. – L. 4.

³³ Ibid.

Similar ideas were voiced in jury comments to the “Hail the Heroes” project, which speaks to their rhetoric power in this particular communication field:

18 *“The base of the obelisk brings about associations with a burial mound, which does not correspond with the desired theme in its direct interpretation. However, this could be justified if a communal grave was created under the obelisk, into which the remains of soldiers and officers of the Soviet Army that are currently buried in various parts of the city were moved.”³⁴*

Work on designing city space not only allowed to come to an agreement concerning future Rostov, but also served as a virtual training range, where different variations of constructing the past were tested out. In 1953 there were not enough funds to construct the monument that won the competition; in 1959 a new, country-wide, competition was announced. First place went to the project proposing a 37-meter statue of a Red Army soldier saluting from an automatic gun, however this project was also not implemented for financial reasons. And only in 1983 a memorial complex, the centre of which was a 72-meter stele, was erected in the square that had stood empty for so long.

Managing the past in city municipal practices: regulation of burials, monumental commemoration and toponymy

Right in the first few weeks after the city's liberation, local authorities had to solve pragmatic tasks regarding cleaning up the city territory, devastated in the course of war. The main issues here were clearing away the bodies, organizing burials, keeping accounts and taking care of the already existing grave sites. Due to the many civilian casualties and the disorganization of burial services, almost the entire city was covered in individual and group burial sites.

³⁴ Ibid. – L. 2.

It should be noted that after the first liberation of Rostov in November of 1941, a small obelisk was erected in one of the locations of the annihilation of civilians (Frunze park). It became a communal grave and began functioning as a place of remembrance. Immediately after February 14th 1943 and during the entire post-war period, Rostov authorities regularly discussed questions

of immortalizing the memory of victims and heroes of war and erecting memorial sites, and made appropriate decisions on the subject.

Traits characteristic of the first stage of memorialization (approximately until the end of the 1950s) were, on the one hand, limited scopes of financing, and on the other – treating activities of this type more as a question of improving the city rather than as one of ideologically important aspects of city politics. In a number of cases, the initiative to immortalize certain heroes came from “below”. So, on May 18th 1943, the City Executive Commission, basing its decision on a request made by N-unit issued a decision “Regarding erecting memorials at communal graves of soldiers and commanders, who have died an honorable death in battles for the liberation of Rostov-on-Don from Nazi aggressors.”³⁵ The memorials were supposed to be wooden, financing was limited to three thousand rubles from private funds of the Burial services Trust.

In the 1940s and early 1950s, standard monuments were erected at mass graves in different parts of Rostov-on-Don and residential communities in the region (fig. 4). In 1947, a decision was made to erect a granite memorial by the mass grave at Bratskoe cemetery, two individual gravestones at the graves of colonels Zharikov and Andreyev, 12 memorial plaques in memory of the fighters of the Rostov regiment of citizens



Fig. 4. Outline of the standard monument to be erected on the mass graves of WWII soldiers in Rostov and region. Source: GARO. - F. 1817. - Op. 3. - D. 4. - L. 99.

³⁵ GARO. – F. 1817. – Op. 3. – D. 4. – L. 99.

in arms³⁶. In 1951, a metal obelisk with the words “Here lie Soviet patriots, brutally tortured by Nazi executioners in February of 1943” was set up at Cavalry Army Park (*Konnaya Armiya Park*).

20 Along with installing gravestones that functioned as family and collective commemorative objects, an important trend of the post-war period up until the early 1960s was the centralization, or the consolidation of mass graves. Officially acknowledging the existence of three or four communal cemeteries in the city, Soviet authorities in the late 1940s – early 1950s purposely moved smaller and individual graves to those cemeteries³⁷. On the one hand, this answered the question of beautification of the city, since the Executive Commissions of district councils did not have enough resources to provide adequate care for the burial sites in the city (in gardens, parks, etc). On the other hand, the symbolic sense of such actions was to remove the signs of death out of the public space and limit their legitimate presence to isolated zones. This administrative redistribution of memorial sites can be interpreted as an attempt to gain control over the past, as a step towards the government appropriating the remembrance of war and turning it into a special political institute.

At the same time, the centralization of cemeteries was a problematic point in the city politics for a long time. In 1961, the question of ethics in moving the graves was discussed at a meeting of the City Executive Committee. Comrade Fedorov, referencing his personal experiences, justified the necessity for careful and attentive treatment of war-time burials³⁸. The other persons present at the meeting also noted the sensitivity and potential for conflict in this issue: “There was a scandal with relatives of the deceased in regards to Kirov park. I participated in the Executive Commission’s decision to check the graves in accordance with the decision made by the Council of Ministers and it was a very difficult position to be in.” (com. Yakovleva); “we moved about twenty graves... the work was done at night” (com. Palasanyantz)³⁹. The guiding motives were, however, not the wishes of those who have

³⁶ GARO. – F. 1817. – Op. 3. – D. 138. – L. 213.

³⁷ GARO. – F. 1817. – Op. 3. – D. 138. – L. 213 (1947); GARO. – F. 1817. – Op. 4. – D. 812. – L. 105 (1961).

³⁸ GARO. – F. 1817. – Op. 4. – D. 812. – L. 108.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

fought in the war, but rather issues of comfort, behind which there could've been a desire to remove from view these signs of trauma, to isolate them. Zmievskaia Balka, a ravine where many civilians were executed during the occupation, became one of the disputed sites of memory in Rostov-on-Don. It was included in the official communal cemeteries, and a standard monument with the figures of two Soviet army soldiers with the flag was erected here right after the war. Unlike the impersonal attitude of Rostov authorities, that was prevalent during the Stalin era in regards to all mass graves, the Jewish community of Rostov thought of Zmievskaia Balka as a memorial site specifically of the Jewish community. Thus in 1953, the authorized representative of the Council on Religious Cults Baykov reported that representatives of Jewish synagogue were denied the right to hold a burial service on August 12th – 13th, 1953 at the site of the tragedy, because “not only Jews are buried here, but also people of other nationalities”. It was also noted that “previously, burial services at the communal cemetery (Zmievskaia Balka) attracted almost 5,000 religious Jews, due to which religious activity among the clergy and select groups of believers has been revived.”⁴⁰

At the end of the 1950s and the early 1960s, commemorative activities of Rostov authorities greatly increased, which was due to both the social rise of the “Thaw” era, and the generation change (young men and women who did not live through the war were becoming adults).

In 1959, an eternal flame was lit by the monument in Frunze park, and this spot began functioning as a place for mass rallies (fig. 5). In 1961 a monument to Vitia Cherevichkin,



Fig. 5. Memorial complex “To Fallen Soldiers, 1941-1943” in Frunze Park, 1964. Source: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/24872888@N08/6298539578>

⁴⁰ GARO. – F. 4173. – Op. 3. – D. 10. – L. 6.

Rostov's pioneer hero was erected, and in 1965 one of the city parks was named after him (fig. 6). In 1965, memorial plaques to A. T. Karataev, A. L. Krivonos, M. A. Gakkel, V. P. Bondarenko, C. L. Kunikov, A. A. Belgin, L. S. Chapchakhov were erected on the corner of Zero and 1st Soviet street (the site of execution of 90 citizens in November 1941), on the Mechanic Institute building (the site where 339 Rostov infantry division headquarters were located), near the city prison (site of execution of 1,500 citizens of Rostov-on-Don).

Aside from commemoration in monumental forms, renaming of the existing streets of Rostov after the heroes of WWII also functioned as a way of immortalizing the memory of war. In 1945–1953, this practice was not clearly regulated and was rather spontaneous. In 1958, a list of re-named streets was created. A significant number of streets were named after the heroes of WWII that had a connection to Rostov and the region: Vasilchenko, Skachkov, Derevyanko, Popovsky, Samoshkin, Yugov, Malyugina, Tekuchev, Makarov, Nesterov, Yufimtsev (most were fighters



Fig. 6. Monument to Vitya Cherevichkin (by N. V. Avedikov).

Source:

<http://fotki.yandex.ru/users/diomedes2/view/520845/?page=1>

in the citizens' infantry regiment); country heroes: Shevtsov, Matrosov, Chaykina, Koshevoy, Karbyshev; special "military" names were also used: Battery, Front, Army, Volunteer Corps, Defender side-street. In 1962, Gerasimenko street appeared, in 1965 appeared streets named after Chapchkhonov, Gakkel, Bondkarenko, Evdokimov, Serzhantov, Kulagin, Arefyev, Gorbachev, Bogdanov.

The results of these twenty years were the successful dean-up of communal graves to a normal state, a creation of special zones related to the cult of the Great Patriotic War and their inclusion in the commemorative cycle as sites to hold propagandist events.

By 1965, the local pantheon of heroes of WWII had been composed in the practice of erecting monuments and city toponimy.

Memory of War As an Object of 'Ideological Work'

23

Though the practices of recreation of the cityscape played an important role in the formation of the official image of the war, the narrative language tools were also helpful for the construction. One of the influential instruments was local newspapers, where the common ideological dichés along with specificity of the Rostov history of the wartime. Reflecting over the publications in “Molot” and “Vederniy Rostov”, I delineated three strategies of representing the new theme.

In 1943-1945, after the liberation of Rostov, the tales about the period of occupation appeared where different problems were present: mass extermination of the Rostov Jewry, partisan movement, and collaboration. The main purpose of these publications was the mobilization of the Rostov dwellers to keep fighting against the enemy. Thus, the article “Musician” by M. Nikulin describes the fate of one Jew perished under occupation;⁴¹ the article “Translator” by G. Khatsianov presents the life story of a woman who used her position (“she was a translator for the fascists”) for saving the lives of the Soviet airmen,⁴² etc.

From 1945 to 1953 immediate wartime experience was washed away from newspapers, and the ‘official’ picture of the past dominated while the war and victory were included into the panorama of the Stalin personality cult. The annual commemorative cycle was formed, and the publications on war appeared close to the respective dates (major – February 14, May 9, auxiliary – February 23, June 22, July 3, November 7, etc.). The regional component was not ignored, but remained insignificant compared to the prevalence of all-Union, “Stalin’s” narrative. A significant characteristic of the “war” discourse was the relation between the wartime deeds and labor exertion for the reconstruction. But along with this, some publications started to outline the frames for the local Rostov “war myth.” Among them there was the article by G. Madoian with the typical title

⁴¹ Никулин М. Музыкант // МОЛОТ. – 1943. – № 37 (6407). – 11 марта. – С. 2.

⁴² Хациянов Г. Переводчица // МОЛОТ. – 1943. – № 36 (6406). – 7 марта. – С. 2.

“In labor as in battle,” where the story of the liberation of Rostov (“how it was”) was legitimized as a source and example of heroism for the socialist construction projects.⁴³

24 With “de-Stalinization” of memory of the war, a new historical subject was constructed - the Soviet people under the leadership of the Communist Party being the creator of the Victory. The area of “private” war experience was expanding; it should illustrate and animate the common schemes. “Narrativization” of memory of the war became a marked trend. Semi-artistic and semi-documentary essays and sketches about the lives of soldiers, guerrilla participants, militias, home front workers became a common genre in periodicals. The “Great Patriotic War” began to be used as a discursive frame for construction of civil solidarity and social cohesion of the Soviet society.

An important instrument of the memory politics on the local level was museum work. However, the building of the museum was destroyed during the war, that’s why Rostov Regional Museum of the Local History in 1946–1951 was situated in Taganrog. Only in 1951 the museum was given the building on Engels Street in Rostov, and the festive opening of the exhibition took place only in 1957, and the theme “The Don during the Great Patriotic War” was placed in a separate hall.

In spite of material hardship, museum staff since 1951 has worked over the preparation of the new exposition on “Participation of the region in the Great Patriotic War” (its plan was compiled in 1951).⁴⁴ The features of this plan were:

- the exposition had to start with Stalin’s portrait, citations from Stalin and pictures of him supplemented every chronological stage; sometimes citations from Molotov tempered the presentation;
- the presence of Cossack theme was considerable (photo “Cossacks of the Don in support of the Red Army are preparing the powerful host of the people’s levy” etc);

⁴³ Мадоян Г. И в труде, как в бою // Молот. – 1951. – № 37 (8579). – 14 февраля. – С. 2.

⁴⁴ Архив Ростовского областного музея краеведения [Archive of the Rostov Museum of *Kraevedenie*, further AROMK]. – F. 1. – Op. 1. – D. 112.

– the Jewish theme was present in citation from Stalin: “they [hitlerites] also willingly organize the medieval Jewish pogroms, as the Czarist regime has done it.” The description of the photo “the Death Ravine” (Petrushinskaia Balka near Taganrog) had no mentions of national identity of the victims; no information of another killing place, Zmievskaia Balka, was present;

– an important place was given to the narrative of destruction and victims, without concrete information about their social status or national identity;

– representation of the role of the home front (photo “Housewife Morozova (Rostov) gives the golden crotchet with diamonds as a contribution to the defense fund”, “inhabitants of Rostov are digging the trenches”).

Exhibition from 1951 appeared to be quite stable and hasn’t been changed until the early 1960s. However, already in 1951 the head of the sector for the Soviet period in the Scientific and Research Institute for *Kraevedenie*⁴⁵ and Museum Work (Moscow), while reviewing the plan of exhibition, made several remarks and admonitions showing the discrepancy between the local process of museification and the official ideological line. Firstly, among those remarks there was critique of the plentitude of photos and lack of the “true objects” and documents. Secondly, it was demanded “to shorten the textual material” and to leave mostly “texts from the works by Lenin and Stalin and from the orders of the Commander-in-Chief”. Thirdly, it was stated: “too much space was given for showing the victims and destructions, in some cases it being wrongly attributed to “Germans” while it is necessary to say about the atrocities of the German fascists, Hitlerites”.⁴⁶ This remark not only alluded to international situation (creation of the GDR friendly to USSR), but also was a reaction to the preservation of memory of extremely traumatic aspects of the city’s past. The balance between heroism and suffering proposed in the exhibition from Rostov was not approved by the central institution.

⁴⁵ *Kraevedenie* is synthetic form of local studies of particular territory, including local history, geography, folklore, and everyday life etc.

⁴⁶ АРОМК. – Ф. 1. – Оп. 1. – Л. 2.

Active museification of the war history in Rostov took place in early 1960s. The Stalinist version of the past has gradually been replaced by the “popular” one: more objects owned by ordinary people became present in museum, the private experience of the ordinary people was presented as heroic, and the new collective activity, such as *poiskovaia rabota* (searching for the historical artifacts and memoirs carried out by non-professionals). Typical example is the newspaper article “The Relics of the Combat Fame” by M. Sapozhnikov where the author presented the museum exhibition primarily as a collection of things giving the immediate physical contact with the past: “For the sacred relics of the Great Patriotic War there were different ways to reach the museum. Some things appeared here in the process of long searching, others – by good fortune. Sometimes a photograph survived, a piece of paper, one object might tell you more than the whole book”.⁴⁷

Private stories became visible through these material, physically sensitive objects. Goggles of Dina Nikulina, the commander of the air regiment; a self-made hammer of Vladimir Degtiariov, the doctor from the “fascist death camp,” an artilleryist’s helmet punched out by the bullet, and other objects stimulated the feeling of involvement to the great deeds of the compatriots through the mythologization of the everyday.

By the early 1960s the city war narrative has finally been formed, the key local events and actors have been selected in order to represent the “victorious fighting path of the Rostov dwellers” and “heroic deed of the people during the war.” The most important components of this story were:

- the liberation of Rostov in November 1941 – “one of the first crushing blows against the fascist army”;
- regiment of the people’s levy “bravely fighting for the liberation of the city”, and the battery of the lieutenant S. Oganov;

⁴⁷ Сапожников М. Реликвии боевой славы // Вечерний Ростов. – 1961. – № 108 (869). – 9 мая. – С. 3.

– underground activists and partisan troops in the enemy’s home front;

– the troops of the Southern Front headed by the general R. Y. Malinovskiy that liberated the city in February 1943;

27 – battalion of G. K. Madoian that “held the railway station for 6 days till the coming of the most parts of the Soviet Army”;

– the 5th Don Cossack Cavalry Corps of the Guards which “went from the steppe of Kizliar to the Austrian Alps”.⁴⁸

The elements of these frameworks were almost untouchable during the whole late Soviet period, as the museum plans of the exhibitions and the newspapers from the 1970s – 1980s show us.

Conclusion

Thus the evolution of the official memory of war in the postwar Rostov was closely related to the dynamics of the social and political changes in the USSR. In 1943–1945, the purposes of mobilization caused the open representation of the diverse picture of the city life under occupation. After the end of the war to the mid-1950s the dominant unified Stalinist version of war was used as a mechanism of conversion of the postwar enthusiasm into the mass labor breakthrough. At the same time on the level of the city planning the processes of ordering the cityscape, its symbolization, conversion of the spaces of memory into the commemorative spaces started. In the end of the 1950s – the first half of 1960s the ideological construction of the “people’s war” was created, where the concept of the party leadership was integrated with the “mass” memory activated through the personal engagement.

⁴⁸ Марков С. Реликвии боевых лет // Вечерний Ростов. – 1961. – № 147 (908). – 22 июня. – С. 4.

The scale of destruction in Rostov was so enormous that the memory of occupation dominated in the projects of the postwar reconstruction. On the other hand, the failed defense and two periods of occupation were the challenges for the creation of the heroic myth of Rostov, as well as the lack of resources and economic hardships forced to postpone the construction of the big-scale memorial projects.

At the same time, this general scheme was influenced by the local specificity. The scale of destruction in Rostov was so enormous that the memory of occupation dominated in the projects of the postwar reconstruction (and in this sense the case of Rostov is closer to the “cities-memorials” Stalingrad and Sevastopol). On the other hand, the failed defense and two periods of occupation were the challenges for the creation of the heroic myth of Rostov, as well as the lack of resources and economic hardships forced to postpone the construction of the big-scale memorial projects.

A specific Rostov theme was the Cossack collaboration, which, however, ceased to exist after 1945, but remained a hidden threat to the concept of “all people’s” war (*obshebrenarodnaia voina*). The evidence of this hidden presence was the attempt to remove this threat through the heroization of the pro-Soviet parts of Cossacks in the museum exhibitions and monuments etc. An important function of symbolic compensation for collaboration and fameless retreat from Rostov was performed by the narrative of the (two) city liberation(s). At the same time it was impossible to exclude the living memory of heavy losses and destruction under occupation: this memory was visible in the museum

exhibition, everyday practices, such as difficulties in the ordering of the burial places.

KHARKIV

General Outline

29 Kharkiv, currently a big administrative, industrial, and cultural centre of the eastern part of Ukraine, was founded in 1654 by the Cossack migrants from the Right Bank of the Dnieper, later became the fortress and the centre of the Cossack Kharkiv Regiment on the southern frontier of the Muscovy, than the centre of the province in the Russian Empire, and finally in 1917 was proclaimed the capital of the Soviet Ukraine (until 1934). On the eve of the war it was important industrial and military centre, with a lot of institutions for education and Soviet propaganda. Kharkiv's population in May 1941 was 902,312.⁴⁹

After beginning of the Nazi-Soviet war and while the enemy was approaching to the city, most part of its industrial power was evacuated to the Urals, and many industrial objects, objects of infrastructure, and food stores were blown up or set into fire by the retreating Soviet authorities. on October 24th, 1941 Kharkiv was occupied by the Nazis. It was the most populous Soviet city under occupation, and severe hunger was used there as a tool of depopulation in winter 1941/42. Also, most of the the Jews were resettled to the barracks of the Tractor plant in the suburbs, and in two weeks they were shot in what is now called Drobytskyi Yar (about 12,000 – 15,000 died there). Also, some special instruments of killing were tested in Kharkiv, such as *Gasnugen (dushobubka)*. Another big killing places were in the woodland park (especially in Sokolnyky), where Jews, Resistance activists, and all the real and potential enemies of the Reich were exterminated. The camp in the Kholodna Hora district was a place where about 10,000 Soviet POWs died because of hunger, cold, and diseases.⁵⁰ Another well-known crime of the occupants was the destruction of nearly 300 wounded Soviet soldiers who were left in a hospital at Trinklera Street when the Soviet Army quickly retreated in March 1943 and didn't succeed to evacuate the hospital. Resistance in Kharkiv was presented by organizations intentionally created by Soviet authorities and left on the occupied territory (however, mostly they were quickly and tragically

⁴⁹ Скоробогатов А. В. Харків у часи німецької окупації (1941–1943). – Харків, 2004. – С. 19.

⁵⁰ Ibid. – С. 78.

crushed), as well as by spontaneous solidarity actions and organizations not controlled by Communist Party or Soviet power. However, there were also less antagonistic forms of interrelations: there were attempts of renewal of industrial production, and local self-governmental body (*uprava*, City Council) was created, however, with scarce resources and influence.

30

The first period of occupation has lasted until February 16, 1943, when Soviet Army came for one month, and on March 15, 1943, the city was surrendered once again, and finally liberated after the Kursk battle on August 23, 1943 in the course of Belgorod – Kharkiv offensive operation. In following years most enterprises were returned to Kharkiv, and in the postwar Soviet period it was an important centre of industry, especially military, science, especially physics, and education. Many institutions of republican (UkrSSR) and union importance were also situated there. The expression of special recognition of Kharkiv region's significance was its decoration with Lenin Order, the highest state award in the USSR (twice, in 1958 and 1968 – respectively, 15th and 25th anniversaries of its liberation and 30th and 40th anniversaries of the USSR).

Postwar Reconstruction: not the Places of Memory but Places of Commemoration

During the early postwar years in Kharkiv there were a number of big and ambitious projects of the monuments dedicated to the war. In 1944 the Regional Party Committee charged one well-known Soviet artist A. Strakhov to work out the plan of building of the monuments in Kharkiv and the region.⁵¹ A. Strakhov proposed 11 projects of new monuments, 7 out of them were to be related to war: obelisk in memory of Kharkiv's liberation, monument to fighters-liberators of Kharkiv, projects of the common graves, and 3 monuments dedicated to “victims of fascism”: near Tractor plant (place of the mass killings of the Jewish population), near Kuriazh and in Kup'ians'k (on the common graves of civilians). Another ambitious project of war commemoration was the idea of the Obelisk of Victory of 100 (!)

⁵¹ Derzhavnyi arkhiv Kharkivskoi oblasti [State Archive of Kharkiv region, further DAKhO]. – Fond P-2. – Opys 2. – Sprava 405. – Arkush 62.

meters high in honour of the 4th anniversary of the city's liberation and 30th anniversary of October Revolution (1947).⁵²

31

However, these plans were not put into practice, particularly because of the postwar anti-Semitism, as well as because of lack of resources for the large-scale projects. But another important reason was that Kharkiv was not rebuilt as a “city-monument to Victory,” as were such cities as Stalingrad or Sevastopol. In case of these cities the plans of reconstruction were closely related to creation of the symbolical places related to war. From the very beginning the war memory there was embodied in the street names, numerous monuments, and memorial places. Even some higher officials noted the inequality in the scale of attention paid to war commemoration in different cities.⁵³ Kharkiv hasn't become the “city-memorial,” and the reason for that was in not quite successful story of the frontline struggle for the city. The memory of utter defeats was still present, and probably for that reason quite often popular generalized accounts of the wartime history didn't mention at all that there were 2 periods of occupation,⁵⁴ and, respectively, the first liberation in February 1943 was unsuccessful and cost many lives (as well as the offensive of May 1942 when it was planned to liberate Kharkiv and Crimea which resulted in mass captivity and huge retreat). These could be the reason for not implementing the war memory as most important aspect of the city's history. On the other hand, Kharkiv, this former capital of the UkrSSR, was flooded with symbols of another key period in Soviet history – October Revolution, Civil War, and socialist construction of the 1930s. For example, all the central streets have already been renamed in the 1930s and have got the names after famous Bolsheviks and communists.⁵⁵ It was impossible to change their names to some related

⁵² DAKhO. – F. P-2. – Op. 2. – Spr. 1250. – Ark. 36.

⁵³ See general Oktiabrskii's notes on difference between Sevastopol and Feodosiia: Tsentralnyi Derzhavnyi arkhiv hromadskykh ob'iednan Ukraïny [Central State Archive for Non-Governmental Organizations of Ukraine, Kyiv; further TsDAHOU]. – F. 1. – Op. 23. – Spr. 5060. – Ark. 150.

⁵⁴ See, for example: Революция продолжается [documentary film on Kharkiv history produced at Kharkiv regional television studio, 1967. Part 4: The City of Unconquered], <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HkR1wCUvVk0>

⁵⁵ Харьков: Справочник по названиям: 7 000 улиц, площадей, скверов, районов... / Сост. Е. Н. Дмитриева, Е. В. Дьякова, Н. М. Харченко; под общ. ред. С. М. Кудалко. – Kharkiv, 2011.

to WWII. Thus the set of specific circumstances made the memory of WWII in this period not the most important component.

32 Still, in postwar Kharkiv some streets and squares far from the city centre were named after N. Vatutin, N. Gastello, L. Chaikina, O. Koshevoi, *Panfilovtsy* (all after enormously celebrated Soviet heroes with no relation to Kharkiv), and some streets also received the names like Army, Artillerist, Battle, Garrison, Guard, Field Engineer, Sergeant, Tank, Front-line Soldiers⁵⁶ – mostly very general notions not related to any specific events or places. The accent is on the small number of heroes to be known in all the USSR – the typical trait of the Stalinist period.

The same tendency is obvious in case of burial places, when mostly the graves of some officers of higher rank were marked with monuments made of durable materials, while on the common graves there were often obelisks made of wood, cement, or bricks.⁵⁷

The forms of the monuments during the first years after the liberation were not strictly regulated from above because of lack of resources and infrastructure, but in the context of Stalinist society it didn't lead to diversity or deviations from the common standards. Monuments were made at Kharkiv Sculptural factory, and there was a very small number of examples to be followed.⁵⁸ Cultural uniformity was produced also on the local level without special orders from above. In occasional speeches and official publications it was often stated that all the graves are the objects of solicitous care because of the special honour to the fallen. But archival documents give us the evidence of very selective and very often more practical approach to the graves, when they were neglected because of some economical everyday needs.⁵⁹ Obviously it was also the outcome of the economic hardship, but also of rather 'utilitarian' approach to the war

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ DAKhO. – Fond 4785. – Op. 2. – Spr. 8. – Ark. 13.

⁵⁸ Mostly these were the simple conical obelisks, cast-iron plates, tanks on the pedestal, and 7 types of sculptures very similar to each other: "in memory of fallen soldiers" (soldier with submachine gun), "soldier with girl" (similar to one erected in Treptov park in Berlin), "Soviet Army-Victor", "soldier with wreath", "battle comradeship", "in memory of heroes", "Motherland remembers her heroes" (sorrowful female figure). See DAKhO. – F. R-4785. – Op. 2. – Spr. 103. – Ark. 13. Some visual images are also available here: www.shukach.com

⁵⁹ DAKhO. – F. P-2. – Op. 2. – Spr. 845. – Ark. 54–56; DAKhO. – F. P-2. – Op. 4. – Spr. 584. – Ark. 64.

memory, when it was used only for current needs without any interest in the past itself (the 'historization' of the war and interest in it as in some particular historical epoch appeared only under Khrushchev).

And mostly there were no names of the dead on the monuments because it was impossible to identify all the people who died in different time and for a number of reasons, and it was not considered to be important. Only since the Thaw this question has been raised and many people got engaged into the process of searching for the information about this.

An important tendency of the postwar period everywhere in the USSR was the unification of burials (*ukrupnenie*), when several graves were dug out and transformed into one. Sometimes the remnants of the dead were collected from the territory of several villages or village councils (*silrady*) into big common graves.⁶⁰ Often the graves of the dead with completely different background and experience were united (for example, soldiers who died in the battle, POWs and civilians exterminated by Nazis etc), but the monument on such a grave didn't indicate the specific experience of the dead.⁶¹ These larger graves were often situated near a building of the local administration, so the commemorative rituals were centralized and subjected to control. In this way, the utilitarian approach (unification of the burials because of the sanitary questions and economic reasons) was intertwined with the ideological one. Often, these new big burial places had nothing in common with real places of historical events, as they were detached from their original context. The place of commemoration didn't signify the place of memory. The process of unification (*ukrupnenie*) was inevitably selective and left the detached (individual) burials unattended, marginalized, and forgotten. Only relatives (if there were any) of the dead could be interested in such a burial.

Major events of the wartime in Kharkiv were also memorialized selectively. Thus, the camp on Holodna Hora where tens of thousands of POWs died was not marked as a specific place, a park was created

⁶⁰ DAKhO. – F. R-4785. – Оп. 2. – Стр. 8. – Арк. 1–7. See public discussion of specialists in heritage on history and contemporary state of the wartime burials in Kharkiv: http://www.sq.com.ua/rus/article/press_centr/bratskie_mogily_v_harkovskoj_oblasti/

⁶¹ See some examples: DAKhO. – F. P-2. – Op. 2. – Spr. 845. – Ark. 54–56; DAKhO. – F. P-2. – Op. 4. – Spr. 584. – Ark. 63–65.

on the cemetery where these people were buried. However, the memory of several hundreds of POWs exterminated at the hospital at Trinklera Street was honored with the monument on the grave (fig. 6), and mentioning of this tragedy was a standard part of any general description of the wartime in Kharkiv and was widely used for condemnation of the Nazis in international context. Probably it was more comfortable to present this kind of POWs – absolute victims who were not able to move and to defend themselves and who became martyrs, while thousands of camp inmates from Holodna Hora were taken into captivity at the battlefield and thus were the evidence of the Soviet Army's breakdown during the first months of the war with Germany.

The most important memorial places created in the early postwar years were included into a special list compiled by the historical museum.⁶² They were: the Cemetery of Heroes (in the city centre where many persons of higher military rank were buried), Terraced garden named after the 8th anniversary of the liberation, 3 monuments of the common graves of Soviet soldiers in different parts of the city, a monument at Trinklera Str.; monuments “in the pit at KhTZ” (mass burial of Jewish population near Tractor plant), in Pomirky, and Sokolnyky (the place of mass extermination of the Jews, Resistance activists, POWs, and soldiers who died in the course of liberation of the city). The last monument was especially problematic, as it depicted two symbolic figures: a sorrowful woman and a Soviet soldier, typical for the burials of that time, but not informing about so different fate and background of people buried there. These monuments were similar

to each other and their appearance didn't relate to some particular past.

The evident usage of the wartime past for the current needs and a lack of interest in concrete facts from the past are also obvious on example of commemorations of the anniversaries (most important among them –



Fig. 6. Obelisk at Trinklera Str. dedicated to Soviet POWs perished in March 1943

⁶² DAKhO. – F. 5942. – Op. 1. – Spr. 59. – Ark. 1–23.

Victory Day on May 9th and the Day of Kharkiv's Liberation on August 23rd). These dates were marked with gatherings of the working collectives, lectures on current propagandistic topics related to reconstruction of economy and international situation, additional working load to be taken. The results of the socialist competition could also be announced at these days. Generally, these days had to bring "political mobilization of the toiling people for fulfillment of the military-political and economical tasks of help the front" (1944), and these rhetoric survived the whole first postwar decade. Speeches of the officials on radio and the ones published in newspapers were related mostly to the topic of economy reconstruction.⁶³ Even if the speaker or lector had a personal experience of participation in the war, he/she had to present the generalized narrative, related to the most important events and battles, but not the personal vision.

Surely, during Stalinism there also were celebrations, people's "street festivities" (*buliamnia*), as well as the exhibition of the achievements of the socialist economy – however, if to take into consideration the mass hunger and poverty in Ukraine in this period, it became obvious that these activities were rather intended to represent the imagined (ideological) reality of "the happy Soviet people", but not to create a real place for rest and having fun. The scale of celebrations sometimes was too impressing, for example, 30 dramatic societies, 87 choirs, 27 musical, and 19 dance collectives took part in celebrations in Kharkiv in 1947 (and more in the region), while putting all the choirs together with amateur collectives made up the united choir of 6,000 people.⁶⁴ The programs of their performances were not too much different from those dedicated to, say, May Day. Uniting together the description of Nazi occupation harmful effect and the contemporary state of the economy served the goal of glorifying the success of the socialist economy and at the same time justification of low living standards, including the lack of basic goods and hunger; this justification was provided by the narrative of occupation as total destruction. It also served the shifting of the responsibility, for example, for demolition of many buildings, to occupants, though many of the buildings and strategic objects were destructed by retreating Soviet authorities.

⁶³ DAKhO. – F. 5767.

⁶⁴ DAKhO. – F. 5775. – Op. 1. – Spr. 42. – Ark. 10 (rev.).



Fig. 7. Banner on partisan movement in Kharkiv Museum, early 1950s. Photo: Courtesy of the Kharkiv Historical Museum.

After 1948, when May 9th ceased to exist as a day-off, it hasn't disappeared as a holiday, as a lot of researchers now wrongly argue. On the local level it was celebrated during the whole postwar period, as well as the Day of city liberation, though on the smaller scale. But its constitutive elements were present – it was not a holiday in today's sense of the word but a Stalinist holiday. Child festivities, parades of *fizkulturniki*, announcements of the results of socialist competitions, decoration of the city with agitation about 5-year plan were present also in early 1950s.

In a similar way, from 1944 the theme of the wartime was well represented in the Kharkiv museum,

but mostly it was oriented towards inspiring labor enthusiasm among the contemporaries. Partisan and underground activity was one of the most important parts of the representation of the occupation. During Stalin's governance the general approach to this theme was the following: Resistance activity was a part of the front battles strategy and it was totally controlled by Moscow. The exhibition displayed orders issued by the supreme commandment, paintings depicting partisans' meetings with Stalin and Khrushchev, and finally – rewards given to the partisans for their successful "fulfillment" of the orders. Such objects, as the model of the house in Zhuravliovka district where an underground radio station (connecting "with Moscow") was located, were emphasized. The narrative of the Resistance was created mostly through the portraits of its leading activists, who were appointed directly by the party organs (see fig. 7) – before or during the war, without any connection to their real achievements (and there we can see the same tendency of glorifying of not numerous officially approved figures as in the case of the street names).

Some topics were rather uncomfortable for the Soviet propaganda but present in the museum exhibition. Soviet prisoners of war and Holocaust victims were represented in Kharkiv museum, but mostly through the photos and paintings of the dead human bodies: during this period of time an alive Soviet prisoner of war was viewed only as a traitor; the honour to be represented could be earned only by undergoing extreme violence – torment to death. The early exhibition was extremely violent. The Soviet POWs were never shown as just captured, but only as victims of extreme violence or as liberated by the Soviet Army. Starting from 1949, the POWs appeared as parts of exhibitions less and less often. An important place in the exhibition was taken by the instruments of torture, the theme of starvation which eliminated the population; one of the central photos in this section was the photo of several men (called ‘patriots’) hung at the former *obkom* building (the symbolical link to *obkom* is important here; this photo is the most important image of the occupation in Kharkiv until now). By 1949 a lot of evidence on Nazi atrocities were removed from museums because of the established friendly partnership with recently created East German state. As for the destruction of the Jewry in Kharkiv, there were photos taken by the members of the Extraordinary State Commission on atrocities and crimes of German-fascist invaders (dead human bodies); a model of *dushobubka*; official Soviet calculations of the victims; a newspaper article “The Road of Death”. Even in 1944 the specific ethnic dimension of the extermination was not mentioned, and the victims were called “peaceful Soviet citizens”. In fact, the specific Jewish tragedy, well-known methods of extermination, and symbolic capital related to the status of the victim were borrowed by the Soviet ideologists from the Holocaust and were inscribed as characteristic for the Nazis’ attitude to the population at large, and especially to the communists.

Thus, as we can see, commemorations of war in Kharkiv under Stalin were not so much related to the past as to the future. They became commemorative signs but lacked the signified. Stalinist epoch didn’t declare the interest in the past “as it really was”. Moreover, preoccupation with the past could be proclaimed a harmful escape from “our happy contemporaneity”, a serious ideological deviation.



Fig. 8. The son of O. Zubarev looks at his father's bust at Alley of Komsomoltsi. Source: Соціалістична Харківщина. 1963. August 25th. P. 1.

The Thaw: Localization of the War Myth and Privatization of Memory

After Stalin's death more possibilities for activity of the ordinary citizens in the memory politics appeared. In Kharkiv Alexander Kagan used his status as war veteran and invalid to lobby the ordering of a burial place in Drobytskyi Yar, and in 1956 a standard monument to "the victims of the fascist terror in 1941–1942" (euphemism for Holocaust) was erected.

Another tendency of the Thaw – the cult of youth, romanticism and enthusiasm – stimulated the usage of the war memory for inspiration of initiative and enthusiasm of the "toiling people". In 1958, in honour of the 30th anniversary of Ukrainian *Komsomol*, in the city centre appeared the Alley of Komsomoltsi where the figures of different heroes were united: O. Koshevoi, Z. Kosmodemianskaia, and A. Matrosov – heroes of the wartime of the "all-Soviet Union" scale, O. Zubarev, H. Nikitina, M. Kisliak – heroes of the wartime of the "regional scale", I. Minajlenko (local hero of the Civil War), and famous Soviet writer Ostrovsky – hero of the Civil War. As far as we can see, the topic of WWII was not self-sufficient there, it was rather included to the wider project of glorifying the youth and enthusiasm. Uniting the memory of October Revolution, Civil War and WWII became the characteristic feature of the Khrushchev period, when it became common to relate rather to pre-Stalinist period. On the other side, the idea of intergenerational continuity became especially important when the war became quite distant historical past for the youth (fig. 8).

The important new tendency was also focused on the local heroes and events: in the 1960s new streets (and some old) were named after Kharkiv Divisions, I. Bakulin (the head of the underground *obkom*),

M. Kysliak, H. Kovtun, H. Nikitina (heroes of the underground), L. Dovator, S. Oreshkov, H. Rudik, P. Kandaurov (heroes of the frontline struggle in Kharkiv region), *Shyronintsi* (platoon of the Soviet Army who were defending the strategic village Taranivka slowing down the advancement of the Nazi troops to Kharkiv in March 1943). Shyronintsi became especially important heroes of the local war narrative because their heroism somehow overshadowed the shameful second surrender of the city, one of the biggest fails of the Soviet Army. Thus, the concentration on one detachment (though their deeds didn't result in changing the situation on the front) made it possible not to speak about the situation in general.

As for commemorative celebrations, during the Thaw they became more informal and included not only gatherings of the labor collectives but also more informal gatherings of some groups with particular wartime experience or with specific interest in the war past, such as comrade veterans from particular divisions or (what was unimaginable before) former concentration camp inmates who became especially active in Kharkiv. Since 1963 they were gathering on the dates related to war in central Shevchenko park, and soon several activists created an organization called Society of the Anti-Fascist Resistance Fighters (Rus. *OBAS*) that is still active up to now, as well as some its founders (fig. 9).⁶⁵ These were former concentration camp inmates who disseminated more human-oriented and less heroic vision of the wartime past, because their public presentation of the theme included not only heroic but also tragic aspects, as well as such topics as deportations to the forced labor to Reich, captivity, day-to-day coexistence with the enemy – all of that was rather unpopular in the official war narrative.

There is also an evidence on informal commemorative gathering

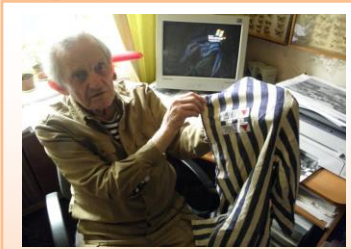


Fig. 9. I. Malys'kyi, one of the founders and current Head of OBAS. Source: <http://oplot.info/content/mayor-igor-fedorovich-malickiy#comment-24>

⁶⁵ Interviews with two of early members of the society I. Malyskiy (3/05/2011) and M. Tomlionov (20/04/2011) are in Iryna Sklokina's personal archive.

of a small group of Jews in Drobytskyi Yar in 1954.⁶⁶ But later such gatherings became impossible. A provincial context of Kharkiv, more conservative administration of the city (comparing to capital Soviet cities) and probably the absence of public (officially sanctioned) Jewish religious life in Kharkiv⁶⁷ were the factors that didn't allow Drobytskyi Yar to become such a powerful symbol of civic activism and unofficial memory politics as Babi Yar in Kyiv.⁶⁸ During the Brezhnev era it was impossible to get to Drobytskyi Yar at all because local administration tried to prevent any gatherings there, and it was difficult to get there because of no road and public transport.⁶⁹ Also, it was the cosmopolitan and modernized character of the city and eastern part of Ukraine that allowed to write the destruction of Jews into the general narrative of the city history without mentioning the ethnic identity of the victims. In general accounts of Kharkiv history the resettlement of Jews to the barracks near Tractor plant was described as resettlement of the "dwellers of the city centre" organized for emptying their living quarters⁷⁰ (before the war, a bigger number of Jews really lived in the city centre because many of them worked there in buros, educational, scientific, and administrative institutions).

Another important tendency of the Thaw was "searching for the heroes" – rooted in the idea that there were many more wartime heroes unapproved during the Stalinism and overshadowed by officials of high ranks and enormously glorified all-union heroes. For example, special new

⁶⁶ Каган А. «Я свое дело сделал...» // Дайджест-Е. – 2000. – № 11, <http://digest-e.narod.ru/digest-2000/11-2000/svoe-delo.html>

⁶⁷ Before WWII there were 3 synagogues in Kharkiv, but after the war regenerated religious community was not allowed to use survived buildings. In 1949 the internal conflict (provoked by the Soviet authorities) in the community led to refusal of the local administration to register it. It renewed only in 1989. See Котляр Е. Харьковские синагоги в XX столетии: расцвет, трагедия, современное состояние // <http://www.judaica.kiev.ua/Conference/Conf56.htm>

⁶⁸ About Babi Yar as place of struggle between official and unofficial memories see: Himka J.-P. Memorialization of the Jewish Tragedy at Babi Yar: Historical and Current Perspectives. Paper presented at 40th Annual Conference of Association for Jewish Studies. Washington, DC, December 21–23, 2008; Mankoff J. Babi Yar and Struggle for Memory, 1944–2004 // *Ab Imperio*. – 2004. – №2. – Pp. 393–415.

⁶⁹ Гейбер І. Залізобетонувий «Вася» йде в атаку на Захід // Сучасність. Література, мистецтво, суспільне життя. – 1983. – № 1–2 (січень – лютий). – С. 302–309.

⁷⁰ See one of the "canonical" narratives on history of underground resistance to occupation in Kharkiv: Мірошніков І. Нескорені харків'яни. – Київ, 1969); see also literary account of occupation in Kharkiv: Галкин Л. Если бы камни могли рассказать... Лричко-документальное повествование. – Харьков, 1970.

programs related to the search of heroes appeared on the local radio and the press.⁷¹ Probably the most important heroes unknown to the larger audience under Stalin were medics – O. Meshchaninov, V. Nikitinska, and their colleagues who organized underground medical help and some food supplement to the wounded Soviet soldiers, POWs from Holodna Hora camp, and wider civil population. These medics, mostly not party members (O. Meshchaninov was a doctor of pre-revolutionary school) had no relations with any underground Communist Party organs, acted under death threat, but saved many lives and helped some people to escape the camp and join the Resistance. During the Thaw they became popular heroes called “soldiers without overcoats”. An interesting example of this is the popular documentary film about Kharkiv (1967) in which the informal friendly meeting of V. Nikitinska, her colleagues, and former Soviet POWs saved by them took a lot of time. Also some ordinary women who lived nearby and helped Nikitinska are shown there (fig. 10).⁷² More and more often women (underground activists, partisans, soldiers) became heroines of radio and TV shows and newspaper articles. Their stories more often were presented as full



Fig. 10. Meeting of underground activists and former Soviet POWs saved by them. V. Nikitinska (on the right). Shot from the film “Revoliutsiia prodolzhaetsia” (1967).

of emotions, details of everyday life, and personal motivations. It is especially true in case of the group led by V. Nikitinska: their motivation for resistance is presented not as obligation or ideological commitment, but as human kindness, responsiveness, and sympathy.⁷³

The same tendency of rising of the number of Resistance participants is obvious in museum exhibitions.

⁷¹ DAKhO. – F. 5767. – Op. 1. – Spr. 892. – Ark. 12–19; Spr. 1144. – Ark. 60; Spr. 1145. – Ark. 26–53; Spr. 1111. – Ark. 159–168.

⁷² Революция продолжается [documentary film on Kharkiv history produced at Kharkiv regional television studio, 1967. Part 4: The City of Unconquered], <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HkRtwCUvVk0>. Part 4 of this film is dedicated exclusively to the period of WWII.

⁷³ DAKhO. – F. 5767. – Op. 1. – Spr. 1145. – Ark. 26–53.

a lot of “new” heroes, among them women, youth, and children, were presented there. Also a lot of new museums – including the so-called “popular” (*narodni*, non-governmental) museums – appeared in the late 1950s – 1960s. They were more rooted in the local context and often called to represent some particular theme or hero; widespread became the type of museum dedicated to participation of particular school, enterprise, or small group of citizens in WWII. In Kharkiv, several new museums were opened in secondary schools, two of them were dedicated to local Resistance heroes Zubarev and Bakulin, others – to the heroes of the frontline struggle.⁷⁴ This new tendency along with other factors led to gradual fragmentation of the wartime narrative, and the lively contact with eyewitnesses and their relatives problematized the general vision of the war.

42 The specific atmosphere of the Thaw was also conducive to changes in relations between the public and private spheres, widely propagating “sincerity,” “openness” of the private life to attention of a collective. That’s why presentations of personal experiences in public spaces (including museums) became broadly welcomed. In Kharkiv the mother of the perished underground activist Yuri Uzunian often took part in radio shows and meetings with different audiences. At one meeting with schoolchildren in the Kharkiv Historical Museum⁷⁵ on the 30th of January 1962 Yuri’s mother presented underground activities not as a mere fulfilment of orders, but as selfless aid given to everybody in need and solidarity with one’s compatriots (Yuri worked in the City Council and issued forged documents to people leaving the city to engage in petty trade in the villages). Yuri’s mother also told the story of the rescue of a Jewish girl and referred to Yuri’s wish to help children from orphanages who had not been evacuated from the city. The many unconventional elements contained in her very emotional and personal speech were thus incorporated into the public sphere. The commemoration of heroes such as Uzunian was an important marker of changes in the politics of memory. As one of the people who attended this meeting recounted, “the everyday struggle against fascists, existence within a hostile environment was a real heroic deed that had to be written into the history of our sons’ glorious struggle against

⁷⁴ DAKhO. – F. 5942. – Op. 1. – Spr. 274. – Ark. 5–17.

⁷⁵ DAKhO. – F. 5942. – Op. 2. – Spr. 153.

the fascist invaders.”⁷⁶ This statement reveals a radical rethinking of basic concepts: antifascist resistance was presented as solidarity and mutual help in times of hardship while the occupation was presented as “life with the enemy”, prolonged day-to-day coexistence.

Ideology of the “Friendship of the Peoples” and Memory of WWII in Kharkiv

From the very moment of liberation of Ukraine the presentation of the wartime story always included the rhetoric figure of “gratitude” for the liberation.⁷⁷ In spite of different digressions from this model, mostly it was understood that “Ukrainian people” is grateful to other peoples – members of the Soviet “fighting family” for their help in struggle against its enemy – Nazism.⁷⁸ Thus, a certain kind of power relations was created, and the Ukrainian “younger brother” had to be the follower of the “older” one. In the Ukrainian context, it was common to represent the “all-union” heroes and their local equivalents hand-in-hand. For example, Lialia Ubyivovk, a partisan from Poltava region who died tragically was referred to as “our [Ukrainian] Zoia [Kosmodem’ianskaia]” and a detachment under Lieutenant P. Shyronin (*shyronin’si*) which fought near Kharkiv to prevent the city from being captured by the enemy was represented as the successor to *panfilov’sy* who defended Moscow. Similarly, “Molodaia gvardiia” served as a model in the representation of other youth resistance organizations. This parallel representation created a kind of hierarchy, where Russian heroes were generally seen as role models and the heroes of other nations as their successors. It was suggested that the “friendship of the peoples” had been fostered by higher party and state officials on visits to the UkrSSR when they made some crucial decisions.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ DAKhO. – F. 5942. – Op. 2. – Spr. 153. – Ark. 2.

⁷⁷ The rhetoric figure of “gratitude” in the Soviet discourse is analyzed in the book by J. Brooks “Thank You, Comrade Stalin!” Soviet Public Culture from Revolution to Cold War (Princeton, 2000).

⁷⁸ Surely this statement is oversimplifying, as the book by S. Yekelchuk shows (“Stalin’s Empire of memory. The Russian-Ukrainian Relations in the Soviet Historical Imagination”) (Toronto, 2004).

⁷⁹ Сяченко В., Топорівська С. Відображення дружби народів в експозиціях музею // Культурно-освітня робота. – 1953. – № 5. – С. 41–43.

But these intrigue of relations between the Soviet peoples was not the whole story. Kharkiv was included into discursive construction of relations with “brotherly peoples” of the newly emerged socialist block. In Kharkiv region, a more specific war myth arose, namely “the battlefield brotherhood of the Soviet and Czechoslovak peoples” embodied in two heroic battles: the first one near the village of Sokolove in March 1943 in which the 1st Battalion of the Czechoslovak Army formed in the USSR under Ludvik Svoboda participated and where the Czech officer Otakar Jaroš became the first foreigner-hero of the Soviet Union; the second one near the village of Taranivka, where *shymyntsi* fought together with the soldiers of the 1st Czechoslovak Division. These events were used not only to glorify the “friendship of the Slavic peoples” and the liberating mission of the Soviet Army in Eastern Europe, but also served to transform the uncomfortable narrative of the second surrender of Kharkiv on the 15th of March, 1943 which could not be prevented by the heroic deeds of “Czechoslovaks”, but the concentration on their deeds made this narrative more heroic and thus legitimate (fig. 11). Representations of this friendship used the term “Slavic peoples”, in spite of the fact that the Czechoslovak Army comprised people of different ethnic origins, including Jews who were never mentioned in this story. The reasons why so many “Czechoslovaks” landed in the USSR were never given (most of them were former Wehrmacht soldiers taken into captivity or members of the Czechoslovak Legion interned in the USSR after the annexation of the east of Poland by the USSR in 1939). The symbolic reply to what “Czecho-slovaks”



Fig. 11. Part of the museum exhibition related to liberation of Kharkiv and participation of Czechoslovaks, early 1950s. Photo: Courtesy of the Kharkiv Historical Museum

did was cases of participation of the Soviet citizens in the Resistance movement in Czech lands, particularly on the native land of O. Jaroš. Commemorations of this international friendship was very wide, there were tourist exchanges of schoolchildren and workers, motorcycle races

etc.⁸⁰ In 1958, the museum “Brotherhood in Arms” was founded in Sokolove.⁸¹ Museums in the region started to collect not only objects on the wartime events themselves but also on the remembrance of these events.⁸² And when the economic cooperation with the states of socialist block was presented, it was usually mentioned that this friendship started during the war. The importance of Kharkiv as industrial centre with huge international contacts was highlighted.

However, sometimes the ideology of “friendship of the peoples” served not to internationalism (as was expected by Soviet ideologists) but to certain reinforcement of ethnic identities (because “friendship of the peoples” needed its subjects – the *peoples* themselves). One of examples for that is the museum in honour of S. Oreshkov, an ethnic Russian and Hero of the Soviet Union who died heroically in Kharkiv region. This museum was created in a Kharkiv secondary school where pupils designed a park in his honour and planted birches there as a symbol of “Russianness”.⁸³ In this way the ideology of internationalism was promoted, but a particular ethnic perspective was also imposed (the emphasis on the Russian identity of the hero identified the children as non-Russians paying homage to a representative of the brotherly people). Thus discourse on WWII promoted *Soviet* Ukrainian patriotism (and the silencing of Ukrainian nationalists’ activity in the wartime Kharkiv was obvious; only in late 1960s the denunciations of nationalists started as the struggle against dissidents, among them opponents of the Soviet national policy, became a pressing problem).

Consumer Society and Memorialization of the War

As it was mentioned above, in the city centre of Kharkiv the war theme was not overrepresented. But since the Thaw, and especially in the 1960s–1980s this theme became important in the new giant districts, formerly suburbs: Novi Domy, Pavlove Pole, Oleksiivka, where central avenues and streets were named after frontline heroes, and the monuments to liberation

⁸⁰ Соціалістична обрядовість на Україні. Історичний досвід і сучасні проблеми. – Київ, 1983. – С. 62; ДАКхО. – Ф. 5745. – Оп. 3. – Spr. 232. – Ark. 127.

⁸¹ Восьовдін М.А. Кімнати-музеї Харківщини. – Харків, 1959.

⁸² ДАКхО. – Ф. 5942. – Оп. 1. – Spr. 153. – Ark. 45.

⁸³ ДАКхО. – Ф. 5942. – Оп. 1. – Spr. 274. – Ark. 5-17.

by the Soviet Army were erected. Entirely new living conditions, beautiful parks for rest and sports, large stores, and accessible services and other achievements of the Soviet consumerism (its rise was proclaimed one of the goals of the late Soviet regime) were presented as the outcome of the wartime heroism of the Soviet Army. In this way during the late Soviet period the war myth underwent certain “profanation” and was linked not only to the values of self-sacrifice, heroism, loyalty to the leader, but also to battle for a “better life” and “socialism” in its consumer sense as they were imagined by the Soviet mind.

During mature socialism, the war theme became related to consumerism by means of entertainment, for example, the adventure literature on the Second World War (especially for children) rose immensely. The celebrations of the anniversaries related to war became much more linked to having rest and entertainment (such as participation in some theatre performances, meetings with friends and comrades in doser circles). Also, evidence for that is changes in museum visitors’ notes (in the special books of notes and wishes).⁸⁴ While there was an emphasis on gratitude for “new knowledge”, “educative work” (“prosvitnytska robota”), darity, and understandability under Stalin, since the onset of the Thaw priority was given not to cognitive aspects and the instructive role of the museum, but increasingly to entertainment and consumption. It became common to write about the museum as a place with lots of “interesting things” where visitors could get a “cultured service” (*kulturne obslygovuvannia*). In a book of comments from 1966–1973, most comments refer not to the content of the exhibitions, but to communication with the guides, convenience, and equipment. Visitors were grateful not for the “exhibited truth about the past”, but for the “informed service of the museum staff”, for the guides’ “courteous behaviour”, “kindness”, “attentiveness” towards visitors, and for beautiful decorations and the design of the exhibitions. Visitors were now seen as consumers of cultural products, not human material that needed to be shaped and reshaped in accordance with instructions from above. Here we can see a change of vision: from the museum as an educational and ideologically loaded institution, guiding visitors into the world of official ideology so they could orient themselves and even survive in the Soviet reality, to the museum as a place for relaxation and leisure.

⁸⁴ DAKhO. – F. 5942. – Op. 1. – Spr. 130, 145, 303b.

During the period of mature socialism, the aesthetic dimension of exhibitions became much more important, and, as a rule, greater emphasis was placed on the artistic presentation of exhibitions and the emotional response they elicited. Big dramatic pictures and dioramas aimed to provoke an emotional and aesthetic response rather than instruct. These new forms of presentation became widespread due to a much better financial standing of Soviet museums at that time. Museums were also established in former partisan or soldiers' mud-huts, dug-outs, and forest houses, where the materiality of wartime life was reconstructed and visitors to these locations were placed in the position of witnesses to the past. The public view of the museum changed; it was now perceived more as a place for cultural consumption and relaxation than a place for education and indoctrination. Objects from everyday life and original weapons were placed there and this reconstruction incorporated visitors into the past through direct physical contact. This was especially important for children with no personal experience of the war as it allowed them to learn about the past through play. To a certain extent the development of Soviet museums was similar to that of "western", "capitalist" museums, where the importance of relaxation and consumption also increased at that time.

Conclusion

Memorialization of the Second World War in Kharkiv was a process going in the context of cityscape loaded with heritage of the 1920s – 1930s, and especially related to its status as a capital of the Soviet Ukraine. Several aspects of the wartime history of the city being uncomfortable for the Soviet propaganda were represented selectively, for example, the fate of the Soviet POWs or extermination of Jews. Cosmopolitan and modernized character of Kharkiv where Jews were not culturally isolated also facilitated speaking about extermination of Jews without ethnic connotations, as well as use of specific Holocaust images for the presentation of the Nazi policy towards all the population. As the nationalist moods were not widespread in Kharkiv during the two postwar decades (as opposed to Western Ukraine), the unmasking of the collaboration of nationalists with Nazis was absent from public discourse and started only in late 1960s when national dissident movement became active also in the east of Ukraine.

Memorialization of WWII in Kharkiv was going in the cityscape loaded with heritage of the 1920s – 1930s related to its status as a capital of the UkrSSR. Memory of war became more present in the new districts far from the center where the link was created between heroic liberation and success in building of socialism in its consumer sense. Cosmopolitan and modernized character of Kharkiv allowed to avoid using ethnic terms while speaking about Jewish tragedy.

Dealing with the most uncomfortable aspects of the past, such as several military defections of the Soviet Army near Kharkiv, was oriented towards accentuation of examples of heroism and international friendship in these failed battles. The result was creation of Kharkiv's city image not only as Soviet but also as significant in international relations, including the states of the socialist block. Moreover, the Soviet official politics of memory presented Nazi occupation as a factor of threat to the very identity of Kharkiv as a *city* (total destruction of buildings and infrastructure, ruralization etc), and Soviet rebuilding was presented as new invention of the city identity. It was obviously related also to the attempts of the Soviet propaganda to present the pre-revolutionary history of Kharkiv as mostly rural and underdeveloped in order to underline the post-revolutionary success.

Commemoration of war became much more present in the Kharkiv cityscape during the period of mature socialism in the new districts far from the downtown where the link was created between heroic liberation and new success in building of socialism in its consumer sense.

A provincial context and rather conservative administration of the city didn't allow to develop any significant unofficial strategies of memory, though the dissident movement, including Zionist, was quite strong in Kharkiv. WWII was rather

untouchable theme for them. However, initiatives of activists from different groups with diverse wartime experience was incorporated into the public sphere, so they were gradually transforming the general narrative of war in Kharkiv, making it more diverse and ambiguous.

HRODNA

Incorporation of the “Polish” City to the Soviet Space: War and Power

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Heterogeneity of the Soviet space was mostly determined by different historical and cultural background of the territories incorporated into it. In our comparative study Hrodna presents a drastically different experience of the pre-war history if to compare with Kharkiv and Rostov-on-Don; in this case we are interested in how this factor influenced the postwar politics of memory.

Unlike Kharkiv and Rostov-on-Don that were included in the Soviet state from its very beginning, Hrodna has been a part of the newly emerged Polish state, Second Rzecz Pospolita, until 1939. It is worth mentioning here that Hrodna, this old centre of the province while in the Russian Empire, was turned into a small *powiat* (district) centre in the province of Białystok. The most important feature is the shortness of the first wave of Sovietization: in September 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop pact was signed; in accordance with it the eastern part of the Polish state together with Belarusian and Ukrainian lands was transferred to the USSR, and Hrodna was included into the Belorussian Soviet Socialist Republic. But soon – in June 1941 – the city was occupied by the German troops. The first period of Sovietization was marked by intensive measures of nationalization of production and trade, repressions against suspicious groups of the population (especially intelligentsia of Polish origin), and respective changes of symbolic space of the city, such as demolition of monument to Józef Piłsudski and monument to Freedom dedicated to the renewal of the Polish independence. But the scale and depth of these transformations was not comparable to that on the old Soviet territories where Bolsheviks came to power in 1917–1921.

Also, it is worth mentioning that Hrodna had a specific ethnic composition, and Jewish population was dominant (however decreasing) during the interwar period: in 1919 Jews comprised 69 %, in 1924, their percentage was 50 %, and the last pre-war poll of 1937 indicated 42 % (the total number of city population was 49,700). Poles comprised 30-40 %, and Ukrainians 10-15 %.

and the percentage of Belarusians diminished from 7.5 % in 1919 to 2.5 % in 1937 (as far as we may trust the politically loaded polls in the interwar Polish state).⁸⁵

50 During the war, Hrodna wasn't the place of any significant battles, so its war experience was reduced to life under occupation. The city fell under Nazi occupation quickly on the 24th of June, 1941 (because of the city's borderland position) and liberated on July 16th, 1944, in course of the final stage of the operation for liberation of Belarus by the Soviet Army. That's why the period of occupation was longer than the period of the "first Soviets" (as locals called it).

The war brought a radical change of the ethnic composition, first of all, mass destruction of the Jewish population (nearly 20,000 of Jews perished), only somewhat 200 Jews survived, and only some of them stayed in the city after the war.⁸⁶ In the postwar years, the deportations of Poles continued in accordance with political and social criteria to the far regions of the USSR, as well as to the socialist Polish state. It is difficult to determine the precise quantity of deported from the Hrodna region because of inaccessibility of the archives. But approximate estimation shows us that nearly 250,000 moved to Poland, among them one third was from the Western part of Belarus.

WWII also sharpened the national problems – Nazi occupational regime exploited difficult relations between Poles and Belarusians in Hrodna giving preferences in the local administration to one or another side. Also Armija Krajowa (Polish underground resistance formations struggling for the restoration of the pre-war borders and, consequently, belonging of Hrodna to Poland) supported by the Polish émigré government in London was active in Hrodna and region.

Respectively, during the first postwar decades, the Soviet power in Hrodna was challenged by the tasks of Sovietization and depolonization of the city. Both tasks were fulfilled by measures of symbolic politics too.

⁸⁵ Чарнякевіч А. Сацыяльна-культурная трансфармацыя г. Гродна паміж Дзвумя сусветнымі войнамі (1919–1939 гг.) // 1939 год у лёсе беларускага народа: 36. матэрыялаў рэгіянальнага круглага стала, Брэст, 29 кастр. 2009 г. – Брэст, 2010. – С. 6–17.

⁸⁶ Акерман Ф. Дэмаграфічнае разбурэнне Гародні ў 1939–1949 гг. // Гістарычны альманах. – 2011. – Том 17. – С. 50.

The depolonization was also carried out not only by means of deportations to Poland (mostly to its western part), but also by means of cultural and historical politics.

In accordance with one of the first orders of the city council in 1944, it was forbidden to use “Polish” names of the streets memorable for the local population, and it was strongly recommended to use only Soviet names from 1939–41.

A special attention was paid to historical politics and the local version of memory of Victory in the Great Patriotic War (mixed with the “liberation from the Polish oppression” in case of Hrodna).

Monuments to the Victims as Dominant in the Local Monumental Memory in Hrodna

The construction of monuments became one of the most important directions of Sovietization and unification of the cityscape. Priority was given first to the construction of the monuments to the leaders of the Communist Party Stalin and Lenin (these two were present even before the war, but were destroyed by Nazis). Special attention was paid to Stalin who had already created his image as a great leader who won the war.

In 1947, a reconstruction of the sculpture of Stalin started at Sovetskaia Str., and finally on the 1st of May, 1948, the sculpture was erected (fig. 12). In 1947, in the city park, the sculpture composition “Stalin and Lenin in Gorki” binding the two leaders



Fig. 12. Monument to Stalin on Savetskaia St. (photo from the personal files of T.A. Tsvetkova), 1951.



Fig. 13. Monument to Stalin near the Music Pedagogy School. Source: www.forum.znyata.com

of the communist state together was installed. And, finally, the 70th anniversary of Stalin's birth was marked by the construction of a 3-meters-high monument to Stalin on a high pedestal in the vesty park near the Music Pedagogy School (fig. 13).

It is worth mentioning that these were the monuments to Stalin

and Lenin that occupied the most important place on the symbolic map of the postwar Hrodna: they were placed near the centers of power, on the squares, thus being the marks of concentration of the political and social life of the city. But the themes of war memory were among those dominant too. Here we present the list of monuments constructed during the two postwar decades:

- 1949 – monument on the common grave of Soviet soldiers and partisans, Central amusement city park;
- 1955 – stele on the common grave of Soviet soldiers, Orthodox cemetery, Victory Str.;
- 1957 – monument to Soviet war prisoners, Orthodox cemetery, Antonova Str.;
- 1958 – monument to soldiers, partisans and victims of fascism, Orthodox cemetery, Antonova Str.;
- 1959 – monument to prisoners of war and Soviet soldiers, Orthodox cemetery, Antonova Str.;
- 1960 – memorial dedicated to victims of fascism, war cemetery, Belusha (Tikhaia) Str.;

- 1960 – monument in memory of mass extermination of Soviet soldiers and civil citizens (Naumovichi town, Hrodna region, 9 km from Hrodna);
- 1965 – obelisk on the common grave of Soviet soldiers, Orthodox cemetery, Victory street;
- 1965 – stele in the former death camp in Folsuz city district.

Thus one can see that a lot of monuments were erected, but we should also keep in mind that, in first place, these monuments were predominantly situated on the cemeteries or particular common graves, so they were presented not so much as generalized symbols, but rather as commemoration of the concrete local tragedy of the dead lying under pedestals. Obviously, cemeteries were rather peripheral to the city life and war monuments were marginal in the everyday experiences of reading the symbols of the cityscape. The only exception was the very first monument (1949) in the central amusement park, it became the most important point for the festive ceremonies on the Victory Day (fig. 14).

It would be productive here to trace the process of monumentalization in the further decades under Brezhnev: 1968 – T-34 tank was put on pedestal in honour of the soldiers of the Second and Third Belarusian Fronts who liberated Hrodna; in 1968–69 – the Hill of Fame was created along with monuments to marshal V. Sokolovskii (1973), general D. Karbyshev (1975), Hero of the USSR M. Kurbatov who perished while liberating Hrodna (1977), underground resistance activist O. Solomova (1977), monument



Fig. 14. Monument on the common grave of Soviet soldiers and partisans, Central amusement city park, Hrodna. Photo by A. Lastouski (2012).

“Always on Guard” on the military cemetery (1979), monument to teachers and schoolchildren who participated in the war (1981). Here we see a different approach: monuments were erected in the open public places, they became more visible, and, moreover, a certain pantheon of heroes related to Hrodna was formed. Consequently, the construction of war monuments during the first postwar decade was overshadowed by monumentalization of the Soviet political leaders, and only under Brezhnev it became the most important part of dealing with the cityscape.

Transformation of the Museum Exhibition during the Late Stalinism and the Thaw

Historical museum in Hrodna was opened in 1920, in 1939 it was transferred under the control of the People’s Commissariat of Enlightenment, in 1940 – it was reorganized into Hrodna Regional Historical Museum. There, the museum exhibitions on war were made later than in the other cities.

The first exposition on the “Great Patriotic War” was opened in 1946 (when the museum got a new building), and a temporary exhibition “Partisan Movement in Hrodna Region during the Great Patriotic War” and a stable exposition was ready in 1952.⁸⁷ This exposition demonstrated the course of the war on the local level in the context of Nazi-Soviet dash. Thus, the exposition started with the newspaper “Free Belarus” dated June 21st, 1941, presenting the pre-war life of Hrodna. The theme of defense of the city in June 1941 was not presented, obviously because of no heroic deeds there (in contrast to later decades when it became one of important heroic narratives). Only the evidence of the crush of one Nazi tank division in summer of 1941 was presented in the exhibition. The exposition itself implied dear ideological message: “the photos and documents tell us in detail how Soviet people under the wise leadership of comrade Stalin crushed the German-fascist troops near Moscow”.⁸⁸ Respectively, the history of WWII in Hrodna and Hrodna region (the status of the museum was regional) was presented in 3 units: the crimes

⁸⁷ Краязнаўчыя запіскі [Hrodna]. – Выпуск 6. – С. 91-107.

⁸⁸ Гродзенская праўда. – 1952. – Май 12th.

of the Nazi occupation regime (photos of mass executions, tortures of the Soviet POWs), partisan movement in the region (where the most important was a false statement of mass support of the local population), and information on the underground organizations in Hrodna and Skidel. Expectedly, the final passage in this exposition was the banner devoted to “the organizer of all our victories, great Stalin”. Stalin was also present in every part of exhibition, on personal documents etc. (fig. 15).

After Stalin’s death this mode of presentation had to be revised, however, in case of Hrodna the fundamental reconstruction of the exposition was finished in 1960, four years after the renowned speech by Khrushchev on the 20th Party congress where he condemned the “personality cult”.

The new version of the exposition had no mentioning of the “wise leadership” of Stalin. The fundamental change touched the very interpretation of the forces which led to the Victory. The only driving force of the Victory was proclaimed to be the Communist Party as a whole, not its leader personally: “The Victory in the Great Patriotic War was gained due to the wise policy of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. During the war it united with the people even closer. Our victory in the Great Patriotic War means the victory of the Soviet social and state order, victory of the Soviet Armed Forces”.⁸⁹



Fig. 15. The commendation to the major Demyanchenko for his excellent military achievements in course of Hrodna’s liberation. Hrodna Historical-Archaeological Museum. Photo by A. Lastouski (2012).

⁸⁹ Гродненский государственный историко-археологический музей. Путеводитель по залам. – Минск, 1964. – С. 163. Ironically, all the driving forces of the victory mentioned here (CPSU, unity of party and people, supremacy of the Soviet social order, strength of the Armed Forces) were initially formulated in Stalin’s speeches and writings.

Also other substantial changes in selection of the events and personalities for the display occurred. In the first place, more attention was paid to the defense of Hrodna during the first days of war – and we suppose it to be the influence of the newly emerged myth about the defense of the Brest fortress (publications about this story, as well as the information about excursions to the fortress are presented in the local press). The central component of this new narrative on “heroic defense” was the defense of the frontline post under the command of lieutenant Usov, and the painting by M. Samsonov dedicated to this event was included into the exposition.⁹⁰ Another key figure was actualized, namely general D. Karbyshev, whose activity as a military official was related to Hrodna and Western Belarus, and who was taken into captivity and died in the concentration camp in 1945. He became especially important for Hrodna.

Secondly, the banner “Hrodna region under the suppress of the fascist occupants” also changed greatly. A new statement appeared about creation of 3 ghettos, where 50,000 Jews from the city and its localities were brought, and than “all the Jews were annihilated by the fascist barbarians”.⁹¹ Remarkably, the silencing of the specific fate of the Jews, characteristic of the period of Stalinism, now ceased to exist, and the scale of the tragedy was too much overestimated (at the moment the estimation of the victims’ number is about 20,000 – 30,000). At the same time, the museum was the only institution where the ethnic identity of victims was so dearly indicated. No specific memorials were created in memory of ghetto dwellers, and on the monument all the victims were called “Soviet citizens”; generalized narratives of the history of Hrodna didn’t mention Jewish victims either.

An important change of the Thaw period in the museum was also the enlargement of the section related to the partisan movement. New portraits of the local partisan leaders Bumazhkov and Pavlovsky, as well as photos of important persons from the central partisan commandment were

⁹⁰ In 2004 the memorial devoted to frontiersmen was constructed in Hrodna, but this is another story to be discussed. See, for example, discussion at <http://www.svaboda.org/content/transcript/783031.html>

⁹¹ Гродненский государственный историко-археологический музей. Путеводитель по залам. – Минск, 1964. – С. 141.

posted. The statement about the support of the local population still was very important for the presentation, and the active participation of youth and children in the Resistance was underlined.

However, the liberalization under Khrushchev had its own limitations: a lot of aspects, such as collaboration with the Nazis, activity of the Belarusian and Polish nationalist movements, have never been represented in the museum.

War Memory in the Local Press: from Generalized Narratives to Personal Experience

Analysis of the local press (there, the most important source is “Hrodzenskaia Prada”, the publishing organ of the city and regional committees of the Communist party, and executive committees of the city and regional Councils of the Deputies, founded in 1939) shows that in case of Hrodna generalized publications on the war without any representation of its local context were especially characteristic. We suppose it to be the outcome of radical discrepancy between the processes and events having taken place in real Hrodna and the propagandist Soviet image of the war, so it was much easier to represent the grand-narrative of the USSR in the war rather than to deal somehow with the real local events and personalities. Even the period of Thaw gave birth to a relatively small number of publications related to the local context.

Period of Stalinism (1944–1956) was marked by the maximal standardization of the war narrative. The number of publications was relatively small (5–10 materials per year, and about 10 messages about the commemorative events in the USSR and worldwide. These materials were dedicated to the certain dates: February 23rd (Armed Forces Day), May 9th (Victory Day), July 3rd (the Day of Liberation of Belarus from the German-fascist invaders). Sometimes the publications marked July 16th (the Day of Liberation of Hrodna), but regular publications on this day began to appear only under Brezhnev, and this day became quite an important holiday.

The publications dedicated to February 23rd and May 9th always included a large portrait of Joseph Stalin on the front page. Another

necessary element was the anonymous editorial on the front page. Its title for the May 9th was “Great Victory of the Soviet people”. The second page presented the article by some higher militarymen – general, major-general, colonel-general. Every year the author of the “general’s” article was different, but the content was identical: the hard trial of the Soviet people, the leading role of the Communist Party, the supremacy of the socialist order. But more than two thirds of the paper were related to the current (internal and external) political situation. Economical success of the Soviet Union was described, and a lot of space was given to the critique of the capitalist states condemned as imperialist (or even fascist) and willing to provoke the new war(s).

During the late Stalinism all the materials related to the war reproduced this rhetoric, and local and personalized images of the war were rare. These rare publications (no more than one for the whole year) were written by the same person – V. Shatsman who worked at Hrodna State Museum of History and *Kraevedenie*. V. Shatsman tried to present the local history of WWII, for example, some articles were related to the partisan movement in the region, particular persons-participants of Hrodna’s liberation etc.

Since 1956, when Khrushchev came to power, the representation of war has started to change. The number of publications on war rose; May 9th became the most important point, and “Hrodzenskaia Prouda” usually included 8–10 articles about WWII on this day. More articles were also published on July 16th, the Day of Liberation of Hrodna.

As for the content, a substantial change was related to the attention to personal dimension of the wartime stories. Numerous life stories about participation in the war appeared – either written by journalists or by participants themselves (with obligatory journalist and editorial reworking). Another important tendency was that more and more diverse experience was included into the public sphere. If earlier the stories of the frontline struggle dominated, during the Thaw the stories of former partisans and underground activists, concentration camp inmates and local dwellers who experienced occupation at their homes could be presented in public.

Stories of the war participants as a rule also included a description of the successful postwar work for the good of the socialist economy, the success in career and social activity. Wartime heroic deeds were presented as analogues of the postwar labor breakthroughs. On the other hand, this approach excluded those handicapped who were not able to join the postwar reconstruction.

However, this widening of the possibilities for the representation of the war past didn't involve the themes of Holocaust, collaboration, and activity of the nationalist organizations ("Hrodzenskaia Prada" published only two materials on this: one was about Lithuanian nationalists who collaborated with Hitler, another one was the story of some local guerilla activist describing how the partisans crushed the nationalists' plans to make a present to Hitler – luxurious wooden table). Also, one of the groups marginalized in this narrative was Poles. Almost never Polish identity of the war participants (or victims) was mentioned, mostly they were marked as Belarusians or Russians, but mostly ethnic identity was not highlighted.⁹² It was obviously related to postwar reality of Hrodna when a lot of ethnic Russians came to take positions in administration, education, industry, and this city was rather russified than nationalized as *Belarusian* city. As opposed to Lviv or Chernivtsi, Hrodna was not described primarily in ethnic terms.

It is also noteworthy that the local press indicates: the Soviet politics of history during the first decade was interested mostly in legitimacy of the Soviet authority on this territory. That's why bright reports about success in all the spheres – industry, agriculture, culture and education – were published along with the gloomy descriptions of the hardships of life for the population in the Polish state and self-sacrifice in the struggle "against the oppression of the Polish bosses", as well as liberative military action of the Red Army in 1939. Moreover, we should keep in mind that for many in Hrodna the beginning of the "Great Patriotic War" was no more than the new stage of WWII and was linked to the division of the Polish state and repressions and deportations to follow. This aspect

⁹² Also, all these problems were mostly omitted in generalized accounts of Hrodna's history, see, for example, Гродно: исторический очерк / Л. В. Аржаева, Я. Н. Мараш, Б. М. Фих. – Минск, 1964.

of the problem helps to explain why the theme of the Victory was relatively unimportant for the propaganda in the local press – that is obvious taking into consideration the small number of publications. This situation changed only after 1956 when more informal stories of the ordinary men and women became widespread.

Conclusion

In order to outline the general framework of the politics of WWII memory in Hrodna, one should also take the discourse of the Belarusian republican leadership into consideration. Leaders from Minsk tried to underline the role of Belarus in the Victory over Nazism: the role of the ones most injured by the Nazi atrocities, on the one hand, and the role of the most active participants of Resistance – in the Soviet Army, partisan detachments, and underground organizations. The significance of the republican Victory myth had grown after coming to power of the “partisan clan.”⁹³

Therefore, it is noteworthy that the memory politics in Hrodna differed from that in Minsk as the latter has been marked with large-scale monuments just after the war ending (in spite of the fact that Minsk was destroyed even more than Hrodna) and the mass renaming of the streets was related to the war history.

It is obvious that Hrodna was a part of a different symbolic space – not completely “Soviet” one – thus, the politics of WWII memory was different there. It was already mentioned that in Hrodna the first date to be commemorated was the 3rd of July, the Day of liberation of Belarus from the German-fascist invaders (the initiative of the republican centre), and only in late Khrushchev period the Day of Hrodna’s liberation became important.

Respectively, one may suppose that Soviet politics of memory on the newly annexed territories made use the Victory myth considerably less actively than on the “old” Soviet Belarusian territories. The emphasis

⁹³ About the “partisan clan” of Belarusian elite: Urban M. *An Algebra of Soviet Power. Elite Circulation in the Byelorussian Republic 1966-1986*. Cambridge, MA, 1989.

Memory politics in Hrodna differed from that in Minsk, the theme of the Victory was relatively unimportant for the propaganda in the local context. The emphasis was made on different topics. Stalin's personality, pre-eminence of the Soviet order, negative sides of the Polish interwar politics, the reunification of the Belarusian people. Still some individual activity outside the official framework was possible. This situation changed only after 1956 when more informal stories of the ordinary men and women became widespread.

was made on different topics:⁹⁴ Stalin's personality, pre-eminence of the Soviet order, negative sides of the Polish interwar politics, the reunification of the Belarusian people. But the city was rather russified than nationalized in Belarusian style. As opposed to Lviv or Chernivtsi, Hrodna was not described primarily in ethnic terms. Still some individual activity outside the official framework was possible: the assistant of the Hrodna museum V. Shatsman made a lot for creation of the local image of the war through research and publishing activity. Thus, it is not surprising that during the first postwar decade, the regional museum was the only place where the mass extermination of Hrodna Jews was represented.

By the period of Brezhnev's rule the regional specificity of Hrodna was erased, and the city was included into the process of a large-scale monumentalization of the WWII memory similar to other Soviet cities.

⁹⁴ Шумскі Я. Савецызацыя Заходняй Беларусі (1944–1953 г.). Прапаганда і адукацыя на службе ідэалогіі. – Беласток, 2012. – С. 167–196.

CONCLUSION

Memory of The “Great Patriotic War” from the Local Perspective

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Memory of the Second World War was one of the components constituting and developing the Soviet identity of the cities under study. In all of them the memory of war underwent the transformation from its “collectivization” to “privatization”. During the period of Stalinism, especially after the end of the war, the official politics of memory was oriented towards unification, creation of one monolithic narrative with a small number of officially approved heroes, when the diversity of the wartime experience was leveled (eloquent examples of that are unification of burials and uniformity of the monuments). During the first postwar decade, the Victory myth was incorporated as a part to the Stalin cult, thus the war was presented rather as directed process aimed to Victory, as fulfilment of the wise orders from the centre by the leaders mostly appointed from above, and local heroes were less important. Selective and rather practical approach to the material remnants of the past was subordinated to everyday economic needs. Uniting together the description of Nazi occupation harmful effect and the contemporary state of the economy served the goal of glorifying the success of socialist economy and at the same time justification of low living standards, including lack of basic goods and hunger; this justification was provided by the narrative of occupation as total destruction.

After Stalin’s death, the process of transformation started, when personal life stories of ordinary war participants were included into public sphere (among other factors due to restructuring of the dichotomy between the private and the public under Khrushchev), different groups with particular experience started to be formed. More practical, utilitarian approach of the first postwar decade, when the past was used almost exclusively for the current tasks of the reconstruction of economy and international propaganda, was followed by the rise of the interest in war as past in the proper sense of the word under Khrushchev, as well as by bringing together the myths of WWII and October Revolution, localization

of memory, influence of the cult of youth and romanticism, as well as consumer society values. Everyday life experience (not only extreme forms of violence and antagonism) became legitimate part of public representation of the wartime history. Rethinking of basic concepts happened during the Thaw, when antifascist resistance was presented as solidarity and mutual help in times of hardship while the occupation was presented as “life with the enemy”, prolonged day-to-day coexistence.

“Historization” of the war and interest in it as in some particular historical epoch appeared. A rapid rise of the number of people approved officially as heroes and participants of Resistance, “searching for the heroes”, appeal to personal experiences and oral testimonies, questioning of the Stalinist narratives of war, attention paid to problematic and tragic (not only glorious) aspects of war – all this was quite similar to the changes in the memory culture in Europe in the late 1950s – 1960s, when the new generation and new political actors started to question the established vision of the war.⁹⁵ Also, on both sides of the iron curtain the questioning of the ways of commemoration started, societies started to critically rethink how WWII should be memorialized. In European countries, including Germany, the problems of collaboration and Resistance, Holocaust, everyday coexistence with the enemy came to the fore. In the USSR, these problems also attracted more attention, but couldn’t question the basic myth of Soviet Victory as this myth already became the foundation and justification for the socialist order, Soviet international dominance, and system of relations between the peoples of the USSR.

All the three cities under study were not the prominent places of the Soviet wartime glory and not the places of intentional construction of the Victory cult supported and initiated on the highest level. Thus, these examples of Hrodna, Kharkiv, and Rostov-on-Don allowed us to reconstruct the ordinary practices of the politics of memory on the local level. The Second World War for all the three cities was experienced foremost as occupation by Nazis, but narratives about the heroic defense

⁹⁵ See, for example, Herf J. *Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys*. – Cambridge, MA, 1997; Geyer M. *The Place of the Second World War in German Memory and History* // *New German Critique*. – 1997. – № 71. – P. 5–40; *Память о войне 60 лет спустя: Россия, Германия, Европа*. – Москва, 2005.

and liberation of the cities were also constructed along with narratives about Resistance and exclusively destructive, antagonistic nature of relations with the enemy. Even if some of these elements were not present in reality, they had to be created. Collaboration of the local population with the Nazis, activity of the nationalist organizations, as well as the fate of Jews, Roma, children from orphanages not evacuated by the Soviet authorities, *ostarbeiters*, other groups of civil population under occupation were especially marginalized during Stalinism.

Local specific features of the three cities are explained not only by the historical diversity of the wartime events, but also by the scale of destruction of the city, pre-war history and postwar status and image of the city in the framework of the USSR, as well as by amount of resources available for creation and implementation of memorialization projects.

In Hrodna, memory of WWII was overshadowed by narratives of preeminence of the Soviet socialist order over unjust Polish interwar state and unification of the Belarusian people. Kharkiv, the former capital of the UkrSSR, was flooded with symbols of another key period in the Soviet history – October revolution, Civil War, and socialist construction of the 1930s. The importance of Kharkiv as industrial and cultural centre with huge international contacts was highlighted through the narratives of the “battlefield friendship” of the brotherly (especially Slavic) peoples in the war. In Rostov the lack of resources and economic hardships forced to postpone the construction of the big-scale memorial projects. Also, the commemorations of extermination of Jews were more active Rostov-on-Don because legal Jewish religious life was present there, unlike in Kharkiv and Hrodna. Cosmopolitan character of the pre-war cities in the eastern part of the USSR also facilitated speaking about extermination of Jews without ethnic connotations, as well as use of specific Holocaust images for the presentation of the Nazi policy towards all the population (in Rostov and Kharkiv the Jewish victims were called “dwellers of the downtown”).

Along with massive propagandistic efforts “from above”, the role of local activists was important: enthusiastic individuals or groups of participants/survivors with particular wartime experience significantly

influenced the memorial landscape of the three cities. However, their activity was rather complementary than contradictory to the official politics of memory. The provincial context with its more conservative administration didn't allow to develop any considerable unofficial memorial culture.

The close relation of the memory of the Second World War to everyday lives of the people in the USSR, its massive presence in the cityscape, celebrations, museums, literature and arts, as well as in family communication and public presentation of the personal wartime experiences, in practices of education of the schoolchildren, made the war an integral part of the ordinary citizens' historical consciousness and unconscious everyday practices. The frameworks of representation of the wartime history shaped during the two postwar decades were extremely useful for the (re)creation of the city images also during the Brezhnev era, and moreover, they by far succeeded to survive the collapse of the USSR.

In ten years they [people born in 1945] will be able to imagine vaguely the life of the country during the wartime years only from books and the stories of those who lived through the Great Patriotic War. Much will remain obscure for them . . . The youth of the sixties will stand near the obelisk shocked by those stories and think: "Did all that really happen?"

Krasnoe znamia, May 9, 1945.

