

memorating the residents who died in the clashes of May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2014 next to the “Wings of Victory” obelisk.

President Petro Poroshenko has also attempted to make use of the resource of the cult of wartime dead in Odesa. On April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2015 he visited the city and participated in festivities dedicated to the anniversary of its liberation.

## 5. Concluding remarks

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Soviet myth of the Great Patriotic War, and the forms and practices of commemorating its dead went through transformations in Ukraine. In Odesa, they had regional peculiarities and were often manipulated by various political forces. These changes were affected both by external (European and Russian) and Ukrainian tendencies. This can partially be accounted for by the fact that in Soviet times events dedicated to commemorating the wartime dead were strictly regulated by the state-party apparatus. In post-Soviet Ukraine, public, private, and party initiatives based in various worldviews and value systems play an important role alongside state regulations. All these tendencies bring ambiguity to the transformations of the cult of the wartime dead, and their commemoration in Odesa. Considering the current situation (especially continuing military conflict in the Donbas), we may assume de-communization, but not de-heroization of the Soviet soldiers who had defended or liberated the city. Their political cult is undergoing yet another transformation and will apparently gain new functional meaning – just like the sites of their commemoration.

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## From Subversive Memory to the Cult of Heroes: The Memory of the OUN and UPA in the Case of Hurby Battle Commemoration<sup>1</sup>

### 1. Introduction

In case of battlefield memories, the past is literally dug, exposed, and performed, losing its historical features and acquiring mythological ones. This sheds light on many aspects of remembrance – agendas of memory actors underpinned with political, economic, and emotional interests of all parties involved as well as the persistence of the past *per se* that leaves traces which condition remembrance. It also involves desirable and undesirable amnesias inseparable from remembering.

In what follows I will try to see how one specific battlefield in the West of Ukraine – Hurby – has been commemorated since the Second World War. Why and when did this place become important and for whom? More precisely, why was this place turned into a site of memory? When and why have the fallen in that battle become so important that they acquired the status of a cult? And last but not least, who rendered them this status?

### 2. What is remembered? Hurby as a site in history

First, we should shed light on the place, the battle and the actors involved. The memory of the Hurby battle refers to the history of the wartime nationalist movement that belongs to one of the most controversial and disputed topics in Ukrainian history.<sup>2</sup> For some, wartime Ukrainian nationalists, as represented by the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and its military arm Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), are undeniable heroes who fought for Ukrainian

<sup>1</sup> The article contains some parts from the author's dissertation: Yurchuk, Yuliya: *Reordering of Meaningful Worlds. Memory of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army in Post-Soviet Ukraine*. Stockholm 2014.

<sup>2</sup> Rudling, Per Anders: 'Historical Representations of the Wartime Accounts of the Activities of the OUN-UPA', in: *East European Jewish Affairs* 2006/36(2), p. 175.



independence. For others, they are seen as despicable villains, “bourgeois nationalists,” and “bandits,” as labelled by Soviet-time propaganda.

When we speak about the OUN and UPA, we speak about the period that lasted over 27 years (1929–1956). The OUN was founded in 1929. In 1948, it concluded its activities in both Poland and in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (UkrSSR). The UPA was formed in the late 1942. That army’s final unit was destroyed by NKVD forces in 1956. Formally, however, the OUN pursued its activities in the diaspora, where it established itself in 1948 into a smaller group entitled OUN-zakordonnyi (OUN-z), or OUN abroad, led by Mykola Lebed.

The OUN legacy is actively exploited by several far-right parties in Ukraine. After 1991, the OUN tried to establish itself in independent Ukraine. It was split between the Congress of Ukrainian Nationalists (KUN) in Ukraine and the *émigré* OUN-B, led by second-generation *émigrés* from Germany and Australia.<sup>3</sup> Nowadays, several organizations trace their origin back to Stepan Bandera: the KUN and the *émigré* OUN-B, the paramilitary organization “Tryzub imeni Stepana Bandery” (“Trident named after Bandera”), and the VO “Svoboda” (All-Ukrainian Association ‘Svoboda’).<sup>4</sup> The political party “Pravyi Sektor” (Right Sector) that emerged as a political-paramilitary movement during the time of *Euromaidan* protests in 2013–2014 heavily exploits OUN symbols and those of symbolizing Bandera legacy. Such an active exploitation of OUN legacy by Ukrainian far-right parties makes the perception of the original OUN, which existed as the organization over the years (1929–1956), more complicated. This is because present parties not only try to influence memory politics but also, through their own activities, affect public attitudes towards the OUN. One can even state that exactly during and after *Euromaidan* the theme of the OUN became widely popular in the form of a myth which presents the OUN exclusively as freedom fighters and defenders of Ukraine. In such an understanding, the difficult aspects of OUN history are silenced or ignored.

The most difficult aspects of the OUN and UPA history are the relations with the “others” – Jews, Poles, Russians, and Germans. To these difficult aspects we can add the ideology of the OUN, as, for many, the mere notion of the OUN as an organization which had some fascist or nationalist characteristics is disturbing and difficult to accept. An additional difficult aspect in the history of these organizations, which remains considerably understudied in the historical literature, is the persecution of Ukrainians by the OUN. Timothy Snyder estimated

3 Rudling, Per Anders: ‘The Return of the Ukrainian Far Right: The Case of VO Svoboda’, in: Wodak, Ruth / Richardson, John E. (eds.): *Analyzing Fascist Discourse: European Fascism in Talk and Text*. London i.a. 2013, p. 235.

4 Kuzio, Taras: ‘Stratehii natsionalistiv-emihrantiv i ukrainsko-radianski realii’ [‘Strategies of emigrant nationalists and Ukrainian-Soviet realities’], in: *Istorychna Pravda*. 28 November 2011, available at: <http://www.istpravda.com.ua/columns/2011/11/28/62812/> [18. 12. 2019].

that among the victims of the OUN “purging” campaigns there were more Ukrainians who did not support the OUN ideology and its deeds than any other nationality.<sup>5</sup> For instance, in the interwar years many of the Ukrainian moderates – mostly members or supporters of the Ukrainian National Democratic Union (*Ukrainske natsionalno-demokratyчне obyednannia* – UNDO) that represented Ukrainians in the Polish Parliament – were killed by the OUN. The problem of OUN persecuting Ukrainians is paid such scant attention in memory-related debates, though, that it cannot reasonably be included within the category of “difficult knowledge”<sup>6</sup> as it has not penetrated public debates and virtually remains “unknown.” The same can be said about the relations with other nationalities, as Russians, for instance. Not so much is researched on the question of the OUN attitudes to Russians as ethnic minority which would extend beyond their attitude to the Soviet authorities and the Communists. The OUN ideology was anti-Russian in its essence. For instance, in his writings Dmytro Dontsov, on whose writings the OUN was building its ideology, maintains that Ukraine has to be liberated from “Russian spirit” and united with Europe instead. Russia was perceived as a part of the East from which Ukraine had to be separated.<sup>7</sup> In Soviet historiography and subsequently in the recent Russian debates, the OUN is mentioned in the propagandistic terms as “banderites” (followers of Stepan Bandera), traitors who fought against Soviets and who continue to be Russia’s enemies today.<sup>8</sup>

The Hurby battle took place on the 20–25<sup>th</sup> April, 1944. It was the largest battle between the Ukrainian Insurgent Army and the NKVD (People’s Commissariat of Internal Affairs). It took place in Hurby, a village in the west of Ukraine, some 30 km away from the city of Rivne, the center of territorial administration of Rivne oblast (region). It is said that five thousand soldiers of the UPA-North unit “Bohun” under the command of Petro Oliinyk “Enei,” and the UPA-South under the command of Vasyl Kuk “Lemish,” opposed thirty thousand soldiers of the NKVD under the command of Major General Mykhailo Marchenkov.<sup>9</sup> As a result of the battle, the village was devastated and destroyed to the ground, so there is no longer a trace of the village there. The memory of the village is still alive, though.

5 Snyder, Timothy: *The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569–1999*. New Haven i.a. 2003, p. 164.

6 On the conceptualization of the history of the OUN and UPA as “difficult knowledge” see Yurchuk 2014.

7 Zaitsev, Oleksandr: *Ukrainskyi intehralnyi natsionalizm (1920–1930-ti roky)*. [Ukrainian integral nationalism (1920s–1930s)]. Kyiv 2013, p. 366–367.

8 Polehkyi, Oleksii: ‘Soviet Mythology and Memory of World War II as Instruments of Russian Propaganda’, in: *Warsaw East European Review* 2016/VI, p. 77–89.

9 Viatrovych, Volodymyr et al.: *Ukrainska Povstanska Armiia. Istoriia neskorenykh* [Ukrainian Insurgent Army. The history of the unconquered]. Lviv 2008, p. 16.



It lives primarily through the memory of the battle. The village gave its name to the battle and now the battle gives its name to this place.

### 3. Post-battle memory: subversive and spontaneous

Almost immediately after the battle, the local population from the neighboring villages began to erect crosses in the forest in order to mark the ground where thousands of people were killed. As theorized by Jack Santino, such spontaneous commemoration of the dead is “a primary way to mourn those who died a sudden or a shocking death.”<sup>10</sup> The Soviet militia, though, continually demolished the crosses and prohibited search and excavation work.

As showed by Harriet Senie, spontaneous commemorations have great potential to become subversive and challenge the authorities.<sup>11</sup> But in the case of Hurby, it seems that the primary need for commemoration was subjected first and foremost to the need to mark places of death and mourn the dead who were deprived of proper funeral rituals. Hence, the use of religious symbols – simple wooden crosses – which otherwise would have been placed on the graves. Nevertheless, the mere commemoration in the context where any commemorative practice is forbidden lets us refer to these spontaneous cases of remembrance as subversive, even if they were not motivated by political reasons but by simple human needs. Such subversive local commemorations seemed to abate with time. On the 9<sup>th</sup> of May, 1965, following the Soviet trend of Soviet Victory glorification initiated by Brezhnev, the monument in honor of local villagers who fell dead during the Second World War with the Red Army soldier on the high pedestal was inaugurated. It seems that symbolically it closed the need to mark the place of the burial even if it was devoted not to all those who fell dead on the battlefield (see illustration 1).

As soon as Ukraine became independent in 1991, local initiatives to remember the dead of the UPA army resurfaced with renewed vigor fueled by support and encouragement from the diaspora, the church, and regional political and non-governmental organizations to commemorate the dead who were forbidden to remember.

10 Santino, Jack: ‘Performative Commemoratives: Spontaneous Shrines and the Public Memorialization of Death’, in: Santino, Jack (eds.): *Spontaneous Shrines and the Public Memorialization of Death*. New York 2006, p. 5–16.

11 Senie, Harriet F.: Mourning in Protest: Spontaneous Memorials and the Sacralization of Public Space, in: Santino, Jack (eds.): *Spontaneous Shrines*, p. 41–56.



Illustration 1. “Monument to the villagers of Buderazh who fell during the Second World War” opened on 9 May 1965. Source: Babych, Anton: Buderazh. *Prysvichuietsia 65 richnytsi provedennia pershoi konferentsii ponevolenyh narodiv* [Buderazh. Dedicated to the 65th anniversary of the first conference of oppressed peoples]. Zdolbuniv 2008.

### 4. Dead bodies and management of the past

The genuine impossibility of carrying out excavation and finding the bodies of the dead during Soviet times meant proper remembrance was impossible. This became decisive in shaping the remembrance of Hurby at present. In such a way, an anti-Soviet narrative dominates the remembrance of the battle whereby the Soviets are not only the villains who inflicted suffering and caused the death of UPA soldiers in the field, but also the ones who prohibited the inappropriate burials and their general remembrance. Thus, the commemorative practices at present redress the prohibition of memory and are framed as activities that are to mean to correct the wrongdoings of the past. As a result of the fact that traditional Christian ceremonies connected to death merge with remembrance of the UPA soldiers who fell at Hurby and who were not properly buried, the memory of the Hurby battle is mainly influenced by religion. It should be stressed that in many cultures, Ukrainian included, proper funeral rituals work as “adoptive response to death,” and through the rituals “both the individual and society are



transformed and gain a sense of power which motivates ongoing life”.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, funerary rituals are performed to “locate the dead firmly in the past and in memory”.<sup>13</sup> Regarding this, individuals and societies in general that were limited in holding proper burials of their dead as well as their commemoration afterwards can be seen as restricted in their ability to cope with death and overcome the suffering inflicted by loss of family members, for example, or, even broader, members of the community. Those who are alive feel responsible for remembering the dead. This duty of remembrance can be revived even many years after death and by the generations who have no living memory of the dead.<sup>14</sup>

## 5. Religion and memory of the dead

Hurby is the site of memory which is to a large degree shaped and influenced by religion and one particular Church – Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Kyiv Patriarchate.<sup>15</sup> From the very beginning of the 1990s, the commemorative practices in Hurby had an overtly religious underpinning. A tall wooden cross marked the death of people who were killed here and were never properly buried (illustration 2). Later on, a symbolic grave to unknown UPA soldiers was arranged. The grave consists of two tombstones and two crosses – one made of iron (which was erected first to mark the place of death) and one made of granite (being a part of the granite composition built in 2007–10). The plate on the iron cross has the *tryzub* (trident, Ukraine’s national symbol and coat of arms) an inscription “They Lost Their Lives for Ukraine’s Freedom. Glory to Heroes!” The granite stone to the left also depicts the *tryzub* and a woman sitting down whose appearance suggests that she is deeply in grief. The inscription near the woman reads: “To the fighters for freedom and the independence of Ukraine.” The stone to the right shows a kneeling male soldier holding a rifle in one hand and stretching out the other hand. The inscription reads:

12 Davis, Douglas: *Death, Ritual and Belief. The Rhetoric of Funerary Rites*. London 2002, p. 1.

13 Ibid.

14 On postmemory that is shared by generations, see Hirsh, Marianne: *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust*. New York 2012.

15 In the post-1991 Ukraine, there were several most important Orthodox churches: Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Kyiv Patriarchate, Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Moscow Patriarchate, and Ukrainian Orthodox Autocephalous Church. In 2018, the unified Orthodox Church of Ukraine was proclaimed and granted the Tomos of Autocephaly by the Constantinople Patriarch. It united the eparchies of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Kyiv Patriarchate and Ukrainian Orthodox Autocephalous Church, as well as some smaller communities. See more on religious situation in Ukraine in: Wanner, Catherine / Yelensky, Viktor: *Religion and the Cultural Geography of Ukraine*, in: Schmid, Ulrich / Myshlovska, Oksana (eds.): *Regionalism without Regions: Reconceptualizing Ukraine’s Heterogeneity*. Budapest 2019, p. 247–296.



Illustration 2. Hurby Memorial Complex. Collage: Daria Anfalova.

People!

Stop, and in your thoughts

Honor the memory

Of five thousand insurgents

Who under commander “Yasen”

On 23–25 April 1944 took up the fight

With Moscow’s crudest horde of NKVD

In total 30 thousand men.

In the battle the warriors of (following) units took part:

“Storchyn,” “Mamay,” “Diuk,” “Dovbenko,”

“Buvalyi,” “Doksa,” “Andriy Shuma,” “Zalizniak,” “Herasym,” and “Sotnyk Venko.”

In this corner of land in eternal rest sleep the patriots of Ukraine.

Among them most of the warriors are from the Northern Unit of Ukrainian Insurgent Army.

Eternal memory!

Glory to Ukraine!

In the beginning of the 1990s, an annual celebration on the third day of Easter was established. The symbolism of Easter as the high point of spiritual life reached in the resurrection of Christ is connected to the idea of the symbolic resurrection of the nation. The idea of people’s sacrifice for the sake of the nation reaches its high point during these ceremonies. Another day when people gather here annually is the Day of the UPA, the 14 October, which is also the religious feast day of *Pokrova* (God’s Mother Protectress), which again charges the commemorations at Hurby with special religious atmosphere. Thus, the memory of the UPA in Hurby is based on religious rituals and the religious calendar. In such a way, nationalism underpinned with religious symbolism is almost literally celebrated as religion here. Furthermore, the date of the 14<sup>th</sup> of October connects the UPA memory to the well-established memory of Cossackdom because the Day of *Pokrova* is also celebrated as the Day of Cossackdom. Cossacks are presented in the national identitarian project as freedom fighters who set the



beginnings of Ukrainian statehood in 16–18<sup>th</sup> centuries. In 1999, a special decree of the then President Leonid Kuchma introduced this Day into the official calendar of Ukraine.<sup>16</sup> In such a way, the UPA history is symbolically written into a continuity that starts as early as the 16<sup>th</sup> century.



Illustration 3. Monument to the UPA soldiers who were killed at the Battle of Hurby. Photo by Yuliya Yurchuk, 2011.

Peter Burke wrote that commemorative ceremonies are “an agreed interpretation of the past linked to shared views of the present.”<sup>17</sup> The link to religion in those rituals makes the interpretation more “agreed.” Visiting during the commemoration in Hurby is to experience it as if being simultaneously present at various kinds of events – a celebratory liturgy, a political demonstration, and a ceremony of mourning. The role of the church in these commemorations is undeniable. The effect that the religious services have on visitors is hard to ignore. Through these commemorations, nationalism is articulated by means of religious rituals.

In tandem with the construction of the memorial complex “For Heroes of Battle of Hurby,” other construction work has taken place in Hurby – the building of Sviato-Voskresenskyi Monastery (Monastery of Holy Resurrection). This monastery belonged to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Kyiv Patriarchate (UOC KP), from 2018 – to the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (PTsU). The Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Kyiv Patriarchate) was established in 1992. It was one of the three main Orthodox churches in Ukraine, together with the Ukrainian

16 ‘Pro Den ukrainskoho kozatstva. Ukaz prezidenta Ukrainy’ [‘On the Day of Ukrainian Cossacks. The Decree of the President of Ukraine’], 7 August 1999, № 966/99, available at: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/cgi-bin/laws/main.cgi?nreg=966%2F99> [18. 12. 2019].

17 Burke, Peter: ‘Co-memorations. Performing the Past’, in: Tilmans, Karin / van Vree, Frank / Winter, Jay (eds.): *Performing the Past. Memory, History, and Identity in Modern Europe*. Amsterdam 2010, p. 108.

Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church. The church was unrecognized by other canonical Eastern Orthodox churches till 2018, when the unified Orthodox Church of Ukraine (PTsU) was created and recognized by the Constantinople Patriarch. It should be stressed that the attempts of the UOC KP to establish itself as a Church separate from Moscow Patriarchate went along the lines of national liberation agenda in politics that underlined the distinctiveness of Ukraine and its separation from Russia. The heroic memory of the OUN and UPA was shaped exactly in the climate of this national liberation agenda. Thus, the Kyiv Patriarchate became rather active in the formation and promotion of this heroic memory of the OUN and UPA. In this context, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Kyiv Patriarchate became one of the main actors in shaping Hurby as site of memory. Rivne and the Ostroh Metropolitan bishop of UOC KP Yevseviy was present at some ceremonies in Hurby. At one of the first Rivne oblast council’s hearings about the building of the Hurby memorial complex, he delivered a speech in defense of the Hurby complex building project and especially the building of the monastery, which he considered an integral part of the memorial complex.<sup>18</sup>

It should be mentioned that there was strong opposition against building the monastery. This opposition was directed not so much to the UPA but to the monastery in the first place. The struggle involved not only nationalist and anti-nationalist forces, but also the main churches that were fighting for the regional influence – the Orthodox Churches of Moscow and Kyiv Patriarchates. The Metropolitan Yevseviy hoped that by being allied with the parties which once formed the “Orange”, pro-Yushchenko coalition, the Kyiv Patriarchate could win in this clerical dispute.<sup>19</sup> Perhaps, the presence of the Metropolitan at the meeting, as well as the meeting’s timing that coincided with Easter celebrations, strengthened the position of the project supporters in the council.

The fact that the commemoration of the Hurby battle takes place on days of the main Christian feast, with the monastery built and the church already open to visitors, endows Hurby with a special religious aura. Indeed, visitors come here not only to the site of memory but also to the sacred site, in order to make a religious pilgrimage.<sup>20</sup> If one considers the remote location and almost complete absence of public transport to this site, it is clearly not an easy kind of pilgrimage. Being near the large monastery building surrounded by the chapel and crosses of the memorial complex, it is unclear whether the memorial complex at Hurby is part of a monastery or whether the monastery is a part of the memorial complex?

18 Metropolitan Yevseviy, in: Minutes of the meeting of off-term thirty third session of the Rivne Oblast council, in: Author’s archive, 17 March 2010.

19 Ibid.

20 See an insightful ethnological study on relationship between memory, pilgrimage and place: Fröhlig, Florence: *Painful Legacy of World War II: Nazi Forced Enlistment*. Stockholm 2013.



The boundaries between both are so blurred in such a way that no clear-cut answer is possible.

On the relationship between commemoration and ideology, Ben Gook advances his theory of commemoration as an “interpassive ritual.”<sup>21</sup> He argues that “commemoration is a moment of intensified public memory in which ideology and the unconscious are deeply embedded.”<sup>22</sup> Gook explored the potential of subjects to escape the hegemonic influence of ideology through interpassive rituals – the rituals that take place in commemorations merely by our presence among the co-rememberers. That means that even if we came “just” to watch, we are taking part in an “interpassive” ritual of co-remembering, because in reality it is the presence of each subject that makes commemoration and remembering possible.

Although there is no way to escape the ritual in this conceptualization, there is still a chance to escape the influence of the ideology that these rituals transmit. Thus, Gook argues specifically for interpassive commemoration for a potential to allow subjects to escape the influence of ideology because in interpassive commemoration, “subjects maintain a capacity to give or withhold assent,”<sup>23</sup> their subjectivity precedes and can resist the ideological identities subjects are presented to. In this regard, it can be imagined to what extent people who come to the ceremonies in Hurby are influenced by the ideology of nationalism transmitted through religious rituals.

I would argue that commemorative practices in Hurby coupled with pronounced religious undercurrents form a strong bond between ideology and unconsciousness so that it becomes practically impossible to resist subjugation. Religion is the vehicle that makes such “interpassive commemoration” almost impossible as it is hard to withstand following rituals performed exactly as part of religious services. Furthermore, in the situation where power over the memory site belongs almost entirely to nationalist parties and the church, this means that no other forms of commemoration can take place in practice, and the space for subversivity shrinks significantly. In this respect, I would argue that the memory site constructed within the religious paradigm has a strong stabilizing function for the formation of a memory community. As Casey suggested, “whenever commemorating occurs, a community arises. Not only is something communal being honored, but the honoring itself is a communal event, a collective engagement.”<sup>24</sup>

21 Gook, Ben: “Being There is Everything!”, in: *Memory Studies* 2011/4(1), p. 13–22.

22 Ibid, p. 14.

23 Ibid., p. 16.

24 Casey, Edward S.: *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study*. Bloomington 2000, p. 235.

When people meet at this place over and over again and repeat the same set of activities (prayers, putting wreaths on graves, and singing) the memory of the battle becomes a collective performance of collective emotions of grief, gratitude, and pride, etc., first and foremost connected to the death of the soldiers who were shut out from the mourning and remembering for several decades. Reinhart Koselleck, while commenting on war memorials, noted that “the only identity that endures clandestinely in all war memorials is the identity of the dead with themselves. All political and social identification that tries to visually capture and permanently fix the ‘dying for...’ vanish in the course of time.”<sup>25</sup>

In the case of the memorial complex, though, we can instead say that the only identity that endures in the monument is “dying for...” statement as formulated by memory entrepreneurs. What do we know about those people commemorated in stone if we look at the monument? Do we know where they were born, where they lived, what they did? As the scholar of religion Douglas Davies argues, at death, identity and social status of the dead undergo major changes.<sup>26</sup> Memory is called for to safeguard the identity of the dead but exactly through memory, through commemorative rituals and narratives the dead acquire new identities. The identity of the dead as formed by memory can never be equal to the identity of a living person.

In the case of remembering the dead soldiers who were killed in Hurby, all the personal characteristics which would reveal their identity are not known to us, the only thing that remains is the fact and the reason of their death is the struggle for liberation as mentioned in the inscriptions on the monuments. Noteworthy, the names mentioned on the monument, are all *nommes de guerre*, not real people’s names (see illustration 2 and the translation of the inscription in my text above).

The sacralization of the past serves as strategic silence<sup>27</sup> that results from the political pressure of the present. As Tsvetan Todorov pointed out: “When commemoration freezes into permanent forms that cannot be changed without cries of sacrilege, we can be certain that it serves the particular interests of its defenders and not their moral edification.”<sup>28</sup>

25 Koselleck, Reinhart: *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts*. Stanford 2002, p. 289.

26 Davis 2002, p. 4.

27 On different kinds of silence, see Winter, Jay: Thinking about Silence, in: Ben-Ze’ev, Efrat / Ginio, Ruth / Winter, Jay (eds.): *Shadows of War: A Social History of Silence in the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge 2010, p. 3–32.

28 Todorov, Tsvetan: ‘The Uses and Abuses of Memory’, in: Marchitello, Howard (eds.): *What Happens to History: The Renewal of Ethics in Contemporary Thought*. London i.a. 2001, p. 21.



## 6. “Insurgent graves”: actualization of previous historical myths

In October 2002, excavation works started and the reburials of soldiers began. The place was planned to become “A Pantheon of Heroes” with all the dead bodies found buried under a high column topped with a statue to the Virgin Mary. Excavation works were mainly realized by the Society for Searching for Victims of the War “Memory” (*Tovarystvo poshuku zhertv vijny “Pamiat”*) linked to the Youth Nationalist Congress.<sup>29</sup> When Viktor Yushchenko (then president) came to power in 2005, he offered his broad support to the Hurby commemoration project which was in line with his generous propagation of the UPA memory.<sup>30</sup> The excavation works sped up. By 2011, the remains of 30 soldiers had been excavated.

In May 2007, the first reburial in the “Pantheon of Heroes” was conducted. The celebration in 2007 was grand. President Yushchenko and other high-ranking politicians’ presence at the celebrations transformed the event from a local and regional to a national one. The organizers emphasized that this memorial complex should “teach young generations lessons in patriotism and the history of Ukraine.”<sup>31</sup> Indeed, young generations became one of its main visitors. As the site is in quite a remote spot far from any oblast or rayon center, it cannot be visited spontaneously or by chance like any other monument located in a densely populated city, the trip to Hurby needs to be well organized and planned. That is why school children are some of the most frequent visitors as schools usually organize such trips within the framework of their history lessons.

Hurby is used also by young generations without any connection to school. Every year in Hurby the Youth Nationalist Congress<sup>32</sup> (Molidizhnyi Natsionalistychnyi Kongres), the branch of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (revolutionary) which traces its legacy directly from the Bandera OUN, organizes the “terrain game” called “Hurby Antonivtsi” (a kind of historical reconstruction)<sup>33</sup> drawing youth from all over Ukraine. What is important to note is that the

29 See an insightful anthropological study on search activities and their meaning in a general process of remembrance of the Second World War: Dahlin, Johanna: *Kriget är inte över förrän sista soldaten är begravnen: Minnesarbete och gemenskap kring andra världskriget i St Petersburg med omnejd* [The war is not over until the last soldier is buried: memorial work and fellowship around World War II in St. Petersburg and its environs]. Norrköping 2012.

30 On Yushchenko’s memory politics regarding UPA see: Portnov, Andriy: *Memory Wars in Post-Soviet Ukraine (1991–2010)*, in: Blacker, Uilleam / Etkind, Alexander / Fedor, Julie (eds.): *Memory and Theory in Eastern Europe. Palgrave Studies in Cultural and Intellectual History*. Hounmills 2013, p. 233–254; Yurchuk 2014.

31 Pryshchepa, Bohdan / Pryshchepa, Olena: *Istorychne krajeznavstvo Volyni: Navchalnyi posibnyk* [Volyn local history: a textbook]. Rivne 2008, p. 295.

32 Molidizhnyi natsionalistychnyi kongres [Youth Nationalist Congress], available at: <http://mnk.org.ua> [18. 12. 2019].

33 Hurby-Antonivtsi terrain game, available at: <http://gurby.org.ua> [18. 12. 2019].



Illustration 4. Visitors near the monument to the UPA soldiers, Hurby, 2011. Photo by Yulia Yurchuk.



Illustration 5. Schoolchildren leaving the monument, Hurby 2011. Photo by Yuliya Yurchuk.

Church and the members of national democratic parties (e.g. *Our Ukraine*) strongly emphasized that they have no connection to the activities of the Youth Nationalist Congress.

When Viktor Yanukovich ascended to the presidential office in 2010, the memory of the OUN and UPA was reactivated with a new vigor in the region, one that contained strong anti-Yanukovich bias.<sup>34</sup> The oblast council of Rivne was dominated by “Our Ukraine” deputies (the opposition, pro-Yushchenko party, at that moment). In partisan struggles, “Our Ukraine” presented the memory of the OUN and UPA in the form of a glorious narrative directly connected to the security of national interests. Consequently, the anti-OUN and UPA politics of the Party of the Regions (and the party itself) were presented as a threat to national interests. In this respect, the peoples’ deputy of “Our Ukraine” Volo-

34 In the presidential elections in 2010, the majority of voters in Rivne oblast voted for Tymoshenko (76.24 %), Yanukovich received 18.91 % of the votes there. In parliamentary elections in 2012 Tymoshenko party “Batkivshchyna” received 36.59 % of votes in Rivne oblast, whereas the Party of the Regions received 15.80 %, and Svoboda 16.63 %. See ‘Ukraina. Prezidentskie vybory 2010’ [‘Ukraine: Presidential elections 2010’], in: *Elektoralnaia geografiia 2.0*, available at: <https://www.electoralgeography.com/new/ru/countries/u/ukraine/ukraina-prezidentskie-vybory-2010.html> [18. 12. 2019].



dymyr Kinakh stated at one of the oblast council meetings where the Hurby project was discussed:

“Today Hurby is a *holy place* for every Ukrainian. We are addressing a wider public, political organization of the oblast with the chance to show a good example of Christian morals and... to visit Sviato-Voskresensk Monastery on the “Insurgents’ Graves” (*Povstanski Mohyly*), the pantheon of heroes of the Battle of Hurby, to pray and honor the holy memory of the UPA warriors, who gave their lives for future Ukrainian state. Eternal glory to the heroes who were killed in the struggle for freedom of Ukraine! Glory to Ukraine! (emphasis added).”<sup>35</sup>

In this way, the memory of the UPA is sacralized, the fight for independence turns the UPA soldiers into martyrs, or even almost into saints, and the duty of remembering is constructed as a moral duty of each Christian.<sup>36</sup> Interestingly, in the OUN ideology the nation was associated with Christ and the OUN leaders with his disciples.<sup>37</sup> In my view, such a sacralization of the memory of the UPA strengthens its mythical character, whereby the UPA loses its temporality and historicity and becomes rather ahistorical – belonging simultaneously to different epochs, or indeed to any epoch in particular, or in short, to eternity.

Moreover, the whole idea of the Pantheon is presented by the deputy as “Insurgents’ Graves” (*Povstanski Mohyly*) linking this project to the famous site of memory “Cossack Graves” (*Kozatski Mohyly*) that is located in Pliasheva village, near the town of Berestechko, also not far from Rivne.<sup>38</sup> In this way, the memory of the UPA is shaped through the references to the well-known site of memory entitled “Cossack Graves.” In this way, both sites, divided by four centuries of history, are linked together into one node of memory whereby memories of the Cossacks and the insurgency mutually reinforce each other while sharing one mission – telling the eternal story of “liberation” that glorifies all “freedom-fighters.” Being well-established for decades, the memory of Cos-

35 V. A. Kinakh, in: Minutes of the meeting of off-term thirty third session of the Rivne Oblast council, in: Author’s archive, 17 March 2010.

36 Christian motives colored the ideology of the OUN from the moment of its foundation. The trinity of Idea-Will-Action was perceived as the main components for nationalist conduct. See: Rudling, Per Anders: *The OUN, the UPA and the Holocaust: A Study in the Manufacturing of Historical Myths* (The Carl Beck papers in Russian & East European studies, no. 2107). Pittsburg 2011.

37 Ibid.

38 The memorial complex “Cossack graves commemorating the Battle of Berestechko” was built there during the Soviet era in memory of the battle between Cossacks led by Bohdan Khmelnytsky allied with Crimean Tatars, and Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth under John II Casimir from 28 to 30 June 1651. Because of its pivotal place in the national liberation struggle, this site is often referred to as the “holy place” or “holy land.” Cossack Graves (*Kozatski Mogyly*) became a must see destination for pupils and students. The official naming of the memorial complex is “National historical memorial reservation “Berestechko Battlefield””.

sackdom serves as a reliable and functional vehicle for the incorporation of insurgency memory into the memory culture.<sup>39</sup> Referring to the memory of the UPA through the memory of Cossackdom makes the memory of the UPA recognizable exactly as the memory of liberation. Furthermore, the sacralization of UPA memory makes the process of its incorporation into memory culture easier while giving the memory recognizable and trustworthy forms.



Illustration 6. Monument to the fallen Cossacks and peasants, Pliasheva Village. Sculptor A. Kushch, built in 1991. Photo: Facebook Page of the National memorial complex of Berestechko battle.<sup>40</sup>

In response to the abovementioned statement, the people’s deputy of the Party of the Regions opposed the glorification of the Hurby battle as the UPA was fighting there “not only with internal forces of the NKVD but also with the regular Red Army.”<sup>41</sup> This statement was countered by the people’s deputy of the anti-Yanukovich Ukrainian People’s Party arguing:

“There is no difference which of the *repressive forces came from Russia*. [...] whether it was internal forces of Russia or armed formations of Russia. There is no difference. These were the *occupants who came to eradicate us*... For a development of this theme [building the Hurby memorial complex] I would ask the President of our state to come

39 On the role of the myth of Cossackdom in the Ukrainian memory culture see: Plokyh, Serhii: *The Cossack Myth: History and Nationhood in the Age of Empires*. Cambridge 2012; Lada, Krzysztof: *The Ukrainian Topos of Oppression and the Volhynian Slaughter of Poles, 1841–1943/44*. Unpublished PhD Thesis, Flinders University. Adelaide 2012.

40 Natsionalnyi istoryko-memorialnyi zapovidnyk “Pole Berestetskoï bytvv” [National memorial complex of Berestechko battle], Facebook page, available at: <https://www.facebook.com/zapovidnyk.berestechko/photos> [18. 12. 2019].

41 A. O. Yukhymenko: Minutes of the meeting of off-term thirty third session of the Rivne Oblast council, in: Author’s archive, 17 March 2010.



and see, to come and feel, that this is the nation, that this is the Ukrainian nation, that it has its *own wonderful history, history of the fight for this state*, where he is the President<sup>42</sup> (emphasis added).

The President who is addressed was Viktor Yanukovich who, as can be seen, is presented as unfamiliar with the nation he is the president of. Yanukovich's pro-Russian orientation is perceived as a threat to Ukrainian national interest and even to Ukrainian existence. Thus, we can see that the memory of the OUN and UPA was addressed when searching for ontological security at the moment when threats to the national existence were feared the most. Furthermore, the speaker based his argumentation on the idea of reclaimed history, on the belief that the nation's "own wonderful history, history of fight for this state"<sup>43</sup> is the true history that can protect the nation from threats.

## 7. Between authenticity and simulation

After 2010, with the end of Yushchenko's presidency, the Hurby project lost its national significance, but as already mentioned it did not lose its regional importance. Once again Hurby became the site of subversive memory, whereas the aim of keeping and strengthening the glorious version of the UPA past was linked to the demonstration of strong opposition to the ruling authorities in Kyiv. The Chair of the Zdolbuniv district (*rayon*) council (to which jurisdiction the complex formally belongs) Vasyl Tymoshchuk commented on this situation: "none of the parties are interested in Hurby now, everything depends on initiatives from individuals."<sup>44</sup> But in 2011, Viktor Matchuk, the deputy of Our Ukraine party, who was the head of Rivne Oblast Administration in 2006–2010, sponsored the building of a new object in the memorial complex – the bunker. Matchuk's financing for the construction of the bunker was presented exactly as such, an "individual initiative."<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless, such an initiative had a strong political underpinning, considering the fact that Mr. Matchuk was further planning to pursue a political career and was the deputy in the Ukrainian Parliament at that time.

When the bunker (*kryivka*) was solemnly opened on 14 October 2011 on the Day of the UPA (and the Day of Pokrova), the guests were not so numerous – a couple of members from political parties, a priest (who was the head of the

42 Oleksiyuk, S. S.: Minutes of the meeting of off-term thirty third session of the Rivne Oblast council, in: Author's archive, 17 March 2010.

43 Ibid.

44 Tymoshchuk, Vasyl: interview, in: Author's archive, Hurby, 14 October 2011.

45 Kondrachuk, Serhii: interview, in: Author's archive; Tymoshchuk, interview.

monastery), representatives of *rayon* administration who coordinated the construction of the bunker, several members of the regional UPA veterans organization, and a group of pupils with a teacher.

The bunker itself is a well-constructed underground house with a corridor and two rooms. One room is furnished as a sleeping room with several two-level bunks, another – as a command center with a small writing-desk, a larger dinner table, several shelves, and a bank. On the shelves and the writing desk there were sheets of paper with the "Decalogue of the Ukrainian Nationalists" on them.

Kondrachuk, the coordinator of the construction, mentioned that the construction was made strictly in accordance with the description outlined in the volume of "*Litopys UPA*" (Chronicle of UPA). He was fully aware that the bunker presented at Hurby was a "luxury category of a bunker" or a "commander's bunker" but tried to make it attractive to visitors.



Illustration 7. UPA veterans of the Rivne UPA Veteran Union in the bunker, photo by Yulia Yurchuk, Hurby, 14 October 2011.

UPA veterans who were present at the opening said that they were happy to see the bunker as it is, nice and tidy.<sup>46</sup> When asked whether it resembles the object they saw in the past, they all agreed with the coordinator that it was a luxurious bunker of a kind they had not seen in reality.<sup>47</sup> Thus, what is presented to visitors is not quite the reality of the past, but rather a simulation that makes history more pleasant, tidy, and simple. The past "dug up as it was" appears unsuitable for remembrance. It is, though, not the authenticity of the place that matters but rather the authenticity of the atmosphere.

46 Conversation with UPA veterans, in: Author's archive. Hurby, 14 October 2011. As I stated in the introduction, I did not have the chance to conduct a long interview with the veterans, but I did manage to speak with them for about a half an hour.

47 Ibid.



Indeed, the veterans confirmed that although the bunkers were not like this, this bunker is still “truthful.”<sup>48</sup> In this sense, it is important to underline that in such a place as the bunker, the processes of theatricalization and spectacularization create a sense of communality and serve as a powerful mnemonic vehicle<sup>49</sup> because “they leave no room for critical negotiations, they offer a parade of icons that progressively accumulate as a narrative embodiment of the... consensual ideology shared by the audience.”<sup>50</sup> With this in mind, the bunker is a site of memory driven by theatricalization and spectacularization; the purpose is not to have it recognized by the UPA veterans, or by a community of first-hand witnesses, – it is aimed at the creation of a memory community, in other words, a community of cultural memory.

Thus, we go back to the question we asked before: what truth does this sacred site of memory convey? As one can see, there is little similarity between the bunkers presented and the bunkers which the witnesses saw and were familiar with. Nevertheless, for the visitors and for the witnesses as well, this site is considered as truthful; truthful in its atmosphere, the concentration of emotions, feelings, ideals, and hopes.

In October 2012, one more monument was inaugurated in Hurby. It was the monument to the “children fallen in the battle with NKVD.” It was initiated by Borys Voznytskyi from Lviv, who during the war was a teenager and in 1944 joined the unit of the UPA-South, which was stationed not far from Hurby. Voznytskyi himself was not taking part in the battle but some young men whom he knew fell dead in the battlefield and he wanted to commemorate them in the monument.<sup>51</sup>

In 2014, during the annual Easter celebration near the Pantheon, a new memorial project was discussed. This time it was proposed to combine in Hurby the commemoration of the OUN and UPA with the honoring in the Pantheon of those who lost their lives during the Euromaidan protests in January and February 2014, commonly referred to as the “Heavenly Hundred.”<sup>52</sup> This proposal

48 Ibid.

49 Hölscher, Meike: ‘Performances, Souvenirs and Music, Mediation’, in: Erll, Astrid / Rigney, Ann (eds.): *Remediation, and the Dynamics of Cultural Memory*. Berlin i.a. 2009, p. 177–178.

50 Filewod, Alan: *Performing Canada: The Nation Enacted in the Imagined Theater*. Kamloops 2002, p. 13.

51 Golubev, Vitalii: ‘U Hurbakh na Rivnenshchyni vidkryly pamiatnyk ditiam, jaki zahynuly vid ruk NKVDystiv’ [‘A monument to children who perished at the hands of the NKVD was opened in Hurbakh in Rivne region’], in: *OGO*. 29 October 2012, available at: <http://ogo.ua/articles/view/2012-10-29/36084.html> [18. 12. 2019].

52 ‘U Zdolbunovi hochut objednaty pamjatnyky heroiam Hurb i Nebesnoi Sotni’ [‘In Zdolbuniv want to unite monuments the heroes of Kruty and Heavenly Hundred’], in: *OGO*. 27 March 2014, available at: <http://ogo.ua/articles/view/2014-03-27/49448.html> [18. 12. 2019].

was not supported by the public in the online poll organized by the local council<sup>53</sup> and the monument continues to serve primarily for the memory of the UPA. But, in 2015, during the Easter liturgy, the soldiers who fell dead in Donbas were mentioned by the priest together with the UPA soldiers. Moreover, during the ceremony several soldiers who fought in Donbas got special Orders from Vitaliy Chuhunnikov, the head of the Rivne Oblast Administration.<sup>54</sup>



Illustration 8. Monument to the “children fallen in the battle with the NKVD”, Hurby, 2012. Photo by OGO newspaper.<sup>55</sup>

In such a way, we see that the Hurby memorial complex is not only growing but also there are attempts to entwine the memory of the present-day heroes into the memory texture of the past. Such attempts are a clear move towards the solidification of the heroic status of the OUN and UPA as the memory of those who fight for Ukraine in the present inflict the place with the aura of glory and position the OUN and UPA into the linear history of the struggle for national freedom and dignity.

## 8. Conclusions

The example of the Hurby memorial complex shows how localized memories can be portrayed as national if there is an interest and/or a need from the side of memory actors to do so. This case also shows how a need to commemorate the fallen soldiers finds its realization through individual and grassroots collective initiatives. These initiatives, however, can hardly be passed without the attention of political actors. In result, the memory of Hurby became “privatized” by the

53 See results of the poll in *ibid*.

54 ‘Na Rivnenshchyni vshanuvaly heroiv’ [‘In Rivne region, honored the heroes’], in: *Rivne vechirne*. 14 April 2015, available at: [http://rivnepost.rv.ua/lenta\\_msgshow.php?id=59262](http://rivnepost.rv.ua/lenta_msgshow.php?id=59262) [18. 12. 2019].

55 *Ibid*.



Orthodox Church of Kyiv Patriarchate as well as national-democratic and nationalist parties.

The memorial project was growing, the new objects were built, the search for the remains of the dead continued. Every year people go there to commemorate the battle, while others come to act out battle re-enactments. Some perhaps come to both commemorations and re-enactments. As soon as the monastery and the church are finished, people will also most probably come here to attend regular church services. Of course, schoolchildren continue to come there to go in order to “meet” history and learn from it. In such a way, “forced memorization”<sup>56</sup> continues to be imposed through state institutions like schools. In such a way, the battlefield where the dead were remembered first spontaneously and then in opposition to the ruling authority became the battlefield for political influence, one in which the main gain was the creation of the cult of the fallen UPA soldier.

The case of Hurby memory complex vividly shows that one site of memory can have several “owners,” each having its own audiences, or “consumers of memory.” It is visited by believers attending church services which are held here each Easter and each 14 October, despite the fact that the monastery is not yet finished. It is attended by schoolchildren for history lessons, and it is used by nationalist youth for re-enactments of battles. It is precisely in this latter function that the site can be seen as having a national significance as it attracts youth from all over Ukraine. This certainly contributes to establishing the memory of the UPA as part of the cultural memory of the region. Although the youth that takes part in the reenactments is from all over Ukraine, it is hard to say whether this memory of the OUN and UPA becomes relevant to all the nation. The case of Hurby shows that the main actors who systematically take part in establishing the heroic memory of the OUN and UPA are mainly from the region (Rivne, Ternopil, Lviv oblasts) while the politicians of the national level use this memory depending on the needs of present moment and their participation at commemorations is rather situational and sporadic. On the other hand, the tendencies during a couple of recent years to commemorate the UPA together with the soldiers who fight in Donbas and with those who were killed during the Euromaidan protests demonstrate that the memory of OUN and UPA has been constantly solidifying its position in the pantheon of heroes on the national level.

56 Ricoeur, Paul: *Memory, History, Forgetting*. Chicago 2005, p. 85.

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## On the Periphery of History: Remembering the Waffen SS ‘Galicia’ Division in Ukraine

### 1. Introduction

The Battle of Brody destroyed the Waffen SS ‘Galicia’ Division almost entirely. Of the approximately 11,000 soldiers who were deployed at Brody, only about 3,000 returned to re-join the Division.<sup>1</sup> In the area where the battle took place, local activists continue to search for the remains of the soldiers who died there in order to rebury them in the military cemetery. ‘One of the most interesting findings of the expedition [...] was the discovery of the remains of the “Galicia” Division soldiers who had many personal items on them (which will be passed on to the museum of the National Liberation Struggle). In particular, a silver ring which was found on one soldier, explains Sviatoslav Sheremeta, one of the participants of the reburial expedition and a member of Lviv regional council.<sup>2</sup> The soldier whose ring was found by the expedition must have been one of many battle casualties. Sheremeta offers his interpretation on the discovered ring:

“On that ring all German symbols were erased and a trident was engraved in their place by the soldier in question. This is a unique find. [...] I think this ring best symbolizes who the soldiers of the ‘Galicia’ Division really were: that they were our lads, Ukrainians, who picked up arms to fight for the Ukrainian state.”<sup>3</sup>

This silver ring is symbolic of the way the ‘Galicia’ Division is presented in contemporary Ukraine: its connection with the German Armed Forces is acknowledged, but the German inscription is erased and all that is visible is its Ukrainian engraving. In order to understand how this palimpsest came to exist,

1 The Battle of Brody took place on 13–22 July, 1944. See Melnyk, Michael James: *To Battle. The Formation and History of the 14th Galician Waffen-SS Division*. Solihull 2002, p. 149–194.

2 Sheremeta, Sviatoslav in: Sych, Mariana: ‘Perepokhovannia ostankiv voiakiv dyvizii ‘Halychyna’ [‘Reburial of the remains of Galicia Division soldiers’], in: *Zolochiv.net*. 19 September 2012, available at: <http://zolochiv.net/perepohovannya-ostankiv-13-voyakiv-dyviziji-halychyna/> [13.12.2019].

3 *Ibid.*