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The geopolitics of memory

The controversy around the statue of the Soviet soldier in Tallinn in April 2007 provided a striking demonstration that Russia remains both an external and an internal factor in the national narratives of the post-Soviet space. Here, history is used to lay claim to European identity and as a means of emancipation from Moscow. In the former socialist satellite states, meanwhile, nationalists are using their opponents' communist pasts for political capital. Tatiana Zhurzhenko suggests that before we talk about European solidarity, we need to trace the emergent fault lines running through eastern European memory.

Since 1989, as after 1945, Europe has again been confronted with its controversial past. Meanwhile, in the post-communist countries, history has been re-narrated and national memory institutionalized. But national politics of memory can only be understood in the context of recent geopolitical changes: the end of the Cold War and EU enlargement. While discussions about the possibility of a common European memory have started,¹ they tend to focus on a desired European solidarity rather than on the new cleavages and power struggles on the European continent. However, no different from energy politics, memory politics is less about the communist past than about the future political and economic hegemony on the European continent — in other words, it is always the *geopolitics of memory*.

Communist memory "hotting up" again

In 2002, Charles Maier published an article widely referred to in subsequent debates about historical memory in Europe.² He draws a distinction between the "hot" memory of fascist crimes, which still has not faded, and the relatively short-lived, "cold" communist memory, which unavoidably becomes dispassionate with the passing of time. Indeed, while the Holocaust remains the symbol of absolute evil in human history, the horrors of the GULAG and of Stalinist terror, despite being publicly condemned Europe-wide after the collapse of the Soviet empire, have not received comparable institutional recognition (e.g. museums, educational programmes, victim compensation).

Convincing as Maier's argument is, evidence has emerged in recent years that necessitates a revision of his thesis, at least the second part of it. After fifteen years of successful transition, culminating in the accession to the EU, it seemed that the accounts of the eastern European countries with the past had finally been closed. Yet what we observe today is that communist memory is "hotting up" again in eastern Europe. Bear in mind the "decommunization" campaign of the Kaczynskis in Poland, where the Institute of National Memory has been turned into an instrument of domestic politics; recall the controversies and political fights about communist memory in Hungary (where in September

2006 rightwing demonstrators staged a "re-run" of the anti-Soviet 1956 revolution); or look at the current conflict around the statue of the Soviet soldier in Tallinn, which caught the attention of both the European and the Russian public and has since even become an issue in EU-Russian relations.

The discussion took a Europe-wide dimension after Sandra Kalniete, prominent Latvian politician, appealed in her opening speech at the Leipzig Book Fair in 2004 to the equality of commemorative cultures in Europe, claiming that the "two totalitarian regimes — Nazism and Communism — were equally criminal".³ The debate was fuelled once again in 2005 with the celebrations of the sixtieth anniversary of the victory over fascism, a jubilee that revealed the incompatible attitudes of eastern and western Europeans to their recent past. It has become more than evident that the comfortable postwar consensus among western European societies has been thrown into question since enlargement: for some of the new EU members, "Yalta" is not a symbol of liberation and the Allies' victory over Nazism, but of the partition of Europe, in which half the continent was abandoned to four decades of repression.

The debates in the enlarged EU resonate with similar tendencies in the post-Soviet periphery of Europe. The so-called "Coloured Revolutions" (2003 in Georgia, 2004 in Ukraine) mark the most significant shift to anti-communist national narratives since independence. In May 2006, inspired by the example of Tallinn and Riga, Georgian president Mikheil Saakashvili opened a "Museum of Soviet Occupation" in Tbilisi. In November 2006, the Ukrainian parliament adopted a law recognizing the Holodomor (the famine of 1932–33, induced by the Bolshevik government) as a genocide of the Ukrainian people. The law met resistance from the Party of Regions and the Ukrainian Communists, while Russian officials called it an act of Ukrainian nationalism. The previous year, President Viktor Yushchenko had made an attempt to change the meaning of Victory Day, cancelling the traditional military parade on 9 May in Kyiv and calling for a reconciliation between Soviet war veterans and veterans of the UPA (Ukrainian Insurgent Army). In May 2006, the Institute for National Memory was established in Ukraine, inspired by the Polish model.⁴

The most evident explanation for these new tendencies in the landscape of European memory is the generation change. Young politicians and intellectuals, who due to their age carry no burden of the past and have no blanks in their biographies, turn the "grace of late birth" (Helmut Kohl) against the older generation occupying the political Olympus. But this is not the only reason.

Paradoxically, an important factor for the current upsurge in memory in the "old" eastern Europe is the successful accession to the European Union. Before 2004, EU accession was a national objective requiring a minimum of solidarity, and as such, disciplined the national elites. Now that the final goal of post-communist transition — the "return to Europe" — has been achieved, a political vacuum remains in which old tensions re-emerge.

In many of these eastern European countries, the reformed communist parties returned to power soon after 1989 and had no other choice but to carry out economic reforms. Despite growing inequality and frustration, they succeeded in consolidating their nations during the difficult period of transition. In Poland, according to Polish political scientist Aleksander Smolar, "the Left's 'betrayal' of socialism in favour of democracy enabled it to block the alliance of anti-reformers and contributed to the social integration of the nostalgic,

backward-looking section of their clientele."⁵ The success of the Left was partly down to bureaucratic experience and old nomenklatura networks, opening it up to accusations of corruption from their political competitors. The rhetoric of the conservatives and nationalists links the corruption of the post-communist Left to its past, and more precisely, to its ideological and structural ties with the former communist regime. The incomplete process of decommunization, the need to "reckon with the past", is thus politically instrumentalized. This might explain why in these countries the discourse on "memory of communism" is today dominated by the political forces of the Right. While during Perestroika the quest for historical justice united dissidents and democratic fractions in the ruling communist parties, the second wave of historical reckoning splits eastern European societies.

In Ukraine and Georgia, the two post-Soviet countries in the "new" eastern Europe that experienced Coloured Revolutions, there are different reasons for the growing concern with historical memory. The new reformist leaderships are trying to complete the half-hearted transition from communism and to reinvent their nations as European ones. They distance themselves symbolically from the former empire by externalizing the communist past and by nationalizing historical memory. The "great leap forward", which is supposed to move these countries from the ambiguous Eurasian geopolitical space to the European or Euro-Atlantic one, needs to be much more acrobatic than what the Baltic countries achieved in the last two decades. The Coloured Revolutions can be seen as a response of the pro-European, democratic forces in Georgia and Ukraine to the EU enlargement process. This is illustrated by a new regional association, the Community of Democratic Choice, initiated by Yushchenko and Saakashvili with the purpose of re-mapping the Baltic-Black Sea region as a part of Europe.⁶ Here, the politics of memory is used to (re-)position these countries in the European space.⁷

The geopolitical context of EU enlargement is also highly important with regard to the Polish-Ukrainian reconciliation process that started in the 1990s. Recent achievements in this process (the joint commemoration of the Volyn tragedy of 1943-44, the opening of the Polish military memorial in Lviv in 2005, Yushchenko's visit to Warsaw in April 2007 to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the expulsion of Ukrainians in south-eastern Poland, etc.) are often cited as positive examples of coming to terms with a painful past. The Orange Revolution helped to remove the last political obstacles in this process. By supporting Ukrainian state independence and democracy and, despite the traumas of the past, advocating an EU perspective for Ukraine, Poland is gaining a loyal neighbour and creating a buffer with which to protect its eastern border from unpredictable Russia; it is also increasing its influence in eastern Europe and thus its weight in the EU. For Ukraine's part, the partnership with Poland counterbalances the still strong Russian influence and provides the country with an ally and advocate in the EU.

Both in the "old" and in the "new" eastern Europe, the "hotting up" of communist memory is a post-enlargement phenomenon. EU enlargement has become a catalyst for debates about the communist past and for memory politics in both the new EU member states and their neighbours.

"Yalta" forever: The fall and rise of Russia

But there is another important reason for the current boom of communist memory in eastern Europe, namely the changing role of Russia on the European continent.

After the second half of the 1980s, Russia experienced the same upsurge in memory as in most eastern European countries. Moreover, impulses for this revival were coming from the imperial centre: secret archives were opened, Solzhenitsyn's formerly banned writings were published in paperback, and Andrei Sakharov talked to the Congress of the People's Deputies in Moscow. The brutalities of collectivization, the horrors of Stalinist terror and the GULAG system, the forced migration of whole peoples — all these taboos became the subject of public debate. But the collapse of the Soviet empire and the subsequent claims of the former satellites and Soviet republics for "victim status" left Russia practically alone with the historical responsibility for the crimes of world communism — a burden too heavy for the post-imperial Russian elites. Although the anticommunist interpretation of the Soviet past became dominant in Russian official discourse during Yeltsin's presidency,⁸ his ambivalent policies compromised the idea of democracy in the eyes of Russians. Yeltsin's anticommunism was later associated with the the defeat of Russia/the Soviet Union in the Cold War and the ideological subjugation of a politically and economically weak Russia to the West.

In order to stem this development and to consolidate a demoralized and confused society, torn between nationalist extremism and pro-Western defeatism, Vladimir Putin instrumentalized historical memory. The rehabilitation and normalization of the Soviet past as a "part of our history" fits the revived ideology of statism as the new/old source of Russian identity. In recent years, this attitude to the Soviet past has been built into the newly designed ideological paradigm of "sovereign democracy", which denies the universality of the Western normative model and legitimizes Russia's "own way". The Soviet historical narrative was carefully rewritten in order to underline continuity and to "retouch the cracks and moments of crisis" (e.g. removing November 7, October Revolution Day, from the official calendar and celebrating the centenary of the first Russian Duma [1906]).⁹

The most striking example of Putin's "history-making" is the refurbished Soviet narrative of the "Great Patriotic War". It is not the bleak "revolution" of August 1991, but the victory in World War II, that has become the founding myth of the new Russia. As Russian sociologist Boris Dubin has pointed out that, after the October Revolution, socialism, and the USSR lost their symbolic value, the role of the Soviet Union in defeating fascism is probably its only uncontroversial contribution to world history.¹⁰ Dubin explains that the continuity of the narrative of the Great Patriotic War in Russian mass consciousness has its roots in the Brezhnev era. Today, it is not only the relative security and wellbeing of these years, but also the collective identity, that have become a subject of nostalgia. The sense of a common destiny, of belonging to a "we", which is so much missed today, drew on the construct of the Great Patriotic War formed in the 1970s. It seems that with the passing of time, this construct, rather than becoming obsolete, has gained in importance.

But this myth not only concerns Russian society. It has a geopolitical dimension. The "great victory over fascism" represented for the Soviet Union/Russia the entrance ticket to the club of world powers, it legitimized its new status on the European continent and its new sphere of influence. Russia, as liberator of eastern Europe from the "fascist barbarians", thus became not only a powerful, but also a "European" nation. Since the victory over fascism, both Russia and the EU have derived their legitimacy from this central event of the twentieth century. Today, what is at stake for Moscow in the Russian-Polish, Russian-Estonian, and Russian-Latvian conflicts over recent history is Russia's status as a "European nation" and its symbolic capital as the

"liberator of Europe". I don't want to be misunderstood: I refer to "European" here in the old, pre-EU geopolitical sense. Still convinced that politics is made in Paris, Berlin, and London, Moscow ignores its former satellites and prefers to talk to the "old" European nations over the heads of the "new" ones. By insisting on the "irreversibility of the outcome of the Second World War", Moscow is sending out a reminder that its entry ticket to the club of Europe was paid in Yalta in 1945. By condemning "neo-fascism" and the "glorification of Nazi collaborators" in the Baltic states, Moscow positions itself as the true protector of European values, truer even than Europe itself.

As a symbol of the postwar European order, "Yalta" therefore remains the point of reference for contemporary discussions on historical memory. For eastern Europeans, Yalta is a symbol of new oppression, of betrayal by the West, and of national humiliation. For the Russian leadership, it is the greatest moment of geopolitical triumph. Russia's leading role in the anti-Hitler coalition, its contribution to the "victory of civilization over barbarism, of life over death",¹¹ is symbolized by Yalta. Although political boundaries and spheres of influence in Europe have changed, Russia wants to preserve its status as a European power. Today more than ever, Russia needs the symbolic capital of the "Great Victory" and the "liberation of Europe" to legitimize its ambitions for a new, stronger position on the European continent.

However, what Russia evidently ignores, or fails to see, is that it is speaking to Europe in an obsolete language. In Russian official discourse, pride over the Great Victory drowns out mourning for the victims and critical reflection of its own deeds. In other words, Russia has not gone through the transition "from triumph to trauma", as German sociologist Bernhard Giesen has put it.¹² To be fair, other eastern European nations also have difficulties coming to terms with the past. But they have a "historical advantage", namely of being Moscow's victims, and therefore enjoy moral credit.

Fifteen years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia has re-emerged as an independent centre of power in the east of the European continent. It follows its own rules of behaviour and provokes open confrontation with its neighbours. As the recent gas conflicts with Ukraine and Belarus have shown, Russia does not hesitate to use its position as an energy superpower for geopolitical leverage. The rise of Russia's power in Europe is accompanied by efforts to rehabilitate the Soviet past as an integral part of Russia's imperial glory. This development feeds the traditional Russophobia of the former Soviet satellites and now new EU members, for whom Russia is the antipode of Europe by definition. The growing concern with the communist past in post-enlargement Europe can thus also be seen as a symptom of worries about Russia's new economic and political ambitions and influence.

Re-building the nation -- externalizing communism

In his book on European history between 1945 and 1989,¹³ US historian Tony Judt shows that postwar western European nations (with the exception of Germany) succeeded in democratic consolidation and quick economic recovery not least due to externalizing fascism as an alien phenomenon. Nazi Germany was seen as being solely responsible for the devastating war, its crimes, and its victims, including the Holocaust. The other nations preferred to forget their own "local" fascists and Nazi sympathizers, their voluntary or forced involvement in Nazi crimes. Antifascist resistance and partisan actions acquired a central place in the new national narratives. After 1945, even countries formerly allied with Hitler, countries that had connected their

territorial aspirations with his aggressive plans, preferred to see themselves as victims. Once the most prominent collaborators had been punished, postwar European nations felt cleansed of the fascist past. Fascism could be presented as an alien episode in the national history, as having been caused by external force — aggression, *Anschluss*, occupation.

Looking at the way today's eastern European nations have had to deal with their communist past since 1989, one discovers some parallels with the postwar period. The new democracies in eastern and central Europe have typically been built on externalizing the communist past, presenting it as an alien phenomenon imposed by a foreign force (the Soviets) against the nation's will. One of the most striking versions of this narrative, Milan Kundera's metaphor of communist Europe as the "kidnapped West",¹⁴ successfully elicited western Europeans' solidarity with their fellow-Europeans, who were seen as having fallen victim to Moscow and been dragged into the East.

What makes this narrative even more powerful is the underlying dichotomy of "Europe" and "Asia", civilization and barbarism. Communism is presented as an Asian, barbaric force threatening European civilization. This kind of orientalizing makes it even easier to externalize communism.

The "Velvet Revolutions" have provided the founding myths of the new democracies — as nations that have finally taken their history into their own hands. These myths can inspire and consolidate a nation, but by doing so they almost inevitably produce exclusions. "Occupiers", "collaborators", "Stalinists", "The Kremlin's Fifth Column", they are all banished from the national community of victims. Only in some cases do the excluded bear an ethnic marker, such as the Russian speakers in the former Soviet republics. At the same time, outlaws of the *ancien regime* are rehabilitated. In this process, new social and political hierarchies, new systems of cultural hegemony, emerge that marginalize the former elites. This redistribution of symbolic capital (an ironic parallel to post-communist privatization) affects whole generations, ethnic and linguistic groups, religious communities, and professional groups (e.g. public servants, university professors, etc.).

The externalization of communism and the respective status of the nation-victim offers a moral alibi — another parallel with the externalization of fascism in postwar Europe (consider, for example, Austria¹⁵). According to this logic, a nation that was deprived of its freedom cannot be held responsible for its wrongdoings. In his article "The Competition of Victims", analyzing memory politics in Ukraine, Wilfried Jilge points to the tendency of eastern European intellectuals to construct "national Holocausts" and thus award their nations victim status. "From this position of moral superiority, the crimes of one's own nation are justified as defensive actions [...] In this context, national stereotypes serve to distance 'one's own' national history from 'false' Soviet history and thus to 'cleanse' 'one's own' nation of everything that is Soviet."¹⁶

Coloured Revolutions: Politics of memory reloaded

During the 1990s, the political regimes in most former Soviet republics created new national historical narratives, combining selective appropriation of Soviet heritage with partial victimization of their nations as former "colonies" of Moscow. This compromise (in the case of Ukraine, analyzed extensively by political scientist *Mykola Riabchuk*¹⁷), can be explained partly by the nomenklatura roots of the post-Soviet leaders and partly by their concern with political stability in a divided society. "National democrats" and nationalists, in

opposition to the ruling regimes, criticized this compromise as a sign of weakness and surrender to Moscow. But the Coloured Revolutions in Georgia and in Ukraine have changed the approach to the communist past in these two countries at least. As already mentioned, Tbilisi now has a "Museum of Soviet Occupation". The occupation paradigm, which follows the Estonian and Latvian example, expresses the official attitude of the new Georgian leadership to the Soviet past. It underlines the foreign roots of Stalinism and the Soviet regime and thus positions Georgia in the European (or rather Euro–Atlantic) geopolitical context. Moreover, one can imagine that for the Georgian ear, "Soviet occupation" resonates with the current problem of separatist territories, openly supported by Moscow politically and militarily. And so the past is connected to the present...

After visiting Tbilisi in March 2007, Ukrainian president Viktor Yushchenko called for the creation of an exhibition in Ukraine after the model of the Museum of Soviet Occupation in Georgia. Moreover, serious steps have been taken by the new Kyiv leadership, such as the law recognizing the Holodomor as genocide against the Ukrainian people and the foundation of the Institute of National Memory. Yet despite these developments, Ukraine so far has no "national" museum dedicated to the crimes of the communist regime and commemorating its victims. The crucial question is whether the paradigm of "Soviet occupation" and its implication of a radical externalization of communism would be accepted by the majority of Ukrainians. It is not only the current constitutional crisis and the extreme political polarization in Ukraine that makes a constructive discussion of such an approach difficult.

The regional narratives of Ukrainian history are not only different, but sometimes even contradictory. This above all affects the experience of WWII. Western Ukraine was indeed occupied by the Red Army in 1939, and there the brutalities of the Soviet regime during and after WWII have not been forgotten. For the East of the country, on the other hand, the term "occupation" is associated exclusively with the Nazi regime and the term "liberation" with the Soviet Army. Western Ukraine sees itself as a victim in the fight between two superpowers — Nazi Germany and the Soviet empire — and therefore as having a legitimate right to defend itself; situational collaboration with the Nazis is considered to have been the price for national independence. Most eastern Ukrainians see their past differently: they fought alongside the Russians against the same enemy in defence of what was at that time their country, and hence contributed to the victory over fascism. They could hardly accept a narrative presenting them as passive victims of Russian power and as a "people deprived of its national identity". Rather, they see themselves as active subjects, co-actors in the drama of Soviet history (which does not mean that they are still Stalinists, blindly admiring the Soviet regime).¹⁸

Due to these regional differences in historical memory, the externalization of communism according to the "normative" Baltic model¹⁹ is difficult to apply in Ukraine. Neither narrative can just be ignored or suppressed; reconciliation is also very difficult.

It seems that the Ukrainian leadership understands this difficulty, and therefore puts more emphasis on the Holodomor of 1933–34 as a less contested event for both versions of national memory. The series of recent official acts, aimed at commemorating this tragedy, actually make the Holodomor a central event in recent national history, a "Ukrainian Holocaust".²⁰ The symbolic connection to the Holocaust was confirmed in the draft law, submitted by President Yushchenko to the Ukrainian parliament. It introduces criminal liability for

denying both the Holodomor and the Holocaust.²¹

The politics of memory under Yushchenko's presidency has resulted in a meta-narrative that categorizes Ukraine as a nation-victim by integrating all central historical events of the twentieth century, from the civil war and Sovietization to the Chernobyl disaster. It inscribes into the list of Ukrainian tragedies both the Holodomor and the Holocaust, thus avoiding what Jilge calls the "competition of victims"; and it reconciles the "Great Patriotic War" with the nation's newly acquired status as victim. As Sofia Hrachova has noticed, in the new official version, the War is represented as a tragic rather than an heroic event. The sufferings of Ukrainians forced to fight against one another on both sides of the front line thus become more important than the "great victory over fascism".²²

An important consequence of the delegitimization of the Soviet historical narrative and the (re-)construction of national histories after 1991 is the retroactive nationalization of victims. Two different strategies are used according to the two main categories of victims. Those for whom the Soviet regime is held responsible — victims of Stalinist repressions, collectivization, and mass killings — are now the first to be added to the imagined national body of "the dead, the living, and the unborn" (Taras Shevchenko). According to the new national historical narrative, they were killed by the Soviet regime because they were Ukrainians.²³ The recognition of the Holodomor as a genocide of the Ukrainian people²⁴ is such an example. Although a basic consensus exists in Ukrainian society that the Holodomor was an organized famine caused by Stalin's policy collectivization, the "nationalization" of this tragedy remains controversial. The Canadian expert in Ukrainian studies Dominique Arel (who provides strong arguments for the Holodomor as genocide) mentions that this label "retains a certain ethnic connotation and eastern Ukrainians decode the law as yet another attempt to blame 'Russia' for what happened to 'Ukrainians', even if the law explicitly says nothing of the sort."²⁵

Needless to say, this was how Moscow also interpreted the law on Holodomor. Recently, the Russian media reported that the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) will make accessible to the public archival documents proving the scale of famine in 1932–33 in other regions, such as Volga and Kazakhstan. Some Russian historians have called the Ukrainian law on the Holodomor "dancing on the graves of the victims"; they argue that this tragedy "ought to unite, not divide, our peoples".²⁶ Thus Russia is taking part in the competition of victims. What is now at stake for Moscow is not how to suppress the true number of victims or deny the fact of intentional killing but how to prevent its symbolic capitalization by Ukraine.

The second category includes victims of the Nazi occupation and WWII. Soviet civilians, soldiers and officers, partisans and anti-fascist resistance activists all belong to the sacred "twenty million", "the price paid for the great victory". With the construction of the narrative of the Great Patriotic War during the Brezhnev era, the institutionalized memory of these victims laid the foundation for a "new historical community — the Soviet people". Today, these victims are also claimed retroactively by various national "communities of memory" (Charles Maier), but in a selective way. Soviet civilian victims are relatively easy to re-nationalize. But Soviet military victims are difficult to include in the new imagined national communities of "the dead and the living" because they represent the power of the "foreign" communist regime and for this reason are marginalized in the new symbolic hierarchy. Their "community

of memory" has almost disappeared. More than half a century after their death, the winners of WWII have become the losers of the Cold War.

Consequently, almost everywhere in eastern Europe, post-communist elites have difficulties integrating Soviet war memorials into their new national landscapes of memory. On the one hand, the nationalization of history and the successful externalization of communism turns these memorials into disturbing symbols for counter-memories and alternative narratives. They become sites of discontent, protest, and provocation. On the other hand, Soviet war memorials continue to serve as markers of Russian geopolitical influence and ambition. Internal conflicts can easily be fuelled from outside.

Russia thus remains both an external and an internal factor in the national politics of memory in the post-Soviet space, as the recent events around the statue of the Soviet soldier in Tallinn strikingly show. At the end of April 2007, the decision of the Estonian government to dismantle the memorial and rebury the remnants of the 13 Soviet soldiers sparked off protest by the Russian-speaking population and a hostile reaction from Moscow. The Russian parliament threatened Tallinn with trade sanctions and with breaking off diplomatic relations with its former republic. The peaceful protests of the defenders of the statue turned into riots when police evacuated the memorial site. In the days that followed, activists of the pro-Putin youth organizations *Nashi* and *Mestnye* picketed the Estonian embassy in Moscow. The Estonian government tried to repair the damage and hurriedly re-erected the statue at a military cemetery on the outskirts of Tallinn; the conflict is still far from being settled, however.

The political motivations of both Tallinn and Moscow are clear, but what about the so-called Russian speakers living in Estonia? Are they indeed just a fifth column of the Kremlin, instrumentalized for the geopolitical interests of Russia? Instrumentalization certainly takes place, but I believe that the local Russians struggle for symbolic recognition, for their right to be represented in the national landscape of memory. Their problem is that the symbolic resources at their disposal have been completely devalued with the collapse of the Soviet Union and contradict the new narrative of national history.

With the enlargement of the European Union to the East on the one hand, and Russia's growing power and ambitions on the other, tensions are growing and new dividing lines are emerging in eastern Europe. These tensions and conflicts express themselves in the symbolic struggle over the communist past. EU enlargement has created a need for a transnational, common narrative of European history. At the same time, it has fuelled populist nationalism across the Union, while at the periphery, it has raised hopes of one day joining the club. In the new member states, populists use the communist past as a political weapon against their opponents; in the post-Soviet neighbour countries, meanwhile, history is used to lay claim to European identity and as a means of emancipation from Moscow.

¹ See, for example, the Eurozine focal point "European histories. Towards a grand narrative?", www.eurozine.com/comp/focalpoints/eurohistories.html

² Charles S. Maier, "Heißes und kaltes Gedächtnis. Über die politische Halbwertszeit von Nazismus und Kommunismus", in: *Transit*, 22 (Winter 2001–2002), 153–165.

³ See: Claus Leggewie, "Equally Criminal? Totalitarian Experience and European Memory", in: Eurozine, www.eurozine.com/articles/2006-06-01-leggewie-en.html

⁴ For an overview of the politics of memory in Ukraine after the Orange Revolution, see for example: Sofia Hrachova, "Memory, Counter-memory and Politics", in: *Krytyka*, 11/2006

(in Ukrainian).

- 5 Aleksander Smolar, "Poland: The radicals in power", in: Eurozine, www.eurozine.com/articles/2006-09-28-smolar-en.html
- 6 The idea of a "Community of Democratic Choice" (CDC) was first announced in the common declaration of the Georgian and Ukrainian presidents in August 2005 (Borjomi Declaration) as an instrument for democratization and "for removing the remaining divisions in the Baltic-Black Sea region", which as they stressed, is a part of Europe. The CDC was created in Kiev during a two-day forum in December 2005 (founding member states are Georgia, Ukraine, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Romania, Moldova, Slovenia, and the FYR of Macedonia). "Saakashvili had initially proposed holding the regional summit in Yalta to underscore the demise of the Yalta system of division of Europe and the need to consolidate freedom in what used to be Moscow's sphere of influence. The Ukrainian-Georgian declaration, however, does not mention Yalta either for symbolism [...] or as a possible venue for the proposed regional summit. This caution clearly reflects the Ukrainian leadership's concern to improve its relations with Russia." (Vladimir Socor, "Saakashvili-Yushchenko 'Borjomi Declaration' Broadens Euro-Atlantic Integration Vision", in: *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 15 August 2005, jamestown.org/edm/article.php?article_id=2370147)
- 7 By no means do I wish to question the importance of and the need for a serious *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* in the post-communist countries. It is also true that without coherent national historical narratives it would be difficult to build new democratic polities in eastern Europe. But it would be naive to believe that it is only the "enemies of democracy" and former communists who distort and instrumentalize historical memory and that anti-communist narratives are by definition morally superior and true.
- 8 Alexei Miller, "Was tun mit der kommunistischen Vergangenheit?", in: *Transit*, 22 (Winter 2001-2002), 131-144.
- 9 Alexander Semenov, "The Hard Choice of the Historian: Historical Memory, Mythology, and Genealogy", in: *NZ* 3/2006 (in Russian), 194.
- 10 Boris Dubin, "The 'Bloody' War and the 'Great' Victory", in: *Otechestvennye zapiski*, 5/2004. www.strana-oz.ru/?numid=20&article=937; in German: "Goldene Zeiten des Krieges. Erinnerung als Sehnsucht nach der Breznev-Ära", in: *Osteuropa*, 4-6/2005, 219-233.
- 11 Sergey Lavrov, Russian Foreign Minister, in his article, "The Lessons of Great Victory", in: *Diplomat*, 5/2005. (in Russian).
- 12 Cited in Claus Leggewie.
- 13 Tony Judt, *Postwar. A History of Europe Since 1945*, London 2005.
- 14 Milan Kundera, "Un Occident kidnappé ou la tragédie de l'Europe centrale", in: *Le Débat*, 27 (11/1983), 3-22.; English: "A Kidnapped West, or Culture Bows Out", in: *Granta*, 11 (1984), 95-118.
- 15 Cf. for example Cornelius Lehnguth, "Opfer Österreich. Erinnerungspolitik von Waldheim bis Haider", in: *Blätter für deutsche und internationale Politik*, 5/2006, 609-618.
- 16 Wilfried Jilge, "The Competition of Victims", in *Krytyka* (in Ukrainian); English version: "The Politics of History and the Second World War in Post-Communist Ukraine (1986/1991- 2004/2005)", in: Wilfried Jilge, Stefan Troebst, eds. *Divided Historical Cultures? World War II and Historical Memory in Soviet and Post-Soviet Ukraine, Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 2006, 54, H. 1, 51-82.
- 17 Mykola Riabchuk, "Culture of Memory and Politics of Forgetting", in: *Krytyka*, 1-2, 2006.
- 18 Tatiana Zhurzhenko, "The myth of two Ukraines", in: Eurozine, www.eurozine.com/articles/2002-09-17-zhurzhenko-en.html
- 19 Stefan Troebst has suggested a classification of "cultures of memory" in eastern Europe using the successful coping with the communist past as a criterium. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania lead the first group of "champions" — societies which have established a general consensus about the foreign character of the communist regime imposed from outside. The last group in his classification are Russia, Belarus etc., countries with a continuity of authoritarian tradition and without articulated distance from the communist past.
- 20 Wilfried Jilge, op. cit.
- 21 *The Day Weekly Digest*, no. 11, Kyiv, Ukraine, 3 April 2007.
- 22 However, Yushchenko has not abandoned the heroic narrative completely. In 2005 he rewarded a Ukrainian, who supposedly put the red flag on top of the Reichstag on 1 May 1945, with the title "Hero of Ukraine". So Ukraine, despite positioning itself as a victim, does not want to leave all symbolic dividends from the "great victory over fascism" to Russia.
- 23 Other categories of Stalinist victims (national minorities, for example, the Crimean Tatars) are more difficult to nationalize. The victims of the purges in the Party apparatus and in the

NKVD represent an especially problematic case.

²⁴ This formula represents the final compromise; in the draft law submitted by the president to the parliament it was "the Ukrainian nation".

²⁵ Dominique Arel, "Was the Ukrainian Famine Really a Genocide?", www.ukrainianstudies.uottawa.ca/pdf/Was%20the%20Ukrainian.pdf

²⁶ *Izvestia*, 17 April 2007 izvestia.ru/news/news132448/

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