Memory Crash

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In this part of the book, I will provide a historical overview of developments in the field of the politics of history from the end of the 1980s to the present. The sixth chapter deals with the process of separation/emancipation of the national/nationalist memory narrative from the Soviet one and observes the transformation of the latter into the Soviet-nostalgic version of the past. Chapter seven illustrates the process of re-adjustment and re-design of the memory space required by the nationalization of the past. It provides several cases that exemplify the actions, counteractions, and interactions of the major actors in the field. Special attention is devoted to the memorial laws and attempts to criminalize deviations from the official line. The final chapter considers the international aspects of historical politics as exemplified by Ukraine’s relations with its two main historical neighbors: Poland and Russia.
This chapter presents a short historical summary of important events related to the development of historical politics in Ukraine from the end of the 1980s to 2017–20. The main topic is the “nationalization” of the past within the context of Ukraine’s emergence and formation as a sovereign state. We will explore the establishment and the functioning of the national/nationalist memory narrative as it interacts with and struggles against the Soviet (and in some cases the imperial) nostalgic memory narrative.

The Nationalization of the Past

The term “nationalization of the past” might be equal to “redistribution of the past,” with the past represented as a public asset that belongs to the nation. This process has become standard in modern history and is associated with national self-determination, the establishment of certain political regimes, and the dissolution of empires. In a sense, such connotations are valid: the nationalization of the past, on the one hand, is the appropriation of certain fragments of this past by a collective entity, which attains the object of self-determination, in this case, the nation. On the other hand, it is the readjustment of these fragments into a coherent master narrative and ultimately its appropriation by the state that allegedly represents the nation. The nationalization of the past embraces both history (master narrative) and memory. The central task of this nationalization is the transformation of the group in question into the “historical” nation (either real or imagined). It is a process of separation from the previously common narrative, and/or the transformation of the “historical” group from an object into the sovereign agent of history.
The Ukrainian version of this story fits into the standard narrative of self-determination over the past as implemented by cultural and political elites in the age of nationalism. The first attempt at the nationalization of the Ukrainian past took place at the turn of the twentieth century, when the first systematic master narrative, Mykhailo Hrushevsky’s *History of Ukraine-Rus’* emerged, together with similar versions authored by Hrushevsky’s contemporaries and followers including Dmytro Doroshenko, Natalia Polonska-Vasylento, and others. This narrative was preserved in émigré and diaspora historiography after the beginning of Soviet rule in Ukraine.

In the Soviet period, the Ukrainian master narrative was absorbed by the Soviet account of the past and tailored to fit the orthodox-Marxist class approach to history. The latter did not deny the historicity of the Ukrainian nation but emphasized its class character and its temporality. This adjustment resulted in subordination of the “Ukrainian theme” to social-economic determinism and to the idea of evolution to a classless and nationless humanity. In fact, the core of the classical Ukrainian historical narrative with its populist overtones fit perfectly with the Soviet conceptualization of the past in which “the people” was the major actor.

Ukrainians and Ukraine retained their status as agents of history but only within the framework of the Soviet version of Marxism and Soviet teleology, which maintained that the essence of history is in the liberation of mankind from national, class, religious, racial, and other restraints. In more concrete terms, this involved the subordination of the “history of Ukraine” as a separate subject to the grand narrative of the “history of the USSR.” It preserved those elements of national uniqueness permitted by the Soviet master narrative (similarly to the other republics of the USSR), but only with the understanding that the general direction of the historical process should be reoriented toward achieving a classless society and the melting of nations into a new historical entity, “the Soviet people.”

“National history” proper was marginalized to the regional level: the teaching of the “History of the Ukrainian SSR” in schools was a supplementary part of the “History of the USSR.”

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the USSR” course; doctorates on Ukrainian history were permitted under the “History of the USSR” label; and institutions of higher education did not have departments on the history of Ukraine because those courses were located in Soviet history departments.

In the second half of the 1980s, however, this system faced serious challenges. Attempts to reform it (glasnost and perestroika) caused large-scale destabilization. Calls for “true history” became a part of the political agenda of the emerging opposition. In Ukraine as well as in many other Soviet republics, this claim meant emancipating the national historical narrative from the Sovietization of the past and transforming it into a sovereign history. These aspirations naturally concurred with a broader political agenda: calls for greater sovereignty of the republic, and later, for independence.

The second stage of nationalization of the past took place when Ukraine achieved independence. The national/nationalist narrative received full citizenship in independent Ukraine. However, it had to co-exist with the remnants of the Soviet narrative that persisted in public discourse and practices as well as in history and memory. A swift restoration and spread of the national/nationalist narrative in its archaic and antiquarian form took place in the 1990s and early 2000s. However, the ruling class (especially during Kuchma’s presidency) took pains to slow down the process of evicting the Soviet nostalgic narrative, believing that excessive radicalism could give rise to serious conflicts, and used ideological ambivalence to prop up their legitimacy.

In the middle of the first decade of the 2000s, a segment of the ruling political and cultural elites attempted to more intensely promote the national/nationalist narrative of history and memory. While it still showed some deference to supporters of the Soviet nostalgic narrative of history, a new post-independence wave of the nationalization of the past caused an open conflict between the two camps, not least because the battlefield between the nationalists and the communists was stormed by new actors who had previously not been very interested in historical politics. External actors, particularly some foreign powers, intervened: Russia played a decisive role in the radicalization of the politics of history in Ukraine. The instrumentalization of the past reached new levels as a result of the development of information technologies and greater sophistication in the means of mass psychological manipulation.
The years 2010–14 saw attempts to ideologically edit the nationalized past. These efforts sought to eliminate or neutralize its “nationalist extremes” and reanimate elements of the Soviet nostalgic narrative. However, the foundations of the classical national narrative remained untouched. After the “Revolution of Dignity,” the civic revolt in the winter of 2013–14, a radical turn toward the nationalized past occurred. It was followed by the expulsion of the Soviet nostalgic memory narrative and by attempts to eliminate the Russian imperial legacy in the realm of public memory. External factors—the annexation of Crimea, the war in Donbass backed by Russia, and the memory war with Poland—again played a crucial role in the radicalization of historical politics and the fortification of the national/nationalist memory narrative.

“SOVEREIGNIZATION”

The sovereignization of history in the Ukrainian SSR in the late 1980s and early 1990s followed a pattern similar to analogous processes going on in other post-Soviet republics. Initially, historians focused on “blank spots” of history; these were mainly to be found in the Soviet period, with its abundance of forbidden topics and personalities. The revision of the Soviet version of the history of this period became the foundation for its repudiation, and Stalinist crimes, victims of purges, banned names, national tragedies, and wartime losses were prioritized and received the most public attention. The logic of events resembled the Khrushchev thaw of the second half of the 1950s and early 1960s. However, criticism of the Soviet experience was no longer limited to the condemnation of the “wrong” communism, embodied by Stalin and Stalinism, and the assertion of “true” communism as represented by Lenin. Very soon the entire communist period was labeled a total disaster, a period of unprecedented suffering of the Ukrainian nation.

The revision of the Soviet (communist) historical past became a point of departure for the reconsideration of the whole “millennial” history of

Ukraine. The Soviet mono-ideological variant of history did not leave much space for other versions of the past, especially those that cherished the national/nationalist memory narrative as a separate biography of the nation. Therefore, its revision necessitated a search for alternatives, which in the concrete situation of the second half of the 1980s meant the denial of the official Soviet version and the search for the “honest,” “genuine,” “proper,” “true” history. And there was no need to invent anything new. One could merely address the narrative that existed in the works of pre-1917 and émigré historians. Its legitimacy was unquestionable since it was banned during the Soviet years, and some of its founders were eliminated both from history and memory. The restoration of the “true” national historical narrative and its confrontation with “false” Soviet history resulted in open conflict between them.

For one side of the conflict, the ruling Communist Party, control over historical memory and resistance to any systemic changes in its ideological content was the highest priority. For its opponents, burgeoning noncommunist and anticommunist civic organizations, the most important task was to promote an alternate, non-Soviet past and a counter-memory. The confrontation in this sphere developed simultaneously with clashes over the official status of the Ukrainian language (leading to the adoption of the Law on Languages in 1989), the rise of the environmentalist movement provoked by the Chernobyl disaster in April 1986, and the expansion of the labor movement in Donbass caused by the deterioration of the social and economic situation.

The most significant topic on the battlefield of history in the second half of the 1980s was the Great Famine of 1932–33, which was destined to become the central and most contentious historical event of the twentieth century. Previously this event was prohibited in historical writing and was a core dimension of suppressed historical memory in Ukraine, presumably as a result of actions taken by the communist regime.

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4 A list of the main non-state agents of historical politics who opposed the Communist Party in the second half of the 1980s includes the following: The People’s Movement of Ukraine (created in 1989), Ukrainian Helsinki Union (UHS), Republican Party of Ukraine (created on the base of the UHS in 1990), Taras Shevchenko Society for the Ukrainian Language (created in 1988, reorganized into the Prosvita Society in October 1991), Memorial Society, All-Ukrainian Society of Victims of Repression (1989), Kyiv Culturology Club (1987), Society of Friends of Lev (Tovarystvo druziiv Leva, 1987), Green World Society (Zeleny Svit, 1988), Club “Heritage” (Spadshchina) under the state-owned Kyiv House of Scholars (1987), and Hromada student society under the Taras Shevchenko Society at Kyiv State University.
The theme of the Great Famine competed in popularity with the rediscovered story of the Stalinist repressions and the Chernobyl tragedy. They formed a sort of axis used to spin a broad political campaign to discredit Soviet communism and by extension Soviet rule. It created a powerful emotional background that amplified public resentment against the authorities of the USSR, Moscow, and the Communist Party leadership, who were blamed for Chernobyl, the deterioration of the social and economic situation, and for past grievances and tragedies. In the meantime, the ruling party initially continued to follow the canons of the Cold War and counterpropaganda established at the beginning of the 1980s. It also addressed the famine of 1932–33 but directed its efforts against the “insinuations of nationalist propaganda” coming from abroad. The whole enterprise began with a counter-campaign against the crusade launched by the Ukrainian diaspora in North America devoted to the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the famine.

At the end of 1986, several months after the Chernobyl catastrophe, the Central Committee of the CPU created a special commission bringing together representatives of two research institutions, the Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences of the Ukrainian SSR and the Institute of the History of the Party under the Central Committee of the CPU. In the first session of the commission, its members were allowed to watch the movie *Harvest of Despair* and were presented with materials from a US Congressional commission tasked with gathering evidence to support the genocide version of the 1932–33 famine in Ukraine. The party leadership directed the commission of Ukrainian historians to prove that there was no famine at all. The commission members obtained access to previously classified archive materials. These documents were a new discovery both for the historians and for the Ukrainian party leadership, and they proved there was a large-scale famine between 1932–33. At that moment, however, nobody had the heart to make these findings public.

Assistance came from Moscow, by now the epicenter of publicity and the total revision of Soviet history: the second volume of the *History of the Peasantry of the USSR* used the term “famine” in the chapter devoted to the early 1930s. In September 1987, the word “famine” appeared in the public discourse in the official mass media. The famine was interpreted as a result

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of the deviation from “Leninist agrarian policy.” This scheme still followed the “good Lenin/bad Stalin” pattern. By fall 1987, the task of the commission evolved from the denial of the famine to the “correct” explanation of the event. In December 1987, Volodymyr Shcherbytsky, the first secretary of the Central Committee of the CPU, used the term “famine” to refer to the tragedy of the early 1930s in an official speech dedicated to the seventieth anniversary of the “Great October Socialist Revolution,” explaining that the famine was a result of a drought.  

The highest authority had lifted the taboo. From there, events went in two different directions. The official historiography initially tried to explain the famine of 1932–33 as “deviations from the Leninist agrarian policy” or a departure from its principles. In the first months of 1988, official media still preferred to use the term “food shortages” instead of famine. In the meantime, the national democratic intelligentsia, including the elite “Frondist” literati, focused on discussing the famine solely as a Ukrainian national tragedy. Thick magazines published translations of extracts from The Harvest of Sorrow by Robert Conquest, eyewitness testimony, and literary texts dedicated to the tragedy. Some mass media even started special columns such as “By the Paths of Pain and Sorrow” (Ukrayina weekly paper) or published extracts from the White Book (Dzvin, Lviv). In February 1988, speaking at a party gathering of the Kyiv chapter of the Union of Writers of Ukraine, its secretary Oleksa Musiyenko mentioned the mass famine of 1932–33 together with the “criminal extermination of Leninist cadres.” The word “holodomor” was used in his speech, which was published in Literaturnaya Ukraina, the leading newspaper for the intelligentsia that would soon become the mouthpiece of the national democratic opposition. Perhaps this was first public use of the word that soon became one of the most potent symbols of Ukrainian nationalized history. 

In the meantime, the leadership of the ruling party tried to tighten the screws. In March 1988, the Politburo of the Central Committee of the CPU

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adopted a resolution condemning the article by historian Yuri Hamretsky\(^9\) about the Ukrainian National Communist Vasil Shakhrai, who advocated for greater autonomy for communist Ukraine. Hardliners considered this publication an ideological deviation. However, the article was published in *Radyanska Ukraina*, the organ of the Central Committee of the CPU, and the censors did not stop it. This fact indicated the presence of situational allies of the national democrats in the central organs of the party; this group would later to be known as the “Sovereign Communists.”

In April 1988, the Central Committee of the CPU sent a warning signal to its main research center, the Institute of the History of the Party under the Central Committee of the CPU. A special decree criticized the work of this institution and declared that its research activities did not meet the expectations of the party leadership and that they were incapable of meeting the challenges of the time.\(^10\) The key failure of the institution was its lack of a proactive position in the fight against the “nationalists.” In July of the same year, the newspaper *Literaturna Ukraina* published an article by Kyiv philologist Serhiy Bilokin about Mykhailo Hrushevsky;\(^11\) it rehabilitated the “father of Ukrainian history” who had previously been mentioned only rarely and with the obligatory label of “bourgeois nationalist.” Historians from the Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences of the Ukrainian SSR proved their fidelity to the regime, using official media to publish their angry responses to Bilokin’s article.\(^12\) The publication of the article about Hrushevsky in a mass newspaper “for the intelligentsia” clearly demonstrated how far the revision of the Soviet historical narrative, which was silent on Hrushevsky, had gone.

In October 1988, the first secretary of the Central Committee of the CPU Volodymyr Shcherbytsky reproached scholars of the humanities and social sciences, declaring that their efforts to fill in the “blank spots” of history were “not energetic enough.”\(^13\) The criticism was well-deserved: writers,\(^9\) Yuri Hamretsky, “Yak lublyat ridnu matir . . . (Do 100-richchya Vasylya Shakhraya),” *Radyanska Ukraina*, February 27, 1988.
Historical Politics: An Overview

essayists, journalists, and public activists successfully eliminated these historical gaps by replacing them with content that was considered a celebration of nationalism by the authorities. Historians, constrained by the institutional and ideological control of others, lagged behind their scholarly peers, together with their party supervisors. In fact, they were accustomed to the implementation of ideological directives, not to proactive moves.

Meanwhile, the pressure from below became stronger. In December 1988, the KGB of the Ukrainian SSR observed growing demand to recognize the yellow and blue flag and the trident as the national symbols of Ukraine (officially, they were banned in the Ukrainian SSR as nationalist). Many moved beyond demands: the KGB reported displays of yellow and blue flags in the Kyiv, Rivne, Ivano-Frankivsk, Khmelnytskyi, Chernivtsi, and Lviv regions.\(^{14}\) By the fall of 1989, the yellow and blue flag became a habitual sight at public events organized by the national democrats and nationalists.

In December 1988, the Central Committee of the CPU announced plans to prepare an all-Ukrainian program of study and to begin teaching a history of the Ukrainian SSR that would meet the “demands of the time.” However, when work on the new program commenced, it was still based on the formal juxtaposition of “bad Stalin” and “good Lenin” and promoted the idea of “Socialism with a human face.”\(^ {15}\)

In 1989, the famine of 1932–33 and the extermination of the Ukrainian intelligentsia during the Stalinist repressions were openly discussed as important events of the Soviet period. One year later, and the whole communist and Soviet system came under attack, not just for their “shortcomings,” but for their entire ideological basis. Party bureaucracy lagged behind, unable to cope with the “spontaneous” revision of the past, which placed Ukraine’s suffering during the Soviet era front and center.

In January 1989, the leadership of the Central Committee of the CPU submitted a lengthy memorandum on the status of historical research in the republic. The style of the document is compelling: according to Stanislav


\(^{15}\) “Socialism with a human face”—a metaphor used by the communist leader of Czechoslovakia Alexander Dubček in 1968. Since 1986, the phrase was widely circulating in the Soviet Union as a generic description of perestroika goals.
Kulchytsky, “semantic ambivalence” might be its main feature. Indeed, the phrasing of the memorandum could satisfy both the ideologically orthodox members of the Central Committee and their opponents in the national democratic camp. For instance, the authors observed that “many complicated phenomena and facts are represented insufficiently, inconsistency, and sometimes even prejudicially.”16

A resolution of the Central Committee of the CPU published in February 1989 demanded that the preparation of the program mentioned above start immediately. However, the most radical suggestion coming from above was to introduce a separate course on the history of the Ukrainian SSR in secondary schools, vocational schools, and institutions of higher education (as mentioned, the relevant course already existed but only as a supplement to the history of the USSR). This resolution might be a decent example of the incongruence between idea and implementation. The desire to take over the initiative and to keep the revision of the past within the established official framework contradicted the essential elements of the opposition and broader Ukrainian society’s demands.

The development of the program was then entrusted to a new dedicated commission that brought together members of various academic institutions. The commission generated questionnaires, sent them to the institutes of the Academy of Sciences of the Ukrainian SSR specialized in humanities, and used the answers to develop recommendations. However, this work was influenced by factors well beyond the control of the ideological machinery of the party. Despite the clearly established framework that recommended writing on the history not of Ukraine but Soviet Ukraine, proposals from different institutions were about Ukrainian rather than Soviet history. Published sources on the history of Ukraine alone numbered eighty-seven, and they presented an impressive mix of documents designed to satisfy a wide range of demands from the chronicles of the Ancient Rus’ and the Cossacks to the congress and conference proceedings of the Communist Party of Ukraine.17

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17 Kulchytsky, “Prohrama rozvytku istorychnykh doslidzhen,” 140. For the full text of the program, see Istoriya ta istoriohrafiya v Yevropi, no. 3 (2004): 159–78.
By the fall of 1989, the job was done. The product reached its customer, the Central Committee of the CPU, but by this time, the party leadership of the republic had far too many other concerns besides history. Early September 1989 was marked by the founding congress of the People’s Movement of Ukraine for Perestroika (Rukh). The new political force, representing an unstable but large conglomerate of national democrats, nationalists, and part of the establishment, became the first mass political organization to compete with the CPU. The idea of depriving the ruling party of its political monopoly was already present in social discourse; in May 1989, the first Congress of the People’s Deputies of the USSR discussed the abolition of article 6 of the constitution of the USSR, which stated that the Communist Party is the single ruling force in the Soviet Union.

In the meantime, tensions over rewriting the past reached a new stage. Criticism that disavowed the Soviet experience was enhanced by an anti-imperial component. The story of the “celebration” of the anniversary of the Battle of Poltava (1709) revealed deep resentments about the imperial past among the “nationally conscious” segment of society. Early in 1989, some all-USSR non-governmental organizations (including the official Society for Protection of the Monuments of Culture and informal military history clubs) began to prepare for the anniversary of the event. Members of patriotic military clubs in Moscow prepared a parade of actors dressed as soldiers in Peter the Great’s army to march on the streets of Poltava, and several staged scenes from the battle. In Kyiv and Poltava, these plans provoked indignation among national democrats, who decided to use the case of Poltava to present their vision of the event. The Poltava organization of Rukh delivered an address, “To the society of Ukraine and the whole Soviet Union,” where it declared that Peter I destroyed Ukrainian autonomy, which had existed since the Pereyaslav Treaty (1654), and killed “thousands and thousands of peaceful inhabitants of Ukraine.” The celebration of the anniversary was qualified as “a shameful act of disrespect to the people of Ukraine.” Responding to this call, groups of protesters from Lviv, Kyiv, Ivano-Frankivsk, Mykolaiv, and Dnipropetrovsk (over one hundred people) headed to Poltava. They prepared banners like “Peter I is the Butcher of the Ukrainian People” and “Eternal Glory to the Hetman Mazepa.” By July 6, 1989, dozens of radically minded

18 In Ukrainian, the term “nationally conscious” is natsional’no svidomy.
Russian fans of Peter the Great and Ukrainian admirers of Mazepa planned to meet in Poltava with foreseeable consequences. This prompted the authorities to resort to decisive measures, preventing some participants from boarding the train in Moscow and arresting others (by the KGB and the police) at the Poltava train station. Ukrainian counter-protesters were isolated in the same way. The militia detained about sixty people and sent them back home. The local communist party committee reported that Poltavians met attempts to “sow hatred between the Russian and Ukrainian people” with a “torrent of protests,” which was an obvious exaggeration, for neither torrents nor protests were seen in Poltava.¹⁹

The year 1990 started with one of the largest and most successful actions organized by Rukh: the celebration of the Day of Unity of Ukraine, the anniversary of the unification of the West Ukrainian People’s Republic and the Ukrainian People’s Republic (January 22, 1919). This action was overtly political in the sense that it was undertaken in the absence of a round date anniversary (1990 marked the 71st anniversary). The “reunification of 1919” was promoted exclusively as an event of true Ukrainian history; this act, implementing the “age-old aspirations of the Ukrainian people,” was contrasted with the “reunification of 1939” a result of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, which had been officially condemned at the highest state and party levels at the time. It should be mentioned that January 21, 1990, the day of the planned event, was also the anniversary of Vladimir Lenin’s death (a date on the official Soviet calendar).

The initial idea (borrowed from the Baltic Popular Fronts that had organized a human chain between the capitals of the Baltic republics a year earlier) was to organize a human chain between Lviv and Kharkiv, the “West” and the “East,” the capital of the “Ukrainian Piedmont” and the former capital of the Soviet Ukraine, on the day before the anniversary of reunification. However, during the preparations, the organizers became aware of the utter impossibility of bringing a sufficient number of people in Eastern Ukraine onto the streets. The “living chain” had to be shorter. On January 21, 1990, tens of thousands of people formed a human chain along the highway Kyiv–Zhytomyr–Rivne–Ternopil–Ivano-Frankivsk–Lviv, their hands linked, some

of them with banners explaining the meaning of the action. In some places, yellow and blue flags were waved above the living chain, their numbers growing as you traveled westward. In the cities and their environs, people were able to join hands; farther away from urban areas, the chain grew thinner, and sometimes the distance between demonstrators was ten or fifteen feet.

The number of participants who came to the streets was about 450,000, according to the official data of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and about one million, according to the organizers (although one of the leaders of the People’s Movement, faithful to the principles of Soviet-style megalomania, claimed that over five million people took to the streets). Rallies organized in the cities connected by the living chain were followed by calls for independence; this was the case not only in Kyiv or Lviv but even in deeply provincial Zhytomyr, where one of the most popular slogans was “Soviets without Communists—and on to independent Ukraine.”

This action challenged the official politics of history by endorsing not only the historical but also the social and political legitimacy of the Ukrainian nation-statehood of 1918–20. This period was still demonized by official ideology, with the epithet “Ukrainian bourgeois nationalists” used as a standard figure of speech. At the same time, references to non-Soviet Ukrainian statehood was intended to show (and did show) multiple social groups’ support for sovereignization of the republic, and their voices now becoming increasingly louder. A leaflet created by Rukh and distributed on the eve of the Day of Unity of Ukraine, proclaimed: “The ideals of the People’s Republic of Ukraine are our ideals as well. The cause our fathers and grandfathers struggled for is our cause today. . . . Let us then fight for [Ukrainian] liberty and its independence, both economic and political.”

On February 4, 1990, the state newspaper Radyanska Ukrayina published a summary of the resolution of the Central Committee of the CPU, “On the Necessity of Research and Objective Evaluation of Some Pages of the History of the Communist Party of Ukraine in the 1930s–1940s and the beginning of the 1950s.” The rhetoric of the resolution was remarkable: it spoke about studying a complex of issues about the famine of 1932–1933, distortions and mistakes in the “implementation of nationality politics, economic and cultural development—in particular in the western regions of the

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20 O. V. Haran, Ubyty drakona: Z istoriyi Rukhu ta novykh partiy Ukrayiny (Kyiv: Lybid 1993), 81.
Ukrainian SSR, and other problems caused by the cult of personality and its consequences.” It was an obvious concession to opponents. Three days later, on February 7, 1990, the Central Committee of the CPU published the resolution “On the Famine of 1932–1933 in Ukraine and on the Publication of Related Archival Materials.”21 This development was far more significant. The publication of this resolution symbolized not just a concession, but an outright capitulation of the ruling party concerning the interpretation of an event whose very mention had only recently been taboo.

In March 1990, elections to the Supreme Council (Verkhovna Rada) of the Ukrainian SSR and local councils added to the intrigue. The results of the elections unpleasantly surprised the ruling party. Almost 30 percent of seats in the Supreme Council, which was quickly becoming the most influential political body in Ukraine, went to the national democrats and their allies; while this did not give them a majority when casting decision-making votes, it did grant them unprecedented status to pressure the authorities and publicize the ideas of the democratic opposition.22 In three western regions, self-government bodies (regional/oblast councils and some municipal councils) came under the control of Rukh. Now they had an institutional springboard for both political actions and the revision of history “in the field.” Moreover, the essence of the conflict changed; it was no longer a confrontation of ideologically different organizations but a face-off between party organs and the Soviets (councils). In other words, the conflict now moved inside the system.

In March 1990, the Third Extraordinary Congress of People’s Deputies of the USSR adopted a new version of article 6 of the constitution of the USSR, which permitted the creation of “other political parties.”

Immediately after the March 1990 elections, the rhetoric around “correct” history radicalized. In April 1990, deputies of the Lviv Regional Council (chaired by Viacheslav Chornovil, one of the leaders of Rukh) delivered a statement attacking the “fact of the double occupation of Ukraine by the armies of the RSFSR in 1919 and the USSR in 1939.” The deputies called out Ukraine’s presence in the USSR as illegal because its incorporation into the Soviet Union was...
was carried out by “occupying authorities.”23 Yellow and blue flags were raised over local government buildings in some cities of Western Ukraine.

On April 22, 1990, an event took place in Kyiv that reached a level of ideological conflict hitherto unprecedented for the capital of a constituent republic of the Soviet Union. A march ostensibly dedicated to the protection of the environment (and authorized by the city council, where 40 percent of the deputies represented the national democrats and their allies) organized by Rukh, the Union of Independent Ukrainian Youth, the Taras Shevchenko Society for the Ukrainian Language, the Memorial foundation and the “Zelenyy svit” (Green World) association, culminated in laying a barbed wire wreath by the Lenin monument (the prosecutor’s office would initiate a case “over the facts of exceptional cynicism”). The demonstrators carried slogans like “For the united independent Ukrainian state” and “No to the Soviet Empire!”24 The inspiring example of the Baltic republics, where the supreme councils declared independence between March and May 1990, was certainly one reason for the radicalized slogans and actions.

In June 1990, the Central Committee of the CPU issued another historical decision, rescinding the “politically erroneous” resolutions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of Ukraine from the late 1940s to early 1950s related to literature, art, and historical studies. Eight resolutions from that period, notably those that developed into a “struggle against Ukrainian nationalism” and “cosmopolitanism,” were denounced. This decision was an important signal for those who saw the revision of history as one of the most significant dimensions of the anti-CPU struggle: the chronological framework of the crimes of the communist regime was expanding beyond the customary 1920s–1930s period. This move, however, did not elicit the expected reaction because it nearly coincided with the first stage of the 28th Congress of the Communist Party of Ukraine in Kyiv. The congress adopted the resolution “On State Sovereignty of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic.”

On July 16, 1990, the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR issued the “Declaration on State Sovereignty of Ukraine” after a very dramatic period of debate. The declaration proclaimed the supremacy of the republic’s legislation over USSR laws; autonomy in the field of foreign relations; and the full

23 See Smolnikov, “Problema vidrodzhennya ukrayins’kyi,” 121.
authority of the Ukrainian government over lands and resources. Regarding political symbolism, the document was significant because it substituted “Ukraine” for “the Ukrainian SSR.” The declaration also contained a passage about the “national and cultural recovery of the Ukrainian nation, its historical consciousness and traditions, and national and ethnographic features.”

It is notable that on the very same day, the Supreme Soviet adopted a resolution that established a new national holiday, July 16, to be celebrated as the Independence Day of Ukraine.

Five days after the adoption of the Declaration on State Sovereignty, the Politburo of the Central Committee of the CPU approved the resolution “On Implementation of the Republican Program of Development of Historical Research, Improvement of Study and Propaganda of the History of the Ukrainian SSR” (July 21, 1990). The program, prepared as early as the fall of 1989, was an incredible combination of the usual rhetoric of Marxism-Leninism and the conventional markers of the cultural nationalism of the nineteenth century. For instance, the history of Ukraine (this name replaced the Ukrainian SSR in some parts of the text) was framed within a conventional Soviet-Marxist paradigm: as an evolution of socio-economic formations. The Soviet period was billed as the age of building socialism. At the same time, it contained hybrid definitions useful for both sides like “ethnic processes in the territory of Kievan Rus’,” “Ukrainian feudal town,” “Ukrainian nation, its formation, structure and history of development,” and “Ukrainian national revival” (all listed, by the way, as historical research priorities).

The program was a product of an ideological compromise between “sovereign communists” and nationalists. At the same time, it was the last attempt of the ruling party to restore control over the process of rewriting the past. Paradoxically, it provided legal grounds for the sovereignization of national history and triggered a process of mass reproduction of the “sovereign” ver-

26 “Respublikanska prohrama rozvytku istorychnykh doslidzhen, polipshennya vyvchennya i propahandy istoryi Ukrayinskoi RSR,” 6–12. All references are given for a photocopy of the original document from the author’s personal archive. The official text of the resolution was published in Ukrayins’kyi istorychnyy zhurnal, no. 11 (1990): 12.
27 The terms “nationalism” and “nationalists” are used in the standard sense, referring to the part of society that stands up for the idea of the cultural and historic uniqueness of one’s nation and its equality with other nations.
sion of history through the educational system. It launched the creation of a whole hierarchy of ideological precedents that legitimated the process of separation of Ukrainian national history from the previously common transnational “History of the USSR,” entailing the separation of Ukraine itself.

The political turnaround and its consequences became apparent in early August. The massive celebration of the Days of Cossack Glory in the first week of August 1990 initiated by the Rukh was presented in a very favorable light by the official media. A series of articles urged people not only to celebrate the prominent date (the five hundredth anniversary of the Zaporizhian Sich, an arbitrary date) but to use the event for the revival of “Ukrainian national spirituality.”

*Radyanska Ukrayina* published a cartoon with Karl Marx shaking hands with a Cossack. The image was accompanied with a reference to Marx’s *Chronological Notes* where he called the Zaporizhian Sich “a Christian Cossack Republic” and a caption in which the founder of Marxism congratulated the Cossacks on five hundred years of “national glory.”

*Pravda Ukrainy*, the newspaper of the Central Committee of the CPU, declared that from the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries, Ukrainian lands were more advanced than their neighbors. The author informed readers that the literacy levels of this population were very high (higher than that of their neighbors, i.e., Russia), and that in the seventeenth century, Cossack Ukraine already had a market economy and Cossack households were presented as prototypes of contemporary farming. This anachronistic newspeak became the norm in the following decade.

National democrats saw the ideological content of the celebrations in a more practical light. On July 15, 1990, one of the local groups of Rukh published a resolution that provides insight into the expectations of the ordinary members of the organization, which already counted over half a million members. The resolution said: “Celebrating the 500th anniversary of the establishment of the Zaporizhian Sich, we observe the steady movement of our people toward liberty, self-governance, and independence, in conformity with the will of our ancestors.”

The celebration itself took place in several southeastern regions of the Ukrainian SSR. Its central event was a festival on Khortytsia island near

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30 See Smolnikov, “Problema vidrodzhennya ukrayinskoy,” 162.
Zaporizhzhya. Despite all the efforts of party organs, it caused undesirable consequences and clashes. The scale of the event exceeded all expectations: hundreds of thousands of people came from all over Ukraine and other regions of the USSR. The list of visitors was not drawn up by party bodies but rather by Rukh and other NGOs. Moreover, the participation of official representatives turned into a series of episodes that were highly unpleasant. For instance, the attempt of Ivan Plyushch, deputy chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Ukrainian SSR, to speak at a rally was interrupted by whistles and the chant Hanba! (shame!), the most popular word lobbed at party officials at such events. Several speakers simply badmouthed communism and Soviet rule. Volodymyr Yavorivsky, a member of parliament from Rukh, ignited the crowd by calling for the skull of the Zaporizhzhian military leader Ivan Sirko to be brought back from Moscow.\footnote{The skull was in the Moscow laboratory of the sculptor Gerasimov, who aimed to recreate the portrait of the legendary hetman.} His words were so electrifying that it took significant effort to prevent a fight and preserve the skulls of the party officials present at the rally. The official press kept silent about these episodes.

“Cossack tales” provoked one more curious surge of historical mythology. In July 1990, the Verkhovna Rada discussed, in all seriousness, the issue of “Polubotok’s treasure.” According to the information offered by one of the MPs of Rukh, in the early eighteenth century, Hetman Pavlo Polubotok deposited a large sum of gold in the Bank of England. In July and August 1990, the press engaged in a lively discussion on the amount of money that Ukrainians could expect to gain if Polubotok’s treasure could be found. Enormous amounts were mentioned—up to £300,000 per every inhabitant of Ukraine. This story is intriguing not only as a case of the sudden anticipation of a miracle by people who were experiencing financial hardship and worsening living conditions; it also shows that modern Ukrainians consider themselves the direct heirs of a Cossack Hetman as a matter of course.

The participation of party bodies in the development of “Cossackology” entailed further concessions. In August 1990, the deputy director of the Institute of the History of the Party under the Central Committee of the CPU appealed to historians to provide an “objective and unbiased” account of Hetman Ivan Mazepa,\footnote{T. Larina, “Vosstanovit’ pravdu istorii,” Pravda Ukrainy, August 12, 1990.} one of the main antiheroes of the Soviet histori-
cal mythology. This appeal was undoubtedly meant to neutralize attempts by the national democrats to link Mazepa’s name primarily to the struggle for independence, which inevitably led to anti-Russian aims. However, from the perspective of “historical truth,” this appeal was understood correctly: over the next year, Ivan Mazepa, recently branded a “traitor” and “turncoat,” became a wise, prudent ruler, patriot, intellectual, and patron of the arts, and this image took its place firmly in the national pantheon. By the end of 1990, dust settled around the issue of rewriting history. The official magazine of two institutes—the Institute of History and the Institute of the History of the Party under the Central Committee of the CPU—published an article claiming the existence of a fully-fledged Ukrainian feudal statehood in the seventeenth century.33

In summer and fall of 1990, fights over history moved to the last territory not yet yielded by the ruling party: the core symbols of communist mythology. The struggle took place in Western Ukraine. In Chervonohrad, Lviv Region, on August 1, 1990, a local council decided to dismantle its Lenin monument. A week later, another monument was removed in Ternopil, an oblast capital. In September, the Lenin monument disappeared from Opera Square in Lviv. It was during the same period that Lenin’s stone image disappeared from the central squares of Ivano-Frankivsk, Kolomyia, Boryslav, Radekhiv, Mykolaiv (Lviv oblast), and Drohobych. The protests of communist party organs were ignored. Lenin monuments were also demolished or damaged in eastern Ukraine, though only as part of the general anticommunist fervor, not with the nationalist and anti-Soviet flavor common to western Ukraine, where Lenin’s name was synonymous with the national tragedies of Ukraine. The ruling party lost here as well: the statues were not returned, and the frailty of these previously immoveable symbols of communism became engraved in people’s minds. The war on monuments coincided with an increasing number of rallies against the signing of the New Union Treaty proposed by Gorbachev and the proliferation of calls for the dissolution of the CPU.

The elimination of communist symbols from public spaces was accompanied by active efforts to replace them with nationalist symbols. A pub-

lic campaign seeking to rehabilitate the OUN and UPA unfolded in western Ukraine and was supported not only by the anticommunist opposition but also by local authorities, which were represented by different types of councils. In spring 1990, the oblast councils of Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, and Ternopil, all dominated by representatives of Rukh, declared the political rehabilitation of the OUN and the UPA.

On June 30, 1991, Lviv opened the first mass rally to commemorate the anniversary of the Act of Restoration of Ukrainian Statehood (June 30, 1941) declared by the OUN-B. In July, plaques commemorating Stepan Bandera and Roman Shukhevych were installed in Drohobych in the Lviv oblast, and Krakovets in the Ivano-Frankivsk oblast. In October, in the midst of the Kyiv student “Revolution on Granite,” a memorial cross “to the heroes of the OUN and UPA” was installed in Ivano-Frankivsk, and a monument to Stepan Bandera appeared in Staryi Uhryniv. A memorial house to Stepan Bandera was established in Volya-Zaderevatska, and a memorial tomb to the members of the OUN and the fighters of the UPA was established Ternopil. The glorification of Bandera’s image began in the exact style of Soviet propaganda. The Lvov newspaper Za vilnu Ukrainyinu wrote: “Bandera embodied all the best, greatest traits of the Ukrainian people, becoming a burning symbol of freedom and independence for hundreds of thousands, for millions.”

By 1991, the competition between the Soviet and the national/nationalist memory narratives ended with the victory of the latter. In April 1991, the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR adopted the law “On the Rehabilitation of the Victims of Political Repression in Ukraine.” The law mentioned the years 1917–91 as the period of political repression against the “citizens of Ukraine.” On the regional level, an appeal to the past in the fall of 1991 went hand in hand with the idea of splitting away from the USSR (“Moscow”), which was seen as responsible for all the woes of the Ukrainian

34 Mass protests of students in Kyiv in October 1990, which resulted in the resignation of the government.
35 The name of the newspaper (For a Free Ukraine) is an interesting topic in itself: the new edition, founded after the annexation of western Ukraine by the USSR in September 1939, received its name to symbolize the freedom brought by the Soviets. After the March 1990 elections when national democrats took power in the regional council, the name of the mouthpiece of the former party organ took on the completely opposite meaning.
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nation. On the eve of the independence referendum held on December 1, 1991, Ukrainian national television aired the film *Famine-33* by Ukrainian director Oles Yanchuk, which was based on the autobiographical novel *Yellow Prince* by Vasyl Barka and sponsored by the Ukrainian diaspora. The horrors of the Soviet past were to convince Ukrainians to vote for independence. Referendum 1 legitimated the Act of Declaration of Independence of Ukraine that had been adopted August 24, 1991. Most (90.3 percent) voters said “Yes” to independence. Less than a week later, following the Belavezha Accords signed by B. Yeltsin, L. Kravchuk, and V. Shushkevich, the Soviet Union ceased to exist. By law, Ukraine became an independent state. Once independence was achieved, the sovereignization of the past transformed into the nationalization of history.

**Nationalization**

In the early 1990s, independent Ukraine followed a pattern common among all post-Soviet societies: a new state and its ruling class needed historical legitimation. The formula for success was also predictable: a national master narrative, a biography of the nation that confirmed historical continuity and the presence of the nation on the map of European history.

Ukraine had some advantages that allowed it to complete its legitimation quickly. A classic master narrative based on foundations laid by Mykhailo Hrushevsky and preserved by émigré/diaspora historiography was already available. Furthermore, the Soviet version of the past did not negate Ukrainian history but merely reduced it to the class approach, so a significant part of the master narrative only needed to be readjusted according to the basics of national teleology. Ukraine also inherited powerful educational infrastructures that could simply be repurposed for new tasks that were made easier because most personnel were already accustomed to such “repurposing” (see chapter 5).

In the first half of the 1990s, the standard ethnonational narrative of history and memory, which represented Ukrainian history as a never-ending chain of suffering, hardship, struggle for survival, and eternal yearning for national self-determination, quickly re-emerged and took precedence over other narratives. Its restoration relied on the aforementioned historiographical tradition that allowed it to be complemented with periods not covered by
its predecessors while never abandoning the traditional interpretive framework. Revision followed the pattern of teleological history that starts in the present (1991) with the existence of the independent state of Ukraine and its current political borders and then moves backward in time. True, the principle of respect for political borders in the historical narrative was often violated in favor of ethnic borders—an understandable effect of the ethnocentrism of this narrative.

This revisionist history followed its own unpretentious logic: after a decisive reinterpretation of the Soviet period (in the style of the Nuremberg trials), it looked toward the experience of national statehood following the end of World War I. Special attention was now reserved for the history of the Central Rada, the Ukrainian People’s Republic, the Western Ukrainian People’s Republic, and the Hetmanate (1918–20). In August 1992, at the assembly of the Verkhovna Rada dedicated to the anniversary of independence, Mykola Plaviuk (1925–2012), president of the State Center of the Ukrainian People’s Republic (in exile) and the chief of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (Melnykivtsi branch), handed Leonid Kravchuk, president of Ukraine, the state symbols of the Ukrainian People’s Republic and a document certifying that modern Ukraine is the legal successor of the Ukrainian People’s Republic.37

The next period to receive the special attention of the creators of Ukrainian national mythology was the late medieval to early modern era. The Cossack age, including the Hetmanate, became the golden age of Ukrainian history. The Cossack myth that had fit comfortably in the Soviet-era Ukrainian historical narrative as an example of struggle against class and national oppression was similarly adaptable to Ukrainian national historical teleology and was used as evidence of the archetypal democratic nature of Ukrainians, their love of freedom, and their capacity for self-organization. This myth was also represented in a quite antiquarian, if not grotesque, manner. The early 1990s marked an abundance of various events with people dressed as the “Cossacks of old” and by the tremen-

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dous growth of Cossack organizations. The first contemporary Cossack organization, “The Ukrainian Cossackdom,” was created in October 1991: Viacheslav Chornovil, a famous Ukrainian dissident who ran against Leonid Kravchuk in the 1991 presidential elections, was elected as its first Hetman, and Viktor Yushchenko became Hetman in 2005. By the beginning of the 2000s, Ukraine counted no less than ten national and over five hundred regional Cossack organizations. It is hard to judge if their socio-political influence was prominent on the national level, but it was quite visible at the local level, especially in issues of local historical politics.

Kievian Rus’ was also an example of early statehood. Starting with Kiev Rus’, the narrative went back through the ages and reached the early tribal forms of social organization in the “home” territories, which were considered the home of indigenous peoples for centuries. As a result, a full-fledged scheme of national history emerged, stretching from ancient history to the “triumph of historical justice,” i.e., the creation of an independent state. Ukraine got its metaphorical “millennium,” which was certainly longer than standard calendar time (for more details, see chapter 5). Further, a collection of texts dedicated to the history of Ukrainian political thought published on the tenth anniversary of independence was named *A Thousand Years of Ukrainian Political Thought*.

In 1993, the state-owned Kievnauchfilm studio carried out a large project funded by the state called *Unknown Ukraine: Sketches of Our History*. One hundred and four films were produced, representing the most comprehensive visual version of nationalized history from the most ancient period (the Aryans) to 1992. The first film asserted that Ukrainians had been deprived of a national memory, advancing an analogy between historical and psychiatric amnesia. The last film, dedicated to the events of 1991–92, carried the title *Restored Independence*. The whole series represented the theme of continuity with ancient history.

Antiquity and historical continuity became the cornerstones of the symbolic space of statehood. At the beginning of the 1990s, Ukraine acquired essential symbols of statehood, which naturally harkened back to ancient times. The coat of arms of Ukraine, a gold trident on an azure background,

was approved by the Verkhovna Rada in February 1992; it was a reference to Kievan Rus’ and the Ukrainian People’s Republic of 1918–20. The state flag of Ukraine, officially approved by the Verkhovna Rada in January 1992, also confirmed links with the past. A recent statement issued by the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory says: “The yellow-blue colors symbolized the Kiev State even before the Christianization of Rus.” It goes on to say that “in the course of historical development,” the yellow and blue standard was a symbol of the struggle of the Ukrainian people for social and national liberation.40

The anthem of Ukraine was also selected from the archives: in January 1992, the parliament approved music written by Mykhailo Verbytsky in the middle of the nineteenth century. The textual part of the anthem remained in limbo for a while because Pavlo Chubynsky’s lyrics, dating from the same era, generated too much controversy. Attempts to write new lyrics were unsuccessful until a judgment worthy of Solomon was made in 2003: the first stanza and the refrain of Chubynsky’s text were to become the official anthem of Ukraine. Communist and socialist MPs did not vote in favor of this decision.

In 1992, Ukraine started the transition to its new currency. In parallel with Soviet rubles, temporary banknotes called karbovanets—also known as coupons—were introduced; the word karbovanets was a reference to the Ukrainian People’s Republic. National history was presented here in its most archaic variant: banknotes featured either a Soviet-era group sculpture of the legendary founders of Kyiv—Kyi, Shchek and Khoryv, and their mythical sister Lybid—or Prince Volodymyr the Great, with the reverse side of most notes displaying the architectural complex of Saint Sophia Cathedral in Kyiv. The 500,000 karbovanets banknote featured the Kyiv Opera Theater, and the one million karbovanets banknote featured the Soviet monument to Taras Shevchenko. It also symbolized the transformation of most Ukrainians into millionaires and became a monument to the runaway inflation that by 1993 reached 10,206 percent per year.

In 1996, a permanent currency was introduced, the name of which, hryvnia, was a direct reference to the antiquity of Ukrainian statehood, the

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Kievan Rus’ (where this currency was born) and, again, to Ukrainian statehood in 1918–20. The group of historical characters depicted on the new money also showed Ukraine’s rich historical and cultural heritage. The gallery of portraits started with the same Volodymyr the Great (the one hryvnia banknote), followed by Yaroslav the Wise (two hryvnias), Bohdan Khmelnytsky (five hryvnias), and Ivan Mazepa (ten hryvnias), whose presence in the national pantheon was now indubitable. The twenty-hryvnia banknote featured a portrait of Ivan Franko, the fifty-hryvnia bill was occupied by Mykhailo Hrushevsky, and the one hundred hryvnia note by Taras Shevchenko. In 2001, Lesya Ukrainka joined the ranks of historical characters on the two hundred hryvnia banknote; in 2006, Hryhorii Skovoroda followed on the five hundred hryvnia note. In 2019, the National Bank printed a one-thousand-hryvnia banknote with the portrait of Volodymyr Vernadsky, the famous Ukrainian scholar and founder of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences.

The architectural series of the new currency also mainly referenced ancient history: cathedrals, churches, and castles. The youngest architectural symbols depicted on the hryvnias were the buildings of Kyiv and Lviv Universities, and the Pedagogical Museum (Central Rada) in Kyiv. The visual imagery of the officially recognized memory narrative was now set: it was largely antiquarian and archaic, with the twentieth century represented by two literary figures and one historian. It did not contain any signs or symbols of the modern industrial society that had emerged in Ukraine in the twentieth century.

The twentieth century was represented in the national master-narrative by the following phenomena and landmarks: the Ukrainian national movement of the late nineteenth to early twentieth century (as a precondition of the establishment of statehood), World War I (as a tragedy of the Ukrainian nation divided between warring powers), Ukrainian statehood of 1918–20 (the Ukrainian People’s Republic and the Hetman State), and the three famines of 1921–23, 1932–33, and 1947 (as tragedies of a nation subjected to foreign/communist domination and a testimony of the desire of the Soviet Union to exterminate the peasantry, the foundation of the nation). These events were followed by the nationalist movement of the 1920s to 1950s (as an example of the tragic and heroic struggle of the nation for its liberty), World War II (as an example of the tragedy of a stateless nation that found
itself in the epicenter of fighting between two totalitarian regimes), the
political repression of the 1920s–1950s (as a story of the extermination of the
intelligentsia—the brain of the nation—and the suppression of any opposition),
the Khrushchevian Thaw and the Sixtiers, Brezhnevian Stagnation,
Gorbachev’s perestroika and the ultimate triumph of historical justice: the
miraculous transformation of Ukraine into an independent state in 1991.
Within this narrative, the Soviet period was portrayed as a dark era of total-
itarism, national oppression, and endless attempts to assimilate or even
destroy the Ukrainian nation.

Of course, the educational sphere became one of the principal areas of
large-scale nationalization of the past. During the 1991–92 academic year,
the history of Ukraine course was introduced into the school curriculum.
In 1992, the Ukrainian Ministry of Education published its program state-
ment, “Conception of History Education in Schools,” and in 1995 a group
of university professors prepared the “Conception of Lifelong Historical
Education.” One of the basic aims of these statements, in addition to the
“humanization” of historical education, was the “revival of the Ukrainian
mentality.”\footnote{A. I. Zyakun, Navchalna literature z istoriyi kintsya 80–90-ibk r. XX st.: istoriohrafichnyy analiz (Sumy: VVP “Mriya-1” TOV, 2011), 42.} According to this document, the history of Ukraine needed to be prioritized in the historical disciplines that also covered broader world history.

The introduction of elements of national history into the primary schools,
through extracurricular activities, was already planned. Students would then start the history of Ukraine course in the fifth grade through short sto-
ries, a method that was obviously borrowed from Soviet practices. This intro-
ductive course aimed to cover the whole “Ukrainian millennium” from the
early Slavic era to contemporary Ukraine. The “Conception” did not become
an official mandate; the development of history education in schools and the
filing of education plans and curricula followed the logic of the political sit-
uation, giving priority to the ethnocentric version of the history of Ukraine
with an increased focus on the history of statehood. The prototype of the
first textbook on the history of Ukraine for high school was prepared in the
same manner.\footnote{M. V. Koval, S. V. Kulchytsky, and Yu. O. Kurnosov, Istoriya Ukrayiny. Materialy do pidruchnyka diya tvo-11 kl. serednikh shkil (Kyiv: Raiduha, 1992).}
The outline of the new didactic history was shaped by the “classical” schemes of the positivist historiography of the nineteenth century. The years 1990–99 saw the republication of syntheses of the history of Ukraine authored by prerevolutionary and émigré/diaspora historians—Mykhailo Hrushevsky, Natalia Polonskaya-Vasylenko, Oleksandra Efimenko, Dmytro Doroshenko, and others—sixty-four titles in total, of which fifty-three were published between 1990–93.43 These works greatly influenced both authors of school curricula and textbooks and academic historians, resulting in an uncritical reproduction of the ethnonational narrative of the late nineteenth century in the school curricula and in textbooks. This narrative was perceived and presented by its authors as “historical truth.”

In the early 1990s, the book Ukraine: A History written by Ukrainian-Canadian historian Orest Subtelny (1941–2016) became a genuine bestseller in Ukraine. This book, which presented the topic in a simple, transparent, and well-organized narrative written for an English-speaking audience, was translated into Ukrainian and Russian and became a successful commercial project: it sold in record numbers and became a de facto teaching aid in schools and universities.44 The book came from the “West,” lending it a special aura of truthfulness and indicating its conformity to high scholarly standards. Its language was vivid and easy to understand, unlike the ponderous writings of the classics of Ukrainian historiography. Its narrative and explanatory strategy followed the principles of ethnonational history and fit quite well within the schema designed by Hrushevsky and his followers; however, the author based his conceptual framework on the modernist approach. Later, the author of a popular fifth grade history textbook wrote: “At the beginning of the 1990s, Orest Subtelny helped us learn our own past, awaken our consciousness, [and] restore our heritage that they tried to erase, eradicate, kill with hunger and bullets for many centuries.”45

The historiographical cannon obeyed the same principles. During one of the official events of 1993, Leonid Kravchuk, president of Ukraine, regretted that the “Ukrainian people do not have a history.” To address the issue,
the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine proposed a fifty-volume history of the Ukrainian people. The conceptual essence of the project was laid out in a brochure authored by Rem Symonenko of the Institute of History of Ukraine of the National Academy of Sciences: “Reassertions of a truly national history, its restoration as the past of the Ukrainian ethnus on its own autochthonous territory: this means Ukrainian history as an original uninterrupted process the main objective of which is the Ukrainian people, from its very first origins to modern sovereign statehood.”

The same year, there was an attempt to introduce a course of Ukrainian political science or “scientific nationalism” into universities, but it encountered criticism from part of the academic community. Odd as it was, the concerns raised reflected the seriousness of the position of its authors, which also exemplified the attitudes of some in academic leadership positions: “scientific communism” was bound to cede its place to “scientific nationalism.” Neither of the projects mentioned above were implemented.

The aforementioned mass “repurposing” of the educational and cultural infrastructure was a part of this process. The introduction of the new history course in the university curricula meant an immediate demand for qualified teachers, but this challenge was easily addressed: for instance, Departments of the History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (a semester-long course—or sometimes a one-year course—on the history of the CPSU that was mandatory for students of all subjects) were renamed Departments of the History of Ukraine, and those who taught the history of the party were tapped to teach the history of Ukraine, a course that also became mandatory for students of all subjects. The Lenin and Marx portraits in history faculties were replaced by that of Mykhailo Hrushevsky, the new icon of Ukrainian history.

The nationalization of the past provoked a kind of institutional boom. In 1990, there were twenty-one history departments in the Ukrainian SSR,

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48 Hrushevsky became both an icon and a monument. His *History of Ukraine-Rus* was republished in 1991–98, as a part of the series *History Monuments* edited by the Institute of Ukrainian Archeography (created in 1992). Monuments to Hrushevsky were unveiled in Lviv (1994), Kyiv (1998), and Lutsk (2002). The street in Kyiv where the parliament and the government are located was given the historian’s name in 1991.
most of them located in regional pedagogical institutes. According to the
calculations of Volodymyr Masliychuk, twenty-four departments of history in
higher education establishments preparing specialists were established
from 1991–99.49 The history of Ukraine was a major field of study. Between
1993 and 2002, 192 doctoral and 1,243 candidate (equivalent to PhD) the-
esses in history were defended in Ukraine, which amounted to one-third of
all theses completed during this period.50 Taking into account the structure
of demand, it is safe to assume that an overwhelming majority of these the-
eses were dedicated to the history of Ukraine.

In the meantime, the history of Ukraine reached the status of a self-suf-
cient sphere of didactic and patriotic education. By the end of the 1990s,
the canon of school history was finalized and was defined by ethnocentrism,
ethnic exclusiveness, and elements of xenophobia. After an analysis of more
than a dozen textbooks on the history of Ukraine, Natalya Yakovenko con-
cluded that they contained negative ethnic stereotypes of Poles, Germans,
Tatars, and Russians.51 A poll of advanced students of history at Ivan Franko
Lviv National University (2008) confirmed that school textbooks are one of
the main sources of negative ethnic stereotypes.52

From the end of the 1990s to the beginning of the 2000s, the axiological
limitations and ideological extremes of the ethnocentric version of Ukrainian
history became an object of discussion between foreign and Ukrainian histor-
ians, specialists in cultural studies, and sociologists.53 While these dis-

50 Leonid Zaskilnyak, "Metodolohichni aspekty svitovoho istoriografichnho protsesu i suchasna ukray-
51 Natalya Yakovenko, "Polshcha ta polyaki v shkilnykh pidruchnykakh istoryi, abo vidlunnya davnyoho
52 For more details, see Nancy Popson, "The Ukrainian History Textbook: Introducing Children to the
'Ukrainian Nation,'" Nationalities Papers 29, no. 2 (2001): 325–50; Jan Gemen Janaat, "Nation-
Building in Post-Soviet Ukraine: Educational Policy and the Response of the Russian-Speaking Popu-
lation" (PhD diss, University of Amsterdam, 2000); a collection of articles: Magdalena Telus and Yuriiy
Shapoval, eds. Ukrayinska istorychna dydaktyka: mizhnarodnyy dialog (fakhivtsi riznykh krayin pro su-
chasni ukrayinski pidruchnyky z istoryyi) (Kyiv: Heneza, 2000); Taras Kuzio, "History, Memory and Na-

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discussions did not have much impact on the curricula courses on the history of Ukraine, they brought the issue to the attention of the wider public: the ethnocentric narrative of Ukrainian history promoted by the national educational system could not stretch to include the ethnocultural and civilizational diversity of Ukraine.

The Soviet period, as might be expected, was maligned in textbooks, leading to a radical transformation of interpretation: the pathos of “socialist construction” was superseded by a bleak picture of the never-ending suffering of Ukrainians oppressed by Soviet totalitarianism. Following the same model, the older periods of history were retranslated as centuries of suffering and oppression for the freedom-loving Ukrainians and their eternal struggle against foreign domination. As in many other fields of historical politics, the sphere of history education preserved Soviet-style semantic patterns. In the Soviet version, the period before 1917 was depicted as the era of oppression and struggle. In the Ukrainian nationalized version, Ukraine’s suffering and struggle were prolonged until 1991. This year marked the advent of the era of historical justice with the realization of the “centuries-old aspirations of the Ukrainian people.” The idea of the perpetual struggle of the Ukrainian people/nation for liberation and statehood replaced the Soviet canon of eternal struggle against class oppression.54

At the same time, elements of Soviet mythology remained in the school curriculum as part of the general portrait of the past. For example, the term “Great Patriotic War” was present in several textbooks, though the emphasis was on the contribution of Ukraine and Ukrainians to the “Great Victory.” In the search for a suitable name for the period between 1941 and 1945 while


trying to avoid the Soviet formula, the term “Soviet-German War” was sometimes used. The remnants of a nationalized Soviet narrative were counterbalanced by facts, events, and persons that had previously been absent in the school curriculum or featured only as antiheroes. For instance, the history of the Ukrainian nationalist movement was fully integrated into the curriculum.

Previously the “Great October Socialist Revolution” and the “Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union” played central roles in the curriculum for the history of the twentieth century. These were replaced with the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917–20, which symbolized the struggle for independence and Ukrainian statehood, and the Great Famine of 1932–33 (the Holodomor), which was held out as the greatest tragedy in the history of the Ukrainian nation. World War II—which sometimes integrated the “Great Patriotic War” conceptualization—was presented as a catastrophe for a nation that lacked its own (genuine) state. This topic was significantly amplified by a mythology of resistance that centered on the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army as staunch and uncompromising independence fighters; this heroic history balanced out the narrative of victimhood and suffering.

The nationalization of formal history education led to the expansion of the national/nationalist history narrative to the pre-national era. Ukrainian history flowed continuously from one era to another. Kiev Rus’ again became the cradle of Ukrainian nationhood and statehood, the Halych-Volhynia Principality marked its continuation. The “Polish-Lithuanian period” was represented as an age of foreign domination and oppression as well as “latent statehood” and a sign of the vitality of the Ukrainian nation, and the Cossack period confirmed the Ukrainian penchant for freedom and democracy and their capacity for self-organization.

Bohdan Khmelnytsky, formerly a fighter against social, national, and religious oppression in the Soviet narrative, was now the central figure of the “national revolution” of the mid-seventeenth century and the leader of the Ukrainian state. Ivan Mazepa (a traitor in the Russian imperial and Soviet narrative) became the symbol of the independence struggle, and Hetman Pylyp Orlyk was credited as the author of the “first constitution in Europe.” The period when Ukrainian lands comprised a part of empires was presented through a colonial lens, which was not substantially different from the Soviet
version of Ukrainian history. The major difference was that now the pattern encompassed, implicitly or explicitly, the Soviet period, leading to unmistakable conclusions. Of course, the “Ukrainian millennium” proved the transcendent existence of the Ukrainian nation.

The rewriting of history curricula according to the canons of the ethnonational narrative and its adoption in schools was met with the incomprehension and even aversion of some of the very persons expected to implement it—history teachers. Even in the early 1990s, regional differences in the approach to history education were noticeable, and new textbooks embedded in the new national historical framework were met with resistance, primarily in the southeastern regions of the country. This was hardly surprising because the proposed national/nationalist narrative was perceived as the negation of the Soviet version. Teachers in the eastern part of the country disliked the wholly negative assessment of the Soviet past and expressed discontent with the “excess of nationalism,” which often meant the appearance of events and characters from anti-Soviet history on the pages of textbooks. The glorification of the OUN, UPA, and the leaders of the nationalist movement were met with special antipathy.

Defenders of the Soviet narrative acted as the main opponents and critics of the exclusivist ethnonational model of the past until the end of the 1990s. In the late 1990s, new actors and critics came on the scene. European institutions proposed their own alternative to the dominance of the ethnonational narrative following their experiences in the countries of Eastern Europe. In 1997–98, the Council of Europe instigated workshops on “Reforming the Teaching of History in Ukraine,” mingling teachers, experts, and decision-makers. The topic of one of these workshops was formulated in a very diplomatic manner: a reform of the curricula with a special emphasis on “sensitive topics” and “the role of notorious historical figures.” One of the guidelines proposed by European experts read as follows: “the textbooks should be free of political or ideological stereotypes, which could reinforce the political problems of the day, and should contain no information which could be

interpreted from a nationalistic or xenophobic point of view.”

Ukrainian participants (including representatives from the Ministry of Education) recognized the problem and went so far as to promise necessary corrections and amendments to the curricula and textbooks (the country was preparing to transition to the twelve-year system of secondary education), for instance, dropping the mono-ideological and propagandistic approach to history teaching.

It is possible to evaluate the scale of implementation of these good intentions and assurances if we look at the results of a thorough study of history curricula and textbooks carried out ten years later by two independent groups of Ukrainian historians and teachers between 2007 and 2010. One group was comprised of university teachers and professors who worked under the auspices of the recently created Ukrainian Institute of National Memory and analyzed textbooks published in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The second group, school teachers and university professors, analyzed history textbooks published after 2005. Working independently from each other, they arrived at similar conclusions. In particular, they observed the following:

- The equation of notions of “ethnos” and “nation”;
- The domination of political and military history;
- The presentation of historical processes from the point of view of “national interest”;
- The predominance and justification of the idea of conflict (social, national);
- Ethnocentrism, elements of xenophobia, and cultural intolerance; and
- The lack of attention for distinctiveness of regional history.

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59 In this case, institutional affiliation did not play any important role; the composition of the expert group headed by Professor Natalya Yakovenko was a more important factor.
Of course, textbooks on the history of Ukraine in the 2000s had changed both in content and discourse since the 1990s, but all the hallmarks of the period of the nationalization of the past remained intact despite social criticism and the efforts of some historians. This can be partly explained by institutional and cultural factors such as the oligopoly of publishing houses unwilling to pay for textbook revisions, the absence of a system of genuine peer review, and the inertia of authors. At the same time, the reclamation of the past did not automatically lead to the desired changes in the present. Rewriting history according to the standards of an ethnocentric narrative was, rather, a compensation for the existing social, political, and economic context of Ukraine at the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century. The “titular ethnos” in independent Ukraine had not reached the level of well-being, economic development, and cultural influence that would have permitted its representatives to declare that the main tasks of the belated modernity project had indeed been accomplished.

The nationalization of the past in its nostalgic and antiquarian version (a part of the project of “making Ukrainians”) had already reached its limit in the late 1990s. The history curriculum for schools, remodeled using templates from nineteenth-century populist historiography, did not create an attractive image of the past. The Soviet memory narrative with its optimistic utopian promises was discarded. The Soviet past represented a tragedy, a failure, a break in the “normal” development of the Ukrainian nation, and it ceased to exist. However, no narrative of the past appeared that could lead to historical optimism. A dreary past gave rise to a present that was no less bleak; such a past could at best be used to explain the failures and difficulties of the present. In 1999, according to UN data, 42 percent of Ukrainians belonged to the categories of “poor” and “very poor.” Poverty became the distinguishing feature of those groups that had most to do with the implementation of state historical politics: teachers, professors, researchers, and the staff of museums and cultural and educational institutions. In the second half of the 1990s, they were also touched by the widespread phenomena of hidden unemployment (for instance, lengthy unpaid holidays) and the late payment or underpayment of wages. Even when paid, wages could only cover the most basic of needs, at best.

The discrepancy between expectation and reality led to increased resentment and discontent. A segment of the Ukrainian intelligentsia and politi-
cians, national democrats or nationalists, readily came to the conclusion that the troubles and misfortunes of Ukraine were caused, on the one hand, by the communist/Soviet legacy in politics, economics, and mass consciousness and, on the other, uncertainty and inconsistency in nation-building, primarily in the area of language, and, of course, the sphere of historical politics.61

Despite the ambivalence of state historical politics between the 1990s and the early 2000s, the nationalization of the past remained its main vector. However, both the nationalization itself and the hesitant and, in many cases, reluctant removal of the Soviet narrative were not the result of plans elaborated by a group of visionaries in power. To a great extent, the processes associated with the nationalization of the past might be considered spontaneous actions or the contingent responses of various agents of historical politics to the challenges of belated nation-building—not always carefully considered and often dictated by the immediate circumstances and the logic of the situation rather than by a well-considered strategy.

The implementation of an antiquarian, culturally hermetic, and traumatized national narrative of historical memory was also complicated by the existence of a strong Soviet nostalgic narrative firmly rooted in the minds of millions of Ukrainian citizens. Moreover, nationalized history itself was highly reminiscent of the Soviet Ukrainian narrative (ethnographic, antiquarian), expanded by the addition of topics and figures that had previously been taboo. Paradoxically, the “nationalizers” who were supposed to modernize the Ukrainian historical narrative instead enthusiastically promoted the same antiquarian and archaic version of history and memory that had been popularized with equal enthusiasm by the Soviet regime, therefore never allowing Ukrainian history to embrace modernity.

All these issues accumulated in the conflicts that surfaced because of the intensification of the nationalization of history that took place after the Orange Revolution of 2004. This is not to say that these conflicts were not visible before the acceleration of historical politics. In the 1990s, the main defenders and promoters of the Soviet narrative that was quickly turning into Soviet nostalgia were prominent in public attacks concerning the “nationalized” version of Ukrainian history and memory. The main targets

61 The reform of Ukrainian orthography, elaborated in 1999, was not implemented at that time, not least because of excessive politicization. The plot line, once again, boiled down to the confrontation between the Soviet spelling and the “correct” or “national” one.
of their criticism were the canonical version of the Holodomor as the genoc- cide of Ukrainians and the attempt to politically rehabilitate the OUN and UPA. As the ruling elite adhered to an ambivalent model in its historical politics, the confrontation between the national/nationalist and Soviet nostal- gic memory narratives took place between “mnemonic warriors” devoid of a mass audience. One side of the conflict involved both nationalists, whose influence was limited to Western Ukraine, and national democrats, who had largely lost their influence by the late 1990s (their presence in politics was mainly due to their base of support in the rural regions and small towns of central Ukraine). The communists, whose influence was significant in the eastern and, to a certain extent, southern regions of Ukraine, were their main rivals. Since the middle of the first decade of the 2000s, this open confrontation between the national/nationalist and Soviet nostalgic memory narratives has escalated. It was at this very moment that the conflict moved to the level of mass politics.

National democratic and nationalist groups, fragmented and riven by internal strife, achieved political representation through the Our Ukraine Bloc in the parliamentary elections of 2002. Two years later, the dramatic presidential elections of 2004 made Viktor Yushchenko, the leader of this bloc, president of Ukraine. Consequently, these segments of the Ukrainian political class reached the highest echelons of political power. These ideologically motivated groups became major promoters of a “nationalization” of the past that implied a more intense promotion of the national/nationalist narrative and a more severe expulsion of the Soviet nostalgic interpretation.

Meanwhile, a new actor joined the ranks of supporters and promoters of the Soviet nostalgic memory narrative in the field of historical politics: the Party of Regions, with all its financial and organizational resources. Previously, this group was scarcely interested in historical politics. However, the big business conglomerates of eastern Ukraine were quite satisfied with the state of affairs when Soviet identity helped them keep control of the region that created their wealth.

Agents and promoters of both narratives actively inscribed issues related to the interpretation of the past into their actual political agendas. For instance, Viktor Yushchenko and his supporters used the famine of 1932–33 to discredit their opponents during the political crisis of 2006–2007. Communists and Party of Regions members accused their “orange” oppo-
nents of glorifying Nazi collaborators (the OUN and UPA) with their revisionist approach to the Great Patriotic War as well as using the past to divide the country. In the middle of the 2000s, history and memory began to be instrumentalized in the struggle for power.

Finally, after 2005, partisans of the Soviet nostalgic narrative in Ukraine acquired an external ally—the ruling class of the Russian Federation. In Russia, the Soviet nostalgic version of the memory narrative (mostly the myth of the Great Victory of 1945), enhanced by the imperial nostalgic version, became the ideological basis for and self-legitimization tool of the ruling elite that came to power in the late 1990s. The common stance on the past based on this narrative also served as the foundation for internal cohesion. In the middle of the 2000s, the escalation of historical politics of Russia, especially in connection with the active promotion of the idea of the “Russian world” and the protection of Russians living abroad, helped create an alliance with the promoters of the Soviet nostalgic narrative in neighboring countries, especially Ukraine.

In Ukraine, the adherents of the national/nationalist memory narrative also had an external ally, the Ukrainian diaspora, which was well represented by civil society organizations and academic institutions (for example, the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies and the Ukrainian Research Institute at Harvard University). Representatives of these diaspora organizations played an active role in promoting the canonical discourse of the Holodomor as genocide and significantly contributed to the popularization of the nationalist narrative, particularly the social and political legitimation of the OUN and UPA.

Starting in the middle of the 2000s, two narratives, both evolving into a more exclusivist approach, began their territorial expansion, as their respective supporters strove for influence at the national level. This was probably caused by the “The Battle for Kyiv” that took place during the 2004 presidential elections and resulted in the clash of representatives of two regions whose attitude toward historical issues was based on two mutually exclusive memory narratives. Industrial and financial elites of Donbass relied on the Soviet nostalgic narrative; in this respect they became allies with the Russian

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ruling elite that had begun their ideological, economic, and political expansion along the geopolitical perimeter of Russia. Commercial, financial, and bureaucratic elites, along with the middle class of Galicia, the new *nomenklatura*, a part of the intelligentsia, and the academic community both in central Ukraine and among the Ukrainian diaspora were oriented toward the national/nationalist narrative. As noted above, between these two poles a space of ambivalence was created that eventually became a battlefield.

Opinion polls provide incomplete but important insight into the minds of these territories at the moment when the escalation of historical politics began. For instance, according to data from the Razumkov Center, in 2005 almost 46 percent of respondents in western Ukraine agreed with the statement, “Ukraine is the only heir of Kievan Rus’,” as opposed to 26 percent in the center, 17.6 percent in the east, and 9.6 percent in the south. The statement, the “History of Ukraine is an integral part of the great Eastern Slavic people, as is the history of Belarus and Russia,” was supported by 17.4 percent respondents in the western regions of Ukraine, 41.5 percent in the central part of the country, 60 percent in the south, and 54 percent in the east.63

The efforts of Viktor Yushchenko and his supporters, who opened a new era of historical politics, sought to expand the scope of the national/nationalist narrative in space and time. For instance, one of its central elements, “the Holodomor as genocide,” (ideologically and politically significant both as a rejection of the Soviet narrative and an affirmation of the national one) was elevated to the level of national commemorative practices. Similar attempts to promote the nationalist narrative, especially the heroic myth of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army and the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, complemented this policy between 2006 and 2010.

There were two ways to expand the national/nationalist memory narrative: on the one hand, the space of memory was packed with new places and symbols previously absent in the classical national narrative (mainly the events, dates, and historical figures of the twentieth century); and on the other hand, a revival of the classical narrative brought back into circulation names and dates that had been partially forgotten or taboo. This happened not only in the pages of textbooks and scholarly works but in the public

space as well. The basic framework of national history did not change: a millenium of statehood (ensured by the transition from one state form into another); the continuity of history rooted in prehistoric times; and pathos of suffering and struggle. 64

The Soviet period (as a tragic time, the rupture of national history) was mainly represented by the famine of 1932–33 and political purges and repressions. At the level of visual national symbols, monuments, and sites of memory, this narrative was represented by the newly erected Bykivnia Graves National Historic Memorial and the Holodomor memorials in Kyiv and Kharkiv. The national narrative was represented by the Hetmans’ Capital memorial complex in Baturyn, the memorial to the heroes of Kruty, the Chyhyryn Historic and Cultural Reserve, and Khortytsia National Park (this had been created in the Soviet period). Monuments to Prince Danylo of Halych, Petro Sahaidachny, Ivan Mazepa, Mykhailo Hrushevsky, Symon Petliura, and Nestor Makhno were erected in Ukrainian cities. Hundreds of streets took the names of figures from the national/nationalist narrative.

The period after the Orange Revolution witnessed the visible reinforcement and territorial expansion of the nationalist memory narrative, which had previously been mainly localized in the western part of the country, especially in the regions of Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, and Ternopil. This narrative was already represented by its promoters in a distilled form: Ukrainian radical nationalism was understood and presented exclusively as a national liberation movement that played an exceptional role in the achievement of independence. The dark sides of the nationalist movement became the object of a purposeful amnesia.

In 2005, a commission of historians created by the government submitted a report that assessed the activities of the OUN and UPA. 65 Despite differences of opinion between the members of the commission on the com-

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64 A commercial media project carried out in 2007 by the StarMedia Company was symptomatic in this sense. A hundred episodes of historical animation ranged from the Bronze Age to Bohdan Khmelnytsky’s death. The authors chose to base it on works by Ukrainian historians from the nineteenth to the first third of the twentieth century that served as both the source of inspiration and the factual basis of the project. See “Istoriya Ukrayiny,” video, YouTube, 2007, accessed April 12, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLNHlpbN2c0aTuXL4Edk8Q1sobyzeU3Fs.

65 Orhanizatsiya ukrayins’koho nacionalistiv i Ukrayinsk’a povstans’koj armi: Fakhyvyi vyznavok rob north krupy istoriyv pry Uryadovoi komisiyi z vyshchennya diyalnosti OUN i UPA, NAN Ukrayiny; Instytut istorii Ukrayiny (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 2005) 53.
prehensive coverage of the topic, the general conclusion was quite loyal to these organizations and, thus, provided a precondition for their full “political rehabilitation.” By this time, though, de facto rehabilitation already happened: the OUN and UPA became a fixture in Ukrainian school textbooks as heroes of the national liberation movement. After 2005, the political rehabilitation of the OUN and UPA was effectively converted into the glorification of these organizations on the level of state historical politics, leading to their transformation into one of the central elements of the national/nationalist narrative.

Inspired by the findings of the academic commission, Yushchenko charged the government with producing a program of “comprehensive study and objective coverage of the activities of the Ukrainian liberation movement” for 2006–2007. The aim of the program was the “consolidation and development of the Ukrainian nation, providing historical justice for the participants of the Ukrainian liberation movement, the promotion of the process of national reconciliation and mutual understanding, and the recovery of national memory.” Judging by the text of the degree, the “Ukrainian liberation movement,” in Yushchenko’s eyes, was synonymous with the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists and its predecessors and political branches: the Ukrainian Military Organization (UVO), Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), and Ukrainian Supreme Liberation Council (UHVR). Apparently, it was not accidental that the decree was published on October 14, the day celebrated by Ukrainian nationalist organizations as the anniversary of the establishment of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army.

On October 14, 2005, the Kyiv city center had its first street rally dedicated to the anniversary of the creation of the UPA; before that, such events only took place in the western regions. The march culminated in a physical clash between nationalists, represented by the Ukrainian National Assembly–Ukrainian Nationalist Self-Defense, and “leftists” mobilized by the Progressive Socialist Party and the communists. Henceforth, marches

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dedicated to the UPA became an annual even in Kyiv, with local authorities cautiously separating participants and opponents by assigning them different parts of the city center.68

Between 2005 and 2010, the National Bank issued commemorative coins dedicated to Roman Shukhevych, Olena Telicha, and Oleh Olzhych.69 As already mentioned, portraits of Roman Shukhevych and Stepan Bandera appeared on postage stamps and envelopes issued by the state postal agency Ukrposhta. In 2007, President Yushchenko ordered the government to commemorate Yaroslav and Yaroslava Stetsko, the leaders of the OUN-B after Bandera’s death. Their names were to be given to streets, avenues, squares, and educational institutions. The Ministry of Education had to provide “objective coverage of the Ukrainian liberation movement and the participation of Yaroslav and Yaroslava Stetsko in the curricula and new textbooks of educational institutions.”70

In 2007, following another Yushchenko decree, Ukraine celebrated the sixty-fifth anniversary of the creation of the UPA. Between 2006 and 2010, the president conferred the title of Hero of Ukraine on Roman Shukhevych, his son Yuri Shukhevych, and Stepan Bandera. The same period saw the national screening of the television series Sобор на крowi, dedicated exclusively to the history of the OUN, UPA, and related nationalist organizations.71

On January 1, 2008, a torchlit procession dedicated to the birthday of Stepan Bandera took place in Kyiv, organized by the All-Ukrainian Union “Свобода.” Kyiv authorities did not interfere. The event in the capital, a rallying point for nationalists from other regions, became annual and acquired special meaning after 2010, when Viktor Yanukovych and the Party of Regions rose to power. Participants in the processions saw them as protests against the Yanukovich regime, while representatives of the “regime”

71 “Sобор на крowi,” 10 episodes, available online at: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLhcYfZkUXzlZBuqek13gTzXzu0Efj. The title of the TV series plays on the double connotation of the Ukrainian word собор, which means both “cathedral” and “unity” (hence the title can be translated both as “Cathedral [built] on blood” and “Unity of blood.” The series did not contain unrestrained apology for the OUN and UPA.
willingly used the actions of the nationalists to launch a campaign against “fascism in Ukraine” (for instance, the government-sponsored “antifascist marches” of the spring of 2013).

The expansion and radicalization of the national/nationalist memory narrative carried out by the state authorities coincided with the intensified political instrumentalization of the Soviet nostalgic narrative. Supporters of the latter regarded the growth of nationalism in public life, both real and perceived, as a suitable opportunity to discredit Yushchenko and preserve the loyalty of those who valued and cherished the Soviet nostalgic narrative.

In the middle of the 2000s, the regional schism around “historical issues” increased and reached the national level. Prior to that, the promoters of divergent narratives rarely met each other in person. Manifestations of the national/nationalist narrative in its moderate version might cause some discontent but were rarely actively instrumentalized in the eastern parts of the country. The state did not care much about the range and the depth of its internalization. The bureaucracy in Kyiv was content with statistics showing the growing number of Ukrainian schools and printed copies of history textbooks. The Soviet nostalgic narrative in the southeast was preserved and cultivated by local elites as a means of maintaining Soviet-type social hierarchies, systems of loyalties, and patrimonialism.

According to polling by the Razumkov Center in 2009, 73.4 percent of respondents in the southern regions (including Crimea) and 51.7 percent in the eastern regions responded affirmatively to the question, “Do you wish to restore the Soviet Union and the socialist system?” On average, 49.2 percent of the Ukrainian population agreed with them. According to opinion polls from the Rating-Group in 2010 that used a different methodology, 46 percent of respondents regretted the collapse of the USSR.

During Yushchenko’s time in office, some attempts were made to force the Soviet nostalgic narrative from the symbolic space. However, local authorities, especially in the regions east of Dnipro, did not take the presidential decrees on decommunization seriously; moreover, there was clear evidence of

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sabotage in many cases.\textsuperscript{74} There were also halfhearted attempts to integrate part of the Soviet nostalgic narrative into the national/nationalist interpretation, such as the reconciliation between Soviet veterans and UPA combatants and awarding of the title of Hero of Ukraine to Oleksiy Berest, who participated in the symbolic hoisting of the Flag of Victory over the Reichstag; Oleksandr Momotenko; Lieutenant General Kuzma Derevyanko, the head of the Mykolaiv Organization of Veterans; machine gunner Mykhailo Vasylyshyn; Tatiana Markus, a member of the Soviet underground during the Nazi occupation; and to miners, directors of enterprises; and others.

Both decommunization (linked with the “Holodomor as genocide” formula) and attempts at reconciliation only aggravated the growing conflict: the former was seen as an attack on the sacred past, and the latter as evidence of weakness and political maneuvering. The promotion of the Ukrainian nationalist movement myth was particularly irritating and, at the same time, useful for mnemonic warriors from the east. First, it was a direct disavowal of the Soviet experience and memory in which the OUN and UPA were regarded as collaborators and accomplices of the Nazis. Second, it provided the perfect grounds for manipulating public opinion in the regions where the Soviet nostalgic memory narrative dominated or was strong. Yushchenko and his allies were easily presented as promoters of “Ukrainian fascism.”

In the middle of the 2000s, thanks mainly to the efforts of Communists and Soviet veteran organizations, the anti-nationalist rhetoric of the Soviet times re-emerged in public discourse. The open letter of the Kirovograd Oblast Organization of Veterans addressed to Volodymyr Lytvyn, the speaker of the Verkhovna Rada, reads: “The OUN and the military structures of the UPA branded themselves as pro-fascist organizations, as servitors of fascism, as agents of the fascist regime in the territory of Ukraine. This is why the recognition of OUN members and UPA fighters is confrontational, as veterans of a ‘Resistance movement’ in the Great Patriotic War, it is considered an insult to the memory of Soviet soldiers killed in action

and hundreds of thousands of people who became victims of the OUN.”

The veterans also demanded that the new generation of history textbooks be edited and amended in order to show the “truthful and unbiased story about the mass participation of the Ukrainian people in the fight against fascism,” and also the “negative and treacherous role of the OUN-UPA, and the collaboration of their strongmen with the Hitlerites.”

Passions around “nationalist traitors” and “Soviet heroes” went beyond purely symbolic debates. For instance, attempts to politically rehabilitate the UPA were combined with efforts to equalize the social status and benefits for its veterans with those of veterans of the Great Patriotic War. The 1993 law “On the Status of the Veterans of War, Guarantees of Their Social Protection” provided for such an option only for those UPA soldiers who were rehabilitated as victims of political repression, took part in the anti-Nazi struggle between 1941–44, and did not participate in crimes against humanity. This law denied the status of the military veteran to anybody who fought against the forces of the Red Army or the NKVD.

Between 2002 and 2009, thirteen draft laws and resolutions promoting the introduction of equal status in various forms were registered in the Verkhovna Rada, nine of them between 2005 and 2009. Almost every one of these projects appealed to reconciliation and the restoration of “historical truth” or justice. Some of them sought to “legalize” OUN members as well, recognizing them as war veterans. Communists and their allies did their best to block these projects and to submit counter-drafts. Two such draft laws and one draft resolution were dedicated to the “Status and Social Guarantees for the Citizens of Ukraine—Victims of the OUN and UPA in 1939–1941, during the Great Patriotic War and in the Postwar Years.” Naturally, they also looked for “historical justice.”

Opinion polls from this period signaled a clear-cut regional repartition of attitudes on this matter. At the end of 2007, 73.7 percent of respondents in the

76 In 2005, the first fifth-grade history textbooks written according to the new 12-year school program were published.
western part of the country supported bestowing the status of national liberation fighters on OUN members and UPA soldiers, either fully or subject to conditions; 37.9 percent of respondents in the center and southeast of the country supported this idea, and only 13.4 percent in Donbass and Crimea were in favor of this.\footnote{79} In 2010, the issue of the reconciliation of the Soviet Army veterans and UPA veterans divided respondents into three practically equal groups: 32.9 percent saw it in a positive light, 33.2 percent had a negative view, and 33.9 percent were undecided or were not interested in the issue.\footnote{80}

Viktor Yushchenko joined the game. In January 2008 he submitted the draft law “On the Legal Status of the Participants of the Struggle for the Independence of Ukraine in the 1920s–1990s.”\footnote{81} The draft represented an attempt to radically change the status and political legitimation of the whole history of Ukrainian radical nationalism, particularly the OUN, from the Ukrainian Military Organization (UVO) to the Ukrainian Supreme Liberation Council (UHVR).\footnote{82} It was the first and most determined attempt to elevate the nationalist memory narrative to the national level. The draft law was submitted when Yushchenko could count on a favorable majority in the Verkhovna Rada and its submission status was listed as “urgent.” In March of the same year, supporters of the president tried to approve the draft law “in general,” but the document was not even included in the list of issues to be addressed at the plenary sessions. In December 2008, the draft law was taken off the table when the president lost the support of the second largest parliamentary group, the Yulia Tymoshenko Bloc.\footnote{83}

Defeated in parliament, Yushchenko used the only means at his disposal to resolve the issue. In January 2010, he signed a decree: “On Honoring the

\footnote{82} The leaders of the UVO initiated the creation of the OUN in 1929 as a political wing of their organization.
\footnote{83} In June 2011, a clone of this draft law was submitted by a deputy from the Yulia Tymoshenko Bloc. Now the list of those who struggled for independence also included organizations and state formations from the 1917–1920 period and the Ukrainian Helsinki Union (Group). See “Proyekt Zakonu pro status uchasnykiv borotby za nezalezhnist Ukrayiny v XX stoliti,” June 15, 2011, http://w1.c1.rada.gov.ua/pls/zweb2/webproc4_i?p=%20151311=40664.
Participants of the Struggle for the Independence of Ukraine in the twentieth century.\footnote{“Ukaz Prezydenta Ukrainy ‘Pro vshanuvannia uchasnykiv borot’by za nezalezhnist’ Ukrainy u XX stolitii,” January 28, 2010, http://zakon.5.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/75/2010.} This time, he listed all those who fought politically or in military groups connected to the independence of Ukraine, from the Central Rada to the OUN, UPA, and Ukrainian Supreme Liberation Council (UHVR). The presidential decree charged the government with preparing a new draft law on the legal status of the participants of the struggle for independence.

His opponents also wasted no time. In September 2009, communists registered a draft resolution on the “Day of Remembrance of Victims of the Terrorist Gangs of the OUN-UPA.”\footnote{Proekt Postanovy, “Pro vshanuvannya Dnya pam’яти zhertv terorystychnykh band OUN-UPA,” September 3, 2009, http://w1.c1.rada.gov.ua/pls/zweb2/webproc4_1?pf3511=36002.} The radical rhetoric was understandable: a presidential election campaign was gaining traction in the country. On April 1, 2009, the parliament adopted a resolution on celebrating the ninetieth anniversary of the Komsomol in Ukraine.\footnote{“Postanova Verkhovnoyi Rady Ukrayiny Pro vidznachennya 90-richchya stvorennya komsomolu Ukrayiny vid,” April 1, 2009, http://zakon3.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1221-vi.} It is hard to say whether it was intentional or a coincidence, but the project was adopted on April Fool’s Day. In April 2010, Nataliya Vitrenko, the leader of the Party of Progressive Socialists, filed a lawsuit seeking to cancel Yushchenko’s decree on celebrating the participants of the independence struggle. Proceedings took three years, and the case was heard in courts on three levels, until the final decision by the Supreme Administrative Court of Kyiv upheld Yushchenko’s decree.\footnote{“Sud ostatochno vyznav voyiniv OUN-UPA bortsyamy za nezalezhnist,” Ukrayinskiy Tyzhden, February 5, 2013, http://tyzhden.ua/News/71501.} However, nobody was going to implement it by that point.

Counterattacks took place, and not only in parliament. In the fall of 2007, the city of Krasnodon in Luhansk Oblast enthusiastically celebrated the sixty-fifth anniversary of the Youth Guard (\textit{Molodaia Guardija}) organization;\footnote{The “Youth Guard,” an underground organization created in 1942, was glorified in the novel by the Soviet author Alexander Fadeyev and in the cult movie by Sergei Gerasimov (1948). The Youth Guard was one of the most significant symbols of the Soviet myth of the Great Patriotic War. In the years of perestroika and after 1991, alternative versions emerged claiming that it was, in reality, an underground organization of the OUN.} almost two years later in May 2009, Krasnodon celebrated the sixty-fifth anniversary of the Museum of the Young Guard.\footnote{“V Krasnodone otprazdnovali yubiley Ordena Druzhby narodov muzeya ‘Molodoi Gvardii,’” Cxid, May 18, 2009, http://cxid.info/v-krasnodone-otprazdnovali-ubiley-orden-drujby-narodov-muzeya-molodaya-gvardiya-n60380.}
The next year, again with the support of the local authorities in Luhansk, a monument dedicated to the residents of the region “who died at the hands of the nationalist hit squads of the OUN-UPA” was unveiled. A similar monument, “A Shot in the Back,” was erected in Simferopol in 2007. In October 2006, confrontations between nationalists and communists took place in Kharkiv near the UPA memorial stone laid in 1992 by activists of the People’s Movement. The mayor of the city, Mikhail Dobkin of the Party of Regions, planned to follow the example of Simferopol and erect a monument to the victims of the OUN and UPA.90 In November 2008, two days after the unveiling of the Holodomor memorial, an “international” (in fact, Ukrainian-Russian) conference took place in Kharkiv organized by the Russian Foundation “Historical Memory” and the Federal Archival Agency of the Russian Federation. The conference simply broadcast ideological invectives against Viktor Yushchenko and his policy of promoting the Holodomor as genocide, creating a scandal in Kharkiv and provoking street protests by Svoboda.91 In Odessa in September 2008, the local Prosvita offices were attacked by activists of the Rodina and Forpost non-governmental organizations.92

When supporters and promoters of the Soviet nostalgic memory narrative (the Party of Regions and communists) rose to power in 2010, it seemed the hour of their revenge had come. The page dedicated to the Holodomor disappeared from the president’s website, provoking predictable outbursts by opponents of Yanukovych, but it was quickly restored. Viktor Yanukovych refused to consider the Holodomor as genocide, but otherwise he left the canonical version of the national/nationalist narrative untouched. All other components of the national historical myth and related ideological practices were unaffected.

In 2010, the Party of Regions used an additional resource to address the problem of Ukrainian-Polish relations during World War II. A moving exhibition, “Volhynia Massacre: Polish and Jewish victims of the OUN-UPA,” toured Kyiv and the major cities of eastern and southern Ukraine, such as Kharkiv, Luhansk, Odessa, and Sevastopol from the spring to the fall of

2010. Curiously, this action recalled similar events from Yushchenko’s time in office, repeating the techniques and methods used in the moving exhibition “Ukraine Remembers! Holodomor of 1932–1933—The Genocide of the Ukrainian People.”

Allies of the Party of Regions were even bolder and more radical. On the eve of Holodomor Victims Remembrance Day, the editor of the regional CPU newspaper in Luhansk (and a deputy of the regional council) declared in her blog that she was going to celebrate with her friends this day: “we will eat delicious food, joke, and even dance.”93 A week later in the same blog, she praised the actions of the authorities in 1932–33 directed “against the kulaks” and used epithets and profanities to characterize those who observed the remembrance day. In Zaporizhzhia, local communists put a bust of Joseph Stalin on the porch of the house hosting the regional committee of the CPU.

The return to the Soviet nostalgic narrative in 2010–13 on the national level was mostly conveyed through the promotion of the myth of the “Great Patriotic War” inherited from the Soviet era: the standard memorial practices related to round-numbered anniversaries and honors bestowed on Soviet partisans, the Red Army, and the memory of war victims were restored. In May 2011, the parliament introduced a “new” annual ritual, “a minute of silence to commemorate those who died in the Great Patriotic War”; this was actually the revival of a Soviet-era practice.94 Between 2010 and 2011, the government issued a set of resolutions which celebrated “non-round” anniversaries of the liberation of Ukraine from “Fascist German invaders,” and in 2013, the president’s decree began preparations for the seventieth anniversary of the Great Victory (to be celebrated in 2015). Between May and September of the same year, the parliament initiated the passage of more than a dozen resolutions dedicated to the anniversary dates of the liberation of Ukrainian cities and regions from the same German Fascist invaders: fifteen such projects were registered.95

On the local level, the Soviet nostalgic narrative triumphed mostly in

95 Calculated based on the information found at the official website of Verkhovna Rada: http://zakons.rada.gov.ua/laws/main.
those regions where its dominance was never threatened. In several cases, it made a comeback in the symbolic space of places where it had been sidelined by the previous authorities. For instance, the mayor of Odessa, a member of the Party of Regions, decided to reconstruct the wall of commemorative plaques to the Heroes of Socialist Labor.96 The years 2011–13 also saw several attempts to reestablish the Soviet nostalgic narrative in the territories where the national/nationalist narrative had traditionally dominated. These deliberate provocations never failed to arouse reactions from nationalists.

While promoting the Soviet nostalgic memory narrative, the historical politics of 2010–13 never negated the bases of the national/nationalist memory narrative, especially its antiquarian dimensions. Its legitimizing function was recognized by all the groups that rose to power, including those who exploited “anti-nationalist” discourses. In 2010, the tricentennial of “Pylyp Orlyk’s Constitution” was celebrated (in spring, schools held a competition on knowledge of the document while universities organized a student essay contest) along with the 440th birthday of Hetman Petro Sahaidachny. The government created the Coordination Committee on the Issue of the Development of the Cossackdom of Ukraine in 2011; however, it was a purely symbolic act. In 2012, the 360th anniversary of the foundation of Chortomlytska Zaporizhska Sich was commemorated. Topics directly related to the nationalist movement in Ukraine were almost always the ones that sparked controversy.

The dramatic events of the winter of 2013–14, the annexation of Crimea, the “Russian spring” in Donbass, the attempts to repeat it in Kharkiv and Odessa, and the war in eastern Ukraine led to a crucial turn in historical politics and a new wave of the nationalization of the past. The confrontation between protesters and the authorities on the Maidan gave new life to the OUN slogan “Glory to Ukraine—glory to the heroes!” The slogan now referenced protesters regardless of their political affiliation. Compare this political ecumenicalism with another nationalist slogan, “Glory to the nation—death to the enemies!” which is still in use only among radical nationalists. The heroic Cossack myth was resurrected on the Maidan both as a form of ideological support and in everyday practice: for example, in the names of self-defense units (sotnia, the hundred), the use of the term pobratymy (“sworn brothers”) as the self-des-

ignation of the members of these units, and the integration of Cossack symbols into the emblems of these units. It was on the Maidan that the myth of heroic self-sacrifice (Cossackdom, the Ukrainian People's Republic, the heroes of Kruty, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army) superseded the victimhood mythology (the Holodomor). Due to the nature of things, Russia recovered its status as the main historical enemy of Ukraine; the threat of its eastern neighbor was first represented by Vladimir Putin and then, after the annexation of Crimea and the start of war in Donbass, in a more general form.

Simultaneously, the Soviet nostalgic narrative itself transformed into a quasi-ideology of war in the territories of Donbass controlled by separatists and supported by Russia. The anti-“Banderovites” myth cultivated earlier evolved into the idea of “Ukrainian fascism,” which became the rallying cry of pro-Russian separatists. The myth of the “Great Patriotic War” was retranslated into the collective consciousness as a simulacrum of a new war “against the fascists.” This pattern was epitomized by a T-34 tank, removed from its pedestal in Kostiantynivka and restored with the inscription “On to Kiev!” painted on it (during World War II, they used to adorn tanks with the phrase “On to Berlin!”). The parade of prisoners of war (Ukrainian army soldiers and voluntary battalions) through Donetsk in August 2014 seemed like a somewhat parodic and tragic copy of the “parade” of Wehrmacht prisoners in Moscow in July 1944. Meanwhile, “historical” arguments were used as justification for the annexation of Crimea and the support of separatism in eastern Ukraine, which were predicated on the idea of “Novorossiya” (see chapter 8).

State-level historical politics in Ukraine in 2014–19 moved in two different directions. First, during Yushchenko’s presidency, the nationalist memory narrative became significantly stronger. Second, the “spontaneous” decommunization of the winter of 2014 (the so-called “Leninfall” orchestrated by members of nationalist organizations, primarily Svoboda) mutated into state policy with the adoption of new memorial laws in April 2015. The law “On the Condemnation of the Communist and National-Socialist (Nazi) Totalitarian Regimes and Prohibition of Propaganda of their Symbols” outlawed all public representations of communism (with some exceptions related to scholarly research and the arts).

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97 The whole array of slogans used by the separatists was caricatured in Sergei Loznitsa’s movie Donbass (2018) during the scene where alleged rebels were interviewed by a German journalist.
At the same time, the law “On the Legal Status and Celebration of the Memory of Participants of the Struggle for the Independence of Ukraine” provided special status for organizations, events, and figures represented as fighters for independence. If we consider that by the time the law was adopted, most organizations listed therein were already presented in the officially recognized national narrative (including textbooks), it is easy to see that the main goal of this law was to promote and legalize the OUN and the UPA.

Politics at the local level complemented the efforts of the center. At the end of January 2018, the council of Lviv oblast recommended flying the flag of the OUN on administrative and communal buildings (this also included schools). Following Lviv, the Ternopil city council made the same decision in early February. In mid-February, the initiative was picked up by the deputies of the Ivano-Frankivsk city council, who presented a list of twenty-three days during the year when the flag of the OUN should be flown. In March 2018, the Zhytomyr regional council scheduled days when this flag should be displayed on the buildings of local official institutions (six such days were chosen). The Khmelnytskyi city and regional councils then joined the parade. In mid-March after a heated debate, a similar decision was made by the Lviv city council,98 and a few months later in May 2018, the city council of Poltava joined the OUN flag fan club.99 The city mayor supported this decision.

Across Ukraine, it was the local deputies of Svoboda who initiated these processes. The set of memorable dates was basically the same everywhere: it primarily included significant dates in the history of the OUN and the UPA. In the western regions, the birthday of Stepan Bandera was the most important, while in the central regions, the list of days was much shorter, and representatives of Svoboda placed emphasis not on the “flag of the OUN” but rather on the less controversial “flag of the struggle.”

Beyond “party” nationalists, a broader circle of actors, from president Poroshenko to “cultural figures,” joined in the policy of promoting the nationalist narrative of memory throughout Ukraine. In 2017, Chervony was released: a feature film that presented (and lionized) the story of a UPA soldier who led an uprising in a Stalinist-era camp. That same year, several popular Ukrainian rock performers recorded the “new march of the Ukrainian army,” which is an adapted version of the 1932 OUN march. The presidential guards and orchestra took part in the music video. The performance of the march was accompanied by rifle spinning and took place against the background of the coat of arms of the OUN. The year after, the march was officially performed during a military parade on Independence Day.

According to surveys carried out by the Rating sociological firm in 2013–15, the population’s positive attitude toward OUN and UPA was growing. For example, the share of respondents who agreed with the assertion that the OUN-UPA should be recognized as “participants in the struggle for independence” increased during this period from 27 to 41 percent. The proportion of opponents of this idea decreased from 32 to 38 percent. Maximum support was expressed by the residents of western Ukraine (76 percent), residents in eastern and southern Ukraine expressed the least support (23 percent and 27 percent, respectively), and central Ukraine maintained its traditional middle spot, with 42 percent of residents expressing support.100

These data correlate with the results of another study. According to a survey by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (KIIS) in October 2017, responses to the question “Do you support the recognition of the OUN-UPA as participants of the struggle for state independence of Ukraine?” were distributed as follows: “yes” and “rather yes” were indicated by 65.9 percent of respondents in the west, 39 percent in the central regions, 28.7 percent in the south, and 13.3 percent in the east. “Most likely no” and “no” were indicated by 22.8 percent of respondents in the central regions (here was also the largest share of those who “found it difficult to answer,” 33.2 percent), 43.2 percent in the south, and 50.3 percent in the east.101

In September 2017, the Rating agency asked the same question to the same number of respondents. This time the share of those who supported the idea of recognition of members of the OUN-UPA as “participants in the struggle for independence” reached the highest score ever: 49 percent; at the same time, the proportion of opponents dropped to 29 percent, with 23 percent of those selecting the option “difficult to answer.” The regional division in attitudes persisted: the percentage of support for the recognition of OUN-UPA members reached 80 percent in the west and 51 percent in the center, while the east recorded 19 percent pro and 53 percent con, and in the south 30 percent were in favor and 46 percent opposed recognition.¹⁰²

The following year, however, the situation changed slightly. The percentage of those who supported the recognition of the OUN-UPA as fighters for independence dropped to 45 percent while the share of opponents rose to 33 percent. Regional discrepancies remained almost the same. The western regions of the country had the highest proportion of those in favor despite a considerable drop to 71 percent. The center stood at 45 percent pro and 29 percent con, with 23 percent undecided, whereas the east surprised observers with an increase in the percentage of supporters of recognition (up to 26 percent), although the percentage of opponents remained almost the same: 52 percent. In the south, the picture was the same: 30 percent were in favor and 46 percent opposed the proposition.¹⁰³

There are three major explanations for the growth of the share of sympathizers/supporters of the OUN and UPA after 2014. First, the polls did not cover the territories under the control of the self-proclaimed Luhansk and Donetsk People’s Republics and Crimea. Therefore, the share of those who would undoubtedly hold a negative attitude toward these organizations decreased. Second, the media’s intensive promotion of the UPA heroic myth on the front lines in the east, as well as the expansion of this myth into central Ukraine could influence public opinion to certain extent. Third, the wording of the question programmed a positive answer: UPA soldiers were fighters for independence by default; one of the memorial laws passed in 2015 made this status official. Furthermore, the law made “the public denial of the

legitimacy of the struggle for the independence of Ukraine in the twentieth century” illegal. (See Chapter 8)

Once again, the sociological data shown above indicates persistent regional divisions in the attitudes toward the most important icons of the nationalist narrative, with the south and east of the country proving to be the most resistant.

We may summarize the analysis of the process of nationalization of memory and history in Ukraine from the 1990s to the 2010s in the following points. The restoration and promotion of the national/nationalist memory narrative, followed by the expulsion of the Soviet nostalgic narrative and then the partial nationalization of the latter between the 1990s and 2000s, fits the standard trajectory of the establishment of statehood, the shaping of a new system of identities and civil loyalties, and the development of political elites.

The most evident problem of this process was the intellectual quality and merits of its main agents—the cultural and political elites. At first, the nationalized party and Soviet *nomenklatura* relied on habitual approaches and methods, which are easily applicable in mono-ideological systems but not very efficient in pluralistic societies. Through inertia, these methods continued to function in the 1990s and 2000s, but by this time, their efficiency was questionable, as the number of agents of historical politics continued to increase and the society itself was changing rapidly. With the advent of the information era and the development of electronic communication, the administrative bureaucratic practices of historical politics inherited from the Soviet era faced a new set of challenges. However, a new generation of nationalizers continued to follow the Soviet-like practices in the field.

Cultural and political groups who acted as promoters of the national/nationalist narrative were unable to create a new agenda. They selected an exclusivist model of historical memory that was created a century earlier under very different social, cultural, and political conditions. Or, alternatively, this model selected them. This archaic, antiquated vision of the past shaped by the needs of the present did not correspond to Ukraine’s historical situation at the end of the twentieth century. In practice, the “return to roots” that seemed natural and necessary to partisans of the “national renaissance” resulted in the archaization of the historical identity of the target audiences. The habitual metaphor of “national revival” that became a rallying slogan at
the end of the nineteenth century was taken too literally at the end of the twentieth century and proved a semantic trap for its own admirers.

All the problems, antagonisms, and conflicts described above appeared quite clearly during the “reformatting” of spaces of memory, which are discussed in the next chapter.