

# Collective Memories and “Blank Spots” of the Ukrainian Past as Addressed by the Lviv Intellectuals

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## New Emphases in the Politics of Memory in Ukraine in the Beginning of the 2000s

This paper offers a brief examination of the recent intellectual debates unfolding in Lviv, the “least Sovietized, least Russified” (Ignatieff 1993: 125) city of Ukraine, focusing on “local” historical narratives and symbolically charged figures that became issues of national concern. By “recent”, I mean primarily the presidential period of Viktor Yushchenko (2005–2010), a presently concluded chapter in Ukraine’s political history. These five years have been marked by the ambitious vision to consolidate the new Ukraine, whose socio-political unity would be based on a common vision of the nation’s future and supported by a broad consensus about the nation’s past. The first part of the equation was propelled by the hope to incorporate Ukraine into the European structures and NATO, while the second part brought to the fore the necessity of an ideological consensus about the contentious history of Ukraine in the 20th century. From the perspective of the present day, one may conclude that the efforts made in both directions were not crowned with success under Yushchenko’s presidency, and today’s Ukrainian authorities drive an essentially different political line. Nevertheless, notwithstanding the immediate results of this period, the quite radical political initiatives in the sphere of the politics of memory, as well as the intellectual discussions and popular responses triggered by these initiatives, may have a long afterlife.

There is no exaggeration in the statement that, at least during Yushchenko's presidency, "the national re-evaluation of the history of World War II is a central element in constructing an anti-Soviet, Ukrainian national history" (Jilge 2007: 104). The special place of this period is defined not only by the particularly massive suffering and innumerable human atrocities that took place, and not only by the enormity of the task of rescuing the "real" history of the wartime from the captivity of the Soviet myth. In Galicia and Lviv, as elsewhere in Ukraine, the Second World War remains an unburied past; still alive in contradictory cultural memories (Erl1 2008: 2); still full of conceptual "blank spots" as well as newly discovered sites of mass executions, and still not moulded into an intelligible narrative based on historical evidence rather than on assumptions and speculations. Moreover, the topic of the Second World War proved to be a real minefield for the "Orange" politicians. Taking into account the exterminatory policies of the Nazis towards the Slavic population of the occupied territories, it would be logical to make an effort to present the enormous atrocities directed against Ukrainians during the war in terms of a genocide – as in the much debated case of the Great Famine. Nevertheless, Yushchenko and his allies proved to be reluctant to pursue "the policy of legal recognition and public commemoration of the extermination of a significant part of the Ukrainian population by Nazi Germany as genocide" (Katchanovski 2010: 983). This occurred because of the fear of putting at risk relations with one of the EU pillars, Germany, on the one hand, and the infected issue of participation of the Ukrainian nationalists in the wartime genocide of the Jews and ethnic cleansing of Poles, on the other hand. Hence, the Second World War remains a domain where the clash of "traumatic" collective memories, insufficient academic knowledge and contradictory political rhetoric is particularly evident. This is especially true in respect to such topics as the wartime activities of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), its military formations such as *Nachtigall* and *Roland* battalions, the Ukrainian Resurgent Army (UPA), and evaluation of their leaders and symbolic figures.

In Lviv, the legacy and symbolic meaning of the wartime leader of the OUN, Stepan Bandera<sup>52</sup>, has been a permanent topic of public discourses since the late *perestroika* time. The figure of Bandera – as well as his political supporters and rank-and-file Ukrainian insurgents referred to by the name *banderivtsi* – became a focal point in the counter-narratives on the Second World War which were rooted in the collective memory and circulated in Western Ukraine throughout several post-war decades. Although on a national scale the region is often perceived as a stronghold of the Bandera myth and the place where OUN and UPA members have always been unanimously hailed as national heroes, an examination of the recent Lviv-based polemics surrounding them shows that, in fact, the actual state of affairs is more complicated than that.

The recent "Bandera debate" was triggered by granting the title of Hero of Ukraine upon the chief commander of the UPA, Roman Shukhevych, by President Yushchenko in 2007 (in connection with the 65th anniversary of the UPA), and by the bestowal of the

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52 To be correct, during the war Bandera was the leader of OUN only nominally, as almost immediately after declaration of an independent Ukrainian State he was arrested by Nazis and spent the rest of the war in German custody. The real leadership of OUN-B was taken over by other top figures of the party.

same title upon Bandera at the very end of Yushchenko's presidency. Despite Bandera's totalitarian ideology, since 1991 he has officially held one of the chief positions in the all-Ukrainian national-democratic pantheon of the greats of Ukrainian nation-building. This prominent position is explained by the historical fact that Bandera's faction of the OUN (OUN-B) declared a Ukrainian state on 30 June 1941, in the turmoil that accompanied the marching of Nazis into Lviv. The new state proved to be a very short-lived, as its instigators were immediately suppressed by the Nazis. Nevertheless, it restores a continuity of the historical narrative about persistent efforts of the Ukrainian nationalist movement to establish a sovereign state since the beginning of the 20th century. Hence, after 1991, the OUN, the UPA and their leaders were almost without exception presented in schoolbooks as both heroic and tragic figures; as "the avant-garde of the Ukrainian nation of victims" (Jilge 2007: 108). The chief object of controversy within the official political and public political discourses is, however, not the symbolic status of the leader of the ideologically split OUN, in the first instance, but rather the evaluation of his legacy in present-day Ukraine (and, by extension, in Europe and Russia, in whose different parts his name is synonymous with either "national hero" or "nationalist cut-throat." David Marples points out with good reason that "It is probably impossible at the present time in Ukraine to obtain an objective and dispassionate assessment of Bandera because he evokes such strong emotions even fifty years after his death" (Marples 2007: 96).

## The "Bandera Debate": Controversies of Historical Imagery and the Liberalization of Public Discourses in Lviv

The optics of envisioning Stepan Bandera in the debate stemming from Lviv is determined by three both partly convergent and partly opposite discursive fields: the political, the professional historical/academic, and the popular historical. The discussion of the "Bandera myth" among Ukrainian and Western scholars stretches over both pre-war and post-war decades and covers a plethora of such infected issues as terrorist acts of the OUN in the 1930s; efforts to convey the truth about the Great Famine to the West; collaboration with the Nazis; anti-Semitism as a significant part of the OUN platform; participation of the organized detachments of Ukrainian nationalists in the extermination of the Jews; massacres of Polish civilians by the UPA detachments in Volhynia in 1943–44; armed resistance to the Soviets; the killing of the civilians incriminated in collaboration with Bolsheviks, and the influence of ethnic cleansings in the region on post-war deportations of Poles and Ukrainians (ibid.: 17–29). Since 1991, a great deal of biographical, commemorative and popular literature has been published about the OUN, the UPA and Bandera in both Ukraine and abroad (USA, Canada, Poland)<sup>53</sup>. In

<sup>53</sup> See David Marples' book *Heroes and Villains...* for a survey of the most significant scholarly works on Bandera in both Ukraine and beyond.

Western Ukraine, especially Galicia, a hagiographic paradigm of historical writing on the subject has been established since independence. This can be explained not only by the stronger position of nationalist-democratic discourses here, but also by the modality of the local collective memory about the Ukrainian nationalist movement. As the Swedish historian Per Anders Rudling points out:

In the collective memory of Galicia the OUN–UPA is associated primarily with their post-war activities as UPA turned into an underground partisan army, fighting the Soviets. Few Galician Ukrainians and even fewer diaspora Ukrainians have any experience of the ethnic cleansing [of Poles, conducted by UPA groups– E.N.] in Volhynia. To many people, the OUN–UPA is remembered as a freedom fighter, standing up to one of the most brutal tyrants in history (Rudling 2006: 180).

As two excerpts from polemical essays written by two renowned Lviv historians demonstrate, the factor of positively-toned collective memory about the wartime and post-war liberation movement cannot be neglected in the professional historical debate, even though it can be used for contrary arguments:

The Ukrainian resistance movement was extremely sacrificial. The mere thought of those people going to death for the freedom of their Fatherland and fighting to the end induces respect and endless admiration. However, the fact is that among the [Ukrainian] policemen there were many villains and ordinary bandits as well. Therefore, maybe we should not stain the honorable memory about the genuine heroes by adding sadists and criminals to them? (Rasevych 2008, August 14).

The present-day wave of the popular commemoration provides a simple answer to the question about whether nobleness [*lytsarstvo*] or wickedness prevailed in that resistance movement. An exaggerated heroization does profanes the movement of national liberation, because instead of the real personalities who were able to rise above their own fears and temptations we encounter fearless and faultless half-mannequins. We need such commemoration which would spiritually comprise the entirety of this phenomenon (Marynovych 2010, May 25).

Nevertheless, some Lviv participants of the Bandera debate have also been quick to point out that generally positive collective memories of the “westerners” about the nationalist insurgence should not be used as a justification for the hagiographic historical imagery of the elites. As Volodymyr Pavliv, the political scientist from Lviv, rightfully points out, collective memory is an ambivalent phenomenon, one that cannot be used as the benchmark for establishing historical truth about the events and figures of that dramatic period:

Memory about that time was preserved at emigration and in family stories as a counterweight to the communist propaganda and lies. However, any oral stories are prone to mythologization and mystification, considering that these stories become gradually dissociated from the events, the eyewitnesses die, and access to the [archival] documents is limited. Enslaved peoples have a right to create their own myths and mystifications, in particular when this becomes a part of their patriotic and heroic identity. Banderism [*banderivshchyna*] was such an element for the majority of Western Ukrainians in the period of Soviet occupation. The bitter truth was silenced because people did not want to echo the occupants, the sweet truth was whispered in each other's ears... But... in practice people have never forgotten the harm which Banderism inflicted indirectly and the grievances which individual Banderites caused directly. That is why before the independence in many villages people did not use the name "UPA", but said "partisans," "Banderites" and "bandits" instead (Pavliv 2010, May 25).

Allegedly monolithic and unanimous West Ukrainian discourses on collective memory became a springboard for the encroaching politicization of historical narratives about Bandera, the OUN and UPA. During Yushchenko's presidency the field of historical studies of the wartime nationalist movement became even more politicized, as this branch of historical research became not only prioritized, but also concentrated to such state-subordinated institutions as the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory, the affiliated Center for the Study of the Liberation Movement (established in Lviv in 2002), the Security Service of Ukraine<sup>54</sup> (SBU, a successor of the Soviet KGB in Ukraine) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The marginalization of professional, dispassionate research focused on the Ukrainian nationalist movement in the 20th century sent the Lviv intellectual and academic community a signal about their dispensability and the limitation of their intellectual autonomy. Under such circumstances, intellectual polemics on Bandera took a new course. Instead of finding wholesale justifications for the "Bandera myth" and advocating his symbolic significance for the whole nation, the recent debate stemming from Lviv brought to the fore nuances of the ideational/ideological project unfolding with reference to the leader of the OUN. The main questions which engaged the Lviv intellectuals proved to be: The strivings of which community does he symbolize? What ideological legacy does Bandera represent? Who defines the parameters for an evaluation of this figure?

Bestowing the title "Hero of Ukraine" upon Stepan Bandera seems to be a logical culmination of the radicalization of the politics of memory undertaken during Yushchenko's presidency. Arguably, this symbolic gesture was dictated by the necessity to spur a reconciliation of the historical memories and political cultures between the Ukrainian East and West. However, a matter-of-fact presentation of Bandera as

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54 As Grachova points out, "SBU, in fact, is the most active link in this association. Along with its special political status and funding, SBU inherited the republican archives of NKVD-MGB KGB, which, among other materials, contain a great mass of documents about all forms of anti-Soviet resistance. Unlike analogous archives in some countries of East-Central Europe, in Ukraine these documents are, for the most part, still inaccessible to general public and researchers. In other words, SBU enjoys a monopoly on information and uses this monopoly to political ends, publishing selections of documents that represent historical events according to the current official perspective, and authorizing the official position on controversial issues" (Grachova, "Unknown Victims: Ethnic-Based Violence of the World War II Era in Ukrainian Politics of History after 2004," 9).

an all-Ukrainian symbol not only further antagonized the “two Ukraines.” In the west it revealed an apparent split between national-democratic politicians, patriotic intelligentsia and a wider public, on the one side, and critical public intellectuals and dispassionate historians on the other. The latter camp expressed no optimism about the voluntarist political effort to fill the gap between the divided landscapes of collective memory by way of, figuratively speaking, putting dynamite between them. In this connection, the authoritative Lviv historian Iaroslav Hrytsak has expressed quite a controversial opinion that, instead of establishing heroes for a divided nation, politicians should “mind their own business” and leave the discussion about the toxic history to the professionals. If politicians feel the need to express opinions on the politics of memory, then they, in accordance with the European model, should first and foremost acknowledge and commemorate the victims (Hrytsak 2010, March 8). Vasyl Rasevych, another historian from Lviv, has also pointed out that the efforts of Ukrainian politicians to impose Bandera as an all-Ukrainian canonic “figure in bronze” were a step in the wrong direction (Rasevych 2010, January 29).

The split and radicalized Ukrainian memory, in line with this argument, may be remedied by way of a “broad internal discussion” which will establish historical truth about the antagonizing past. The political scientist Volodymyr Pavliv agrees with the opinion that Bandera and the wartime Ukrainian nationalist movement should first be purified from both nationalist and Soviet-totalitarian myths, revealing the “truth” as the result (Pavliv 2009, February 12). This task of bringing historical truth into view is not so easy to realize, however. Nevertheless, as Rasevych argues, even if in the future the intellectuals will be able to present a maximally de-ideologized picture of the Ukrainian historical landscape, it is naive to hope that revelation of the truth alone will immediately erase the contradictions of the divided historical memories and different cultural traditions. The intention to enlighten the “ignorant easterners” may prove to be just another self-delusive “mission” of the Western Ukrainian intelligentsia (Rasevych 2009, January 29).

The idea that unbiased historical knowledge may be only a precondition, but not a guarantee of reconciliation, has gained wider acknowledgement over the last decades (Gloppen 2005). Therefore, while not denying a possibility of non-antagonistic historical narratives in Ukraine in a distant future, the option that Ukrainians should learn to live with the divided collective memories and other dividing factors seems to be more realistic for some public intellectuals (see, for example, Hrytsak 2010, March 8). Hence, one of the important points articulated in the course of the Bandera debate has been the necessity of a liberalization of the national politics of memory, i.e. a process of opening the political discourses and public debate to a circulation of diverse voices and narratives concerning the national past; a circulation unrestrained by political pressure. Besides, the vicissitudes of the “Bandera debate” in post-1991 Lviv have revealed not only disagreements regarding how to treat the “blank spots” within the public sphere, but also noteworthy tendencies in the continuing development of the “national paradigm” in Western Ukraine.

The polemics concerning Bandera once again demonstrated the difficulty (if not impossibility) of condensing conflicting historical narratives and memories



into an orthodox nationalist account which pinpoints victimization and heroism as indispensable attributes of a fully-fledged nation. As immoral and criminal deeds are a part of any national history, the point is not to silence them or whitewash their perpetrators, but rather to acknowledge them as part of the national history and be ready to meet the consequences of such acknowledgement<sup>55</sup>. In this vein, the all-Ukrainian and international debate on Bandera, the results of which were summarized in a special issue of the Kyivan magazine *Krytyka* (2010), also made it clear that, whether revisited and re-defined from the vantage point of present-day historical knowledge or not, Bandera stays here. As a venerable figure of West Ukrainian historical memory and symbol of resistance to the Soviet totalitarianism, Bandera cannot be, figuratively speaking, “thrown from the ship of Ukrainian history.” Or, as the political scientist Volodymyr Kulyk expresses it: “When the time to select common heroes for all Ukraine comes, it may happen that Bandera will not be among them. But such a Ukraine has yet to be won” (Kulyk 2010: 14).

The glorification of Bandera may make little ethical sense today, as it tacitly confirms a totalitarian principle that political transformations justify violence (Snyder 2010). Neither may it make ethical sense to condemn Bandera out of respect for “European values,” as the European Parliament’s recent resolution on Bandera recommended, nor because of the pro-Russian political course of Yushchenko’s successor, President Yanukovich. The latter spoke of stripping Bandera of his posthumous hero title in order not to jeopardize relations with Russia, where he is commonly viewed as the “personification of absolute treachery” (Okara 2010, August 23). In Lviv, liberal intelligentsia circles criticized both acts and defended Bandera, not as an all-Ukrainian hero whose non-democratic legacy is a common denominator of the national ideological course, but rather as a symbol of the distinctiveness of Ukraine’s historical development and anti-colonial struggle. Iryna Magdysh, the editor of *Ň* magazine in Lviv, was quick to point out, in her rather straightforward manner, that “the deputies of the European Parliament – having no great knowledge of Ukrainian history – want to forbid us from having our own vision of our national past” (Magdysh 2010, March 4). As Hrytsak explains, with more composure: “There have and must be ‘uncomfortable heroes’ who break out from a monopolist version of the past. And ‘small’ peoples have the right to have them, as long as they commemorate them not as symbols of violence over other peoples, but as symbols of resistance in the struggle for their own survival and dignity” (Hrytsak 2010, March 8). To summarize, the Lviv public intellectuals and liberal intelligentsia have by and large supported the idea that the right to define a society’s “own” heroes and decide what exactly is manifested by these symbols belongs to communities of memory themselves. Some voices have forwarded a reservation that such communities are not necessarily equal to nations; thus Volodymyr Pavliv’s sarcastic remark: “Well, let’s call Stefko [Stepan Bandera] a symbol of the epoch, a symbol of the struggle, but not a symbol of the nation. Otherwise, the response will be like this: there is no nation whose symbol is Bandera” (Pavliv 2009, January 26).

While the Bandera debate accentuated a notable tendency of liberalization of the public discourses on history and collective memory, it also revealed that this tendency is

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55 This opinion was expressed, for example, by Iaroslav Hrytsak (2004: 110–11)

still evolving against the background of polarized historical imagery, where competing actors strive to monopolize objectivity. This has testified that inertia of treating national history in the Manichean terms of heroism or treason, victory and defeat, glorification and victimization –the approach that was immanent in the Soviet ideological paradigm –may perfectly correlate with an instrumental view of history and historical memory appropriated both by the nationalist politicians and their opponents (Grachova 2008: 18; Dubasevych 2008; Frunchak 2010: 435–63; Kravchenko 2004). In this context, one can recall an apt formulation by Tony Judt: “The mis-memory of communism is also contributing, in its turn, to a mis-memory of anti-communism.” (Judt 2004: 175). While the main emphasis in the Bandera debate was put on the symbolic meaning of the OUN leader for Ukrainian national history, the discussion about his legacy in the history of other nations which used to populate the West Ukrainian borderland, became obviously marginalized (Jilge 2007: 103–31; Grachova 2008). As a result, despite a present-day liberalization and pluralization of the public discourses on Bandera in Lviv, his symbolic representations in the urban public space convey another message.

The Bandera monument erected in Lviv is one of the most obvious examples of this ambiguity. Notably, while the Soviet monumentalist aesthetics of the Bandera memorial stirred criticism, another important aspect of this *lieu de memoire* seems to be overlooked: namely, the logic behind erecting it just beside the former Roman Catholic St. Elżbieta cathedral, formerly used by a Polish congregation. For the majority of Poles, Bandera is a loathed figure, deemed responsible for instigating massacres of the Polish populations in Volhynia and Galicia in 1943, which, in turn, was one of the factors behind the exodus of Poles from the region at the end of the war and thereafter. Despite efforts by the Ukrainian community to “normalize” Bandera as a heroic figure, the Poles’ attitude to him is diametrically opposite. Hence, from the perspective of Polish visitors and the local Polish community (see Fastnacht-Stupnicka 2010), the monument sends an unequivocal message about the vindictive triumph of Ukrainian nationalists over Polish rivals for control of the city; a triumph that resulted from ethnic cleansings and forced migrations.

Curiously, the debate surrounding the erection of the Bandera monument in Lviv has not addressed this “outsider” perspective. Negative signals that the choice of place for it might send to the Polish neighbours, who are officially viewed as geopolitically important partners of Ukraine, were left beyond the parameters even in the discussions of Lviv’s intellectuals. The memorial was strongly criticized in the local media, but mostly for its undesirable associations with Soviet monumentalism and the aesthetics of socialist realism. Even in circles of the liberal Lviv intellectuals, discussion about the symbolic implications of the monument was largely “self-centred”, in that it focused on its ideological meaning on the scale of Lviv and all of Ukraine (Amar 2008, July 8; Pavlyshyn 2007, October 29).

It is easy to criticize insufficiently thought-out commemorative practices and ethical implications of the support of the Bandera cult by politicians, academics and common urbanites in Lviv. What often goes unnoticed is that the emotional attachment and admiration surrounding this figure connects not so much to what Bandera actually did, but rather what he symbolically represented. He personified not only a charismatic



politician, but also a figure endowed with cultural authority. The combination of these two dimensions resulted in the aptness of Bandera for the role of a symbolic figure “larger than life.” As Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe, historian from the University of Alberta, remarks:

...Polish representatives loved the Polish national culture, and Bandera admired the Ukrainian one. This common interest in national culture, as well as claims for the territory populated by the both peoples, resulted in conflicts and fights. ...adherents of both national cultures were a part of the process of heroic modernization which they neither comprehended nor controlled. In this heroic modernization, Bandera played a role of a political myth with several faces –the myth that is not ended for anyone, and that did not lose its mythological sense (Rossoliński-Liebe 2009, January 22).

David Marples’ observation about the importance of Bandera’s symbolic dimension also evokes an idea about a certain cultural framing behind his outstanding attraction for his followers: “According to one former UPA soldier, rank and file fighters never saw Bandera or Melnyk. They were symbols... his importance as a thinker or philosopher was minimal, and the most significant facet of Bandera’s personality was his implacable and uncompromising position and willingness to abandon all principles to attain the goal of an independent Ukraine” (Marples 2006: 556, 565).

The son of a Greek-Catholic priest, a “romantic terrorist” who dreamed about the national revolution (Hrytsak 2008, May 12), and an uncompromising politician who “does not seem to have undergone any fundamental change of views from those embraced in his youth” (Marples 2006: 563), he may be viewed as a personification of the pre-war, nationally conscious “old” Galician *intelihent*. Such envisioning of Bandera has been explicitly formulated by, for example, Volodymyr Parubii, head of the Lviv branch of the Congress of Ukrainian Intelligentsia. He has pointed out that both Bandera and the leader of the UPA, Roman Shukhevych, were charismatic representatives of the intelligentsia and leaders of the people (Zaxid 2010, July 16).

Hence, one may summarize that in Lviv and Galicia the turnarounds of the debates about the “blank spots” in local and national history of the 20th century, and persistent efforts to propose a streamlined anti-communist vision of the past, should also be examined against the background of a continuous “domestic” account about the intelligentsia’s uninterrupted evolution as an avant-garde of the Ukrainian nation. Despite all those who point to the dubious value of Bandera’s political legacy, for the patriotic Galician circles he exemplifies, first and foremost, an uncompromising nation-builder with “his own” vision and active ideological line – i.e., something allegedly non-existent in the contemporary Ukrainian political establishment (Bondarenko 2001: 183–94). With all his extremes, Bandera may be viewed as an outstanding representative of the Ukrainian Galician intelligentsia, whose militancy and ideological rigidity was not only a result of his own agency, but part of a wider cultural pattern of “an *intelihent* as a knight” (Narvselius 2009: 138–42). The same pattern was evident in the collective heroization and mythologization of the OUN-UPA’s rank-and-file members (Marples 2010: 36). A continuing fascination with Bandera in present-day Lviv indicates, in turn, the continuing importance of cultural authority, ideological/ideational autonomy, and political influence as yardsticks of the transformation processes in Western Ukraine.



Figure 1. Processes of transformation of cultural memory in Western Ukraine in the 2000s. Radicalization, Liberalization, Commercialization

## Bringing History to the People? Commercialization of Historical Narratives in the Urban Space of Lviv

The recent debate on the “toxic” past of Ukraine and the Ukrainian nation has revealed new facets of the ongoing struggle for intellectual autonomy in Lviv, and, at the same time, exposed the aspiration of Lviv’s intelligentsia to monopolize the right to form a national cognizant public. As in the case with the “empowering” narratives focused on Lviv’s specificity, the intellectual debate about the national past unfolded in the constant interplay and opposition with the official rhetoric and popular historical narratives underpinned by collective memories. The uneasy relationship between the “objective” historical narratives provided by professional historians and visions of the past “manipulated” by the politicians has been a principal leitmotif in the Bandera debate. Notably, both academic historians and politicians (as well as politicking intellectuals) addressed the “authenticity” of collective memories as a benchmark of historical objectivity in envisioning the national past. Hence, popular collective memories and historical accounts of the 20th century, despite their fragmentation, polarity and inconsistency, became invested with undeniable moral value. This opened the door to efforts to use references to collective memories as an argument underscoring one’s democracy and moral supremacy in various sorts of polemics. In this way, one would, for example, contrast the matter-of-factness of an academic historical narrative addressing “genuine” collective memories to the “distortions” of history supported by powers that be and other elite actors.

Despite the eagerness of professional historians and public intellectuals to justify certain arguments (for example, the advocacy of Bandera as a symbol of the fight for national liberation) by references to the collective memory, the popular historical narratives circulating among “the population at large” have also become a target for intellectual criticism. Kost Bondarenko, the political scientist and historian who used to study and work in Lviv, and who addressed the history of Ukrainian nationalist organizations in his research, was among those who drew public attention to the one-track popular interpretations of history. In an article from 2002, he formulated the core of the problem: “...the overwhelming majority of the country’s population is absolutely historically illiterate. And worst of all, nobody is eager to fill in the gaps in their knowledge of history, or even correct their misconceptions. ...the population at large, including our politicians, prefer easier reading.” Another respected historian based in Lviv, Marian Mudryi, developed this line of argument further:

Is Ukrainian society ready to reject its naive, childish realism when it comes to consideration of the past? No, it is not. This is not because of a lack of a special education, but because of consumerist egotism, which this society got deeply stuck in. ...people stubbornly expect that historians will provide clear answers to all questions about the past, will examine “all” facts and circumstances, will send a sort of “divine revelation” to them. ... If something is incomprehensible, it means it is wrong. ...Against this background, historical fantasies or obvious speculations of the politicians are much more attractive due to their simplicity and comprehensibility than complicated explanations of the historians (Mudryi 2010, January 29).

Laments about an estrangement between intellectuals and “common people” on the one hand, and between intellectuals and politicians on the other, have been a persistent topic of the intellectual discourse in post-Soviet Ukraine. According to this line of argument, present-day Ukrainian society lacks the capacity for intellectual reflection, which explains its uninterest in sober and rational conceptualizations of history. Nevertheless, an unwillingness of the “population at large” to accept “incomprehensible” explanations of historians may depend not only on the alleged stupefaction of the masses by consumerism and political demagoguery. Turning the tables, one might argue that another aspect of the problem is the quality of the historical narratives stemming from the circles of professional historians. As the chief domain of historical research in Ukraine has been national history, the issues of inter-ethnic and inter-state conflicts, competition and injustices, come to the fore, while inter-cultural exchange, peaceful coexistence, daily life, and the hybridity of numerous historical phenomena fade into the periphery<sup>56</sup>. If academics and public intellectuals focus on the elucidation of embarrassing historical

56 In fact, there have been done efforts to overcome this tendency in historiography of Ukraine. One of the most resonant was the work of the commission on monitoring school history textbooks headed by the authoritative historian Natalia Iakovenko. From 2007 to 2009, twelve professional historians from different regions of Ukraine held a series of meetings under the auspices of the Ukrainian National Memory Institute. The working group suggested the conception of “maximum detailization (*mul'typlikatsija*) of the society” which presupposes focusing history teaching on illuminating the motivations and mechanisms of actions of different groups in society. Nevertheless, as Oxana Shevel notes, “Because Iakovenko’s conception effectively deconstructs both the main competing narratives of the Ukrainian past in general and of World War II in particular, the acceptance of this conception at the state level appears problematic under any government” (Shevel 2011: 159).

facts and map almost all recent history as a minefield dangerous for non-professionals to trespass on, then one may expect that the deficit of “non-embarrassing” historical knowledge will be compensated by other actors in other ways.

Throughout the 1990s, the idea that the rich historical legacy of Lviv and the region fascinated the public and, hence, needed sooner or later to be exploited commercially, was repeatedly expressed by the city fathers, planners, intelligentsia and intellectuals. Nevertheless, the most notable developments in this direction began in the 2000s, in connection to the accelerating debate about the “blank spots” of national history. One of the most resonant commercial projects relating to the not-so-distant history of the city was the launching of a network of thematic tourist restaurants: *Hideout* (*Kryivka*, 2007), *Masoch café* (2008) and the *Galician Jewish Restaurant Under the Golden Rose* (*Halytska Zhydivska knaipa Pid Zolotoiu Rozoiu*, 2008). Behind this chain of both famous and infamous restaurants are the young Lviv businessmen Iurii Nazaruk, Andrii Khudo and Dmytro Herasymov. The intellectual motor of the trio is a graduate of the Lviv Ivan Franko University, Iurii Nazaruk, also one of the creators of the Lviv daily *Lvivska hazeta* and a former consultant for the Lviv art enterprise *Dzyga*. In one interview he stated openly that “Our cafés confirm the myths. People need this. ... It’s a transmission of a piece of history ... a piece of Lviv” (Interview with Yurii Nazaruk).



Figure 2. *Hideout*'s interior. Photo by the author

The most commercially successful, and at the same time most scandalous of the restaurants, *Hideout*, exploits the heroic myth of the Ukrainian nationalist wartime and post-war insurgency. The winning concept of this establishment has been the combination of interactivity, humour, provocativeness and free play with historical references. Notably, as Yurii Nazaruk pointed out in another interview (see [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B115S\\_iEo0Y&feature=related#криївка](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B115S_iEo0Y&feature=related#криївка)), *Hideout's* launching was preceded by expeditions to the countryside with the aim of collecting memorabilia associated with the Ukrainian insurgents, and by consultations with historians from the Centre of the Liberation Movement in Lviv. At present, *Hideout* possesses a collection of authentic pictures and other items, some of them displayed in the venue. Hence, as a hybrid form, the restaurant is not a purely commercial enterprise. Its mission is not only to feed and entertain, but also to educate. In *Hideout*, the visitors are served not only an array of meals with tongue-in-cheek names, but also a historical narrative whose entirety emerges in the fusion of several aesthetic forms, such as museum, mini-theatre, adventure centre and art gallery.

Critical or indignant reactions against *Hideout* came from a range of public actors with diametrically opposed political agendas. One of the first harsh critics which demanded the closing of *Hideout* was the Association of the UPA Veterans, whose members protested against the profanation of the Ukrainian insurgency and capitalizing on the memory of the dead heroes. The Jewish organizations and Soviet veteran organizations of Ukraine raised their voices against light-hearted references to the movement which collaborated with the Nazis. Outraged articles about *Hideout* also appeared in the media outside Ukraine, primarily in Russia and Poland. Neither were the reactions of the moderately nationalist intellectuals and cultural personalities in Lviv particularly welcoming<sup>57</sup>. Although the idea of titillating the imagination of tourists with allusions to violent recent history draws negative publicity, this is not the only factor behind *Hideout's* scandalous fame. All in all, in Europe alone there are plenty of *liex de memoir* which both commemorate the tragic pages of history and bring commercial profit. The crux is rather the boldness of the volte-face on envisioning the not-so-distant history suggested by *Hideout's* creators.

Obviously, launching the venue in 2007 coincided with the wave of political efforts to radicalize the all-national politics of memory championed by President Yushchenko. Keeping this in mind, but also taking into account the well-connectedness of the *Hideout's* creators within the circles of the powers that be in Lviv, one may conclude that the enterprise is a typical illustration of the fusion of political and commercial interests so typical of the post-Soviet "oligarchic" Ukraine. As a cultural commodity, *Hideout* referred to the political idea of integration of non-Soviet wartime experiences of Western Ukraine into the all-Ukrainian historical narrative and, viewed from this perspective, was completely in line with the official discourse. Simultaneously, the restaurant's founders added an original emphasis, as they dared to stylize Banderites as sympathetic and cheerful figures, and so hardly suitable for the politics of regret (see Olick 2007) articulated by the political elites. In a way, the *Hideout's* winning

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57 Nevertheless, the high-brow Lviv magazine *Ī* is mentioned among the partners of *Hideout* on the restaurant's website.

concept is not only politicization and commoditization of a historical period, but also its carnivalization. As Iurii Nazaruk stated in one of his interviews, the commercial success of *Hideout* results from reversing tragic aspects of the official historical accounts and turning them into a self-glorifying “optimistic” story where rank-and-file insurgents are not overshadowed by the monumental figures of the nationalist leaders (see [http://daily.lviv.ua/index.php?module=write\\_about\\_lviv&view=56](http://daily.lviv.ua/index.php?module=write_about_lviv&view=56)). Such carnivalization may certainly be liberating and exciting, but there is another side to the coin, too. Enjoyable digestion of tasty meals and internalization of historical imagery offered by the restaurant goes in tandem with a simplification of historical knowledge. The authentic details of the interior and feel-good consumer experiences invite acceptance of a streamlined story about brave, cheerful guys who heroically fought against both Nazis and Soviet occupiers for the freedom and glory of Ukraine. Obviously, another part of the story, which tells about numerous Polish, Jewish, Russian and Ukrainian civilians who fell victim to the Ukrainian nationalist militia and insurgent troops during and after the war, is left aside.



Figure 3. *Wipe your feet when entering Hideout!* A poster on sale from the restaurant’s website <http://www.kryjivka.com.ua/info/souvenirs/>



Curiously, an emphasis on the “authenticity” of the events, people and artefacts referred to and displayed in *Hideout* contrasts with its location in the very historical centre of Lviv. *Hideout* imitates the milieu of forest shelters used by the nationalist insurgents, which seems to be misplaced in the rooms of a 16th-century stone house decorated with a statue of the winged lion; a symbol of the Venetian Republic whose consulate used to be located there. Although this association is missed by many visitors, the physical location of *Hideout* nevertheless evokes an idea that the urban milieu of Lviv was for centuries dominated by other people and other stories than the Ukrainian ones. Notably, the presentation of “authentic” Galician Ukrainianness in terms of the nationalist insurgency also evokes the idea that the principal base of this movement remained the Ukrainian-dominated countryside – where, by the way, *Hideout* enthusiasts collected some of the original artefacts presently stored in the venue. Hence, behind the innovative concept and provocative visual presentations in *Hideout*, one can distinguish a well-known sentiment of the present-day Lviv intelligentsia to the “authentic” Ukrainianness, which in many contexts is the same as “unspoiled” rural roots.

This touch of rurality in the “tourist-accommodating” narrative about the Ukrainian resistance movement of the 20th century has been partially compensated for by a recently published tourist guide: *The City of Our Heroes (Misto nashykh heroiv)*. This richly illustrated book presents Lviv as the site of “heroic events”, and suggests that the readers “not only travel, but also discover the truth for yourselves and confirm the idea that Lviv is a city of heroes!” (Kozytskyi 2009: 246). Such a symbolic project of claiming back the city and presenting it as an organic part of the non-interrupted narrative of national glory and tragedy unavoidably involves the demanding intellectual work of stitching together both “authentic” and “non-authentic” thematic pieces: representations, narratives, artefacts and symbols provided by academic discourses, political rhetoric and popular culture. In itself, such creation of identity narratives from diverse symbolic material is both a necessary and legitimate part in the process of forging solidary communities. Hence, the existing patchwork of “places of memory” in Lviv – which are commercial, commemorative, artistic, political and educational at one and the same time – confirms that cultural entrepreneurs in the city comply with mainstream modern strategies of identity creation that presuppose, among other things, the cultivation of so-called prosthetic memory. This new form of memory, as Alison Landsberg explains, “emerges at the interface between a person and a historical narrative about the past, at an experiential site such as a movie theater or museum. ...the person does not simply apprehend a historical narrative but takes on a more personal, deeply felt memory of a past event through which he or she did not live. ...Prosthetic memories are transportable and therefore challenge more traditional forms of memory that are premised on claims of authenticity, “heritage,” and ownership” (Landsberg 2004: 2, 3).

*Hideout*'s creators did not limit their project to a presentation of the “Lviv myth” through the prism of Ukrainian historical memories and cultural narratives alone. The rich urban semiosphere of the city prompted other stories and figures which could be both commemorated and commercially exploited. Another two potentially resonant and controversial topics were served to the public in the form of another two thematic

restaurants – this time with an urban theme and facets of bourgeoisness coming to the fore. Like *Hideout*, these restaurants immediately became both famous and infamous in the city and beyond. *Masoch café* fully lived up to the expectations of those clients who wished to be titillated by the erotic overtones and references to the decadent air of the Habsburg *fin-de-siècle*. The main point of reference in this conceptual package is the figure of Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, who was born in Lemberg and whose literary works written in German address Galician life and mores at the end of the 19th century. Piquant descriptions of erotic master-and-servant play in his renowned novel *Venus in Furs* led to dubbing a sexual perversion by his name, i.e. “masochism.” Representatives of Lviv intellectual circles were annoyed not so much by the erotic allusions of *Masoch café* as by the alleged disrespect of its creators towards this prominent personality associated with Lviv (Sereda 2008, April 8). However, the much discussed bronze statue of Masoch placed in front of the café was conceived as an allusion to masochism rather than a monument commemorating a historical figure. Therefore the statue awakens curiosity and indeed invites tourists to make frivolous gestures. All in all, the tone of the *Masoch café* may be called equivocal and exoticizing rather than repulsive. It seems to express a seldom articulated nuance in the present-day, popular and stereotypical perception of the urban bourgeoisness and upper-class cultures in Galicia under the “good old” Danube monarchy.

The effort of *Hideout*’s creators to make a profit on easily recognizable representations of urban Jewish culture provoked a much harsher reaction from professional historians and public intellectuals. As there exists historical evidence that the Ukrainian nationalist militia took part in the war-time extermination of the Galician Jews<sup>58</sup>, the idea to match the themes of the Jewish inter-war life and the Ukrainian nationalist insurgency as equally exciting parts of tourist entertainment was seen as blasphemous. Moreover, the practical application of *Hideout*’s concept of playfulness, interactivity and provocation to the extremely sensitive Jewish issue was not especially felicitous. The brave and, one may guess, well-intentioned striving to suggest an attractive and commercially viable presentation of the “Jewish theme” resulted not only in articulation of the old stereotypes, but also in an ethically dubious, distorted account of the history of the Jewish community served to guests at the *Galician Jewish Restaurant Under the Golden Rose*.

Vasyl Rasevych has summarized the main criticisms against the restaurant: the improper location of an entertainment venue in the vicinity of the old synagogue destroyed by the Nazis; a focus on “pleasant” exoticisms of Jewish culture and omission of the “unpleasant” topic of the Holocaust; inaccurate or tactless commentaries about the history of Galician Jews, which the visitors may read alongside the menu; an unholy mixture of sacred symbols and erotic pictures by Bruno Schultz in the restaurant’s interior; kosher food alongside pork meals, and so on (Rasevych 2008, October 29). This list of faults prompts the conclusion that the objections raised against the restaurant are well-founded. In this case, the mishmash of contradictory representations testifies not to the “normal” work of prosthetic memory, but rather an absence of reflection (Sabic 2004: 171). Unlike sections of the intellectual public and policymakers in Lviv, who are

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58 See, for example, Himka 1999, Himka 2005.

unwilling to touch upon sensitive issues of the Jewish past, *Hideout*'s creators intended to turn the "toxic" topic into a part of public knowledge that deserved to be addressed, interpreted and enjoyed. As restaurants, cultural events and tourist attractions exploiting the Jewish theme and attracting, among others, Jewish tourists have already become part of the cultural landscape in, for example, Cracow, the idea to launch a similar venture in Lviv was not improper in itself. However, the *Galician Jewish Restaurant* was created without a broader involvement of Jewish cultural actors. While *Hideout*'s project was partly justified by relying on still vital collective memories of the eyewitnesses, and legitimized by the supposed necessity of interpreting "our own" Ukrainian history from "our own" Ukrainian perspective, the *Galician Jewish Restaurant* failed to meet these criteria.

Hence, the intellectual project of presenting "the Other," the vanished neighbours in the pre-war cityscape of Lviv, to the wider public proved to be a free-floating amateur interpretation provided by a non-representative group of local businessmen and business-minded intellectuals. Contrary to the initial intention to make the pre-war Galician Jewish culture a site of admiration and excitement, this degraded it to a site of farce. This is, unfortunately, not the only example of a lack of cultural sensitivity in the treatment of a multicultural heritage, historical memories and *lieux de memoir* in Lviv. The core of the problem is not the lack of professional expertise or engagement from various non-governmental organizations and cultural associations, but rather "compartmentalization" of the intellectual debate and the absence of regular dialogue between policymakers, academics, concerned intelligentsia, NGOs and public "mnemonic actors" about cultural heritage and prospective ways of developing the urban space of Lviv.

## Summary

A radicalization of the national politics of memory in Ukraine during Viktor Yushchenko's presidency, notwithstanding its immediate results, occurred in tandem with the proclaimed pro-European political course of the "Orange" authorities. The ambition to bring Ukraine closer to Europe, by way of synchronizing the national debate over the legacy of the Soviet past and the Second World War with the quest for overarching frames of historical memory in the EU, opened the door to articulation of the different non-Soviet experiences of Western Ukraine. However, instead of balancing historical debate and mitigating cultural-political tensions between the Ukrainian West and East, an unskillful elevation of "diverging" collective memories of the region in the political discourse of the national elites further aggravated antagonism around prospective ways of nation-building and modelling national identity.

In Lviv and Galicia, efforts to propose a streamlined anti-communist vision of the national history have been undertaken by various circles of patriotic intelligentsia – both politicking and academic ones. It might be argued that these efforts to externalize the Soviet period as a "distortion" imposed on both the regional and national past

by an oppressive foreign power should also be examined through the prism of the efforts of the Galician intelligentsia to create a continuous “domestic” account about their uninterrupted evolution as an avant-garde of the Ukrainian nation. Despite these aspirations, visions and evaluations of the 20th-century past stemming after 1989 from Western Ukraine and, in particular, from Lviv, present a fragmentary and contradictory picture. For instance, discussions about the national insurgency and anti-Soviet struggle in the region have been torn between polar lines of argument as well as between different perspectives addressed by “ordinary people”, professional historians and public intellectuals, and political elites (see Figure 1). Intellectual discourse on the topic lacks contingency and a clearly articulated regional perspective. As the Bandera debate has made clear, when intellectuals advocate the regional perspective as a legitimate part of national discourse and do not insist on projecting “authentic” popular attitudes towards admired regional figures onto the whole nation, a number of misunderstandings and antagonisms can be avoided. Generally, however, discussion on the contentious past of West Ukraine is still entrapped in the tenets of national discourse. This, in turn, entails the dominance of a moral approach and, as the West Ukrainian intellectuals themselves admit, invites a dubious volte-face when appraising the Ukrainian nationalist movement during the Second World War.

In Lviv, the timely intellectual discussion on the wartime period, as well as the changing optics of historical imagery which suggest alternatives to the politics of regret, has enhanced the interest of the broad public towards the previously silenced pages of the “authentic” history of the region. During the past decade, a certain liberalization of the politics of memory and democratization of collective memory discourses did take place in Lviv and Western Ukraine. One can, however, still observe a notable gap between the historical knowledge confined to academic and intellectual circles, and narratives suggested to the broader public. As the example of a chain of thematic restaurants (*Hideout*, etc.) demonstrates, the “light-hearted” interpretations of a contentious past suggested to the public by intellectuals involved in the popularization and commercialization of historical knowledge may have far-reaching, unpredictable implications.

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