Tatiana Zhurzhenko

Ruptured Histories, Contested Memories, Fluid Borders: Monuments in the Northern Black Sea Region from Catherine II to the Russo-Ukrainian War

1 Introduction

On May 4, 2022, on the occasion of the upcoming Victory Day, a new monument was inaugurated in the Russian-occupied Ukrainian city of Mariupol in presence of Sergei Kirienko, the vice-head of Putin's administration, and Denis Pushilin, the head of the self-proclaimed "Donetsk People's Republic." Made of black plastic, it represents an old woman carrying a Soviet flag. The monument refers to an episode from the current Russo-Ukrainian war which went viral on social media and was eagerly instrumentalized by Russian propaganda. In April 2022, seventy-year-old Anna Ivanova, who had lived on the outskirts of the heavily shelled city of Kharkiv, came out of her house with a Soviet flag to welcome Ukrainian soldiers who wanted to bring her food, but whom she mistakenly took for Russians. In the first months of the Russian invasion, the Soviet flag as a de facto official Russian symbol (the "Banner of Victory") was used by the Russian army even more often than the national tricolor to replace the Ukrainian flag in the occupied territories. When one of the Ukrainian soldiers took her banner and trampled on it, the woman rejected their gift. While the later embarrassed Anna Ivanova denied her pro-Russian sympathies, the meme of the "babushka with the Soviet flag" started to take on a life of its own. In the eyes of the supporters of Russia's "special military operation" it was a perfect illustration of its liberating mission in allegedly "Nazi-controlled Ukraine." Murals and statues of the "babushka" appeared in Crimea, the Donbas, and the newly occupied territories in the south of Ukraine. This newly created symbol refers to the glorious Soviet victory over Nazi Germany in 1945 (now re-enacted in Ukraine), and at the same time to the "geopolitical tragedy" of the Soviet collapse in 1991 (which Russia is determined to undo). This admittedly extreme case of a highly politicized commemoration helps frame the issue addressed in this chapter, namely the instrumentalization of memory in the Ukrainian–Russian conflict, and, in particular, the role of monuments in demarcating, contesting, and shifting national borders as well as in bridging historical ruptures and drawing temporal boundaries.[1]

1 Tatiana Zhurzhenko, "Borders and Memory," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Border Studies*, ed. Doris Wastl-Walter (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 63–84.

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The previous chapter in this volume deals with places of memory in the Black Sea region, focusing primarily on Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania, Georgia, and the Crimean Peninsula; it mainly draws on examples from the Turco-Tatar Muslim heritage. My chapter aims to complement this account from a different geographical angle by focusing on the northern Black Sea coast. Integrated into the Russian Empire during the nineteenth century, and part of the Soviet southern frontier for most of the twentieth, after the dissolution of the USSR it was divided between independent Ukraine and Russia along the administrative boundaries of the Soviet republics.[2] The new international border was violated by the Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014; most recently, Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine led to the military occupation and unlawful annexation of the Zaporizhzhia, Kherson, Donetsk, and Luhansk oblasts in September 2022. A theater of the most brutal war in the region for decades, the northern Black Sea coast is contested not only militarily but also on the symbolic level. Russian occupying forces have been destroying Ukrainian sites of memory, have restored Lenin statues, and plan to erect new monuments referencing the Russian imperial narrative. It would be wrong to argue that the Ukrainian-Russian memory wars simply escalated into a real war, the latter being caused by the clash of two irreconcilable versions of the past. At the same time, one can safely argue that the mnemonic contestation has been an important aspect of the Ukrainian-Russian conflict, which goes back at least to the Orange Revolution in 2004.[3] This chapter offers examples of some places of memory which are central to understanding this contestation. And yet, as illustrated by other examples in this text, it would be too simple to present Ukrainian and Russian historical narratives as homogeneous and lacking internal controversies. Many places of memory in the region display conflicts, tensions, and ongoing reinterpretations *within* both Ukrainian and Russian narratives.

The previous chapter has already outlined a theoretical framework for the analysis of sites of memory in the Black Sea region. My chapter profits from this theoretical discussion but focuses on monuments as a particular type of sites of memory.

Monuments establish links between territory and narratives about the past; they invest geographic places with historical meaning. In this way, monuments contribute to the process that political geographer Robert Kaiser called the "production of homelands"[4] and the historian Antony Smith conceptualized as the "territorialization of

2 Tatiana Zhurzhenko, "Making and Unmaking the Ukrainian-Russian Border since 1991," in *Making Ukraine: Negotiating, Contesting and Drawing the Borders in the Twentieth Century,* ed. Olena Palko and Constantin Ardeleanu (Montreal: McGill University Press, 2022), 329–54.

3 Georgiy Kasianov, *Memory Crash: Politics of History in and around Ukraine, 1980s–2010s* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2022).

4 Robert J. Kaiser, "Homeland Making and the Territorialization of National Identity," in *Ethnonationalism in the Contemporary World: Walker Connor and the Study of Nationalism,* ed. Daniele Conversi (London: Routledge, 2002), 229–47.

memory."[5] As symbolic markers of collective identities, monuments do not just memorialize historical events and personalities; often, they help make territorial and geopolitical claims. Especially in times of crisis and rapid change they are instrumental for the re-bordering of political communities. As political boundaries shift, new monuments are erected in order to celebrate territorial gains or help cope with territorial losses. Monuments are also political projects deeply rooted in local politics and society. Monumental commemoration projects have often been sites of public debate and political battles around such issues as location, funding, and ideological interpretation; they involve multiple actors and reveal different visions not so much of the past as of the present. Moreover, the initial meaning of a monument can be changed by means of its various uses and re-appropriation by new actors. "Sleeping" monuments, that is, monuments which have long become an invisible part of the urban landscape or an element of undisputed "cultural heritage," can sometimes be "awakened" and re-ideologized in the context of a political crisis, revolution, or military conflict.

In other words, monuments represent events or personalities that belong to the past, and yet they live their own lives. To grasp this twofold nature of monuments, I find it important to differentiate between static and dynamic aspects of collective remembrance, or between what Eric Langenbacher calls its synchronic and diachronic dimensions, the former referring to dominant collective memories and the latter to the "histories" of these memories.[6] Another distinction which points in the same direction is drawn by some authors between "legacies" and "(politics of) memory." Legacies are "tangible" and "more firmly rooted" in the past; with the passage of time they take on a more or less "permanent form" while "memory" is more subjective and open to instrumentalization (and thus can hardly be separated from the political context).[7] In the context of this chapter, historical and cultural legacies can be seen as material and immaterial traces left in the region by different cultures, civilizations, and states, from ancient Greek and Byzantine, Kyivan Rus, Ottoman and Tatar, and Cossack, to Russian imperial, Jewish, Ukrainian, and Soviet. Legacies provide the "content" for the monuments that have been erected by different state and non-state actors in the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union, post-Soviet Ukraine, and Russia. But these monuments also have their own, often dramatic, histories: They are inaugurated, celebrated, forgotten, sometimes toppled, and then restored; some of them even go into exile. These personal "biographies" of public monuments testify to dramatic historical ruptures, geopolitical shifts, and political earthquakes.

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5 Antony D. Smith, "Culture, Community and Territory: The Politics of Ethnicity and Nationalism," *International Affairs* 72, no. 3 (1996): 445–58.

6 Eric Langenbacher, "Collective Memory as a Factor in Political Culture and International Relations," in *Power and the Past: Collective Memory and International Relations*, ed. Eric Langenbacher and Yossi Shain (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2010), 13–49.

7 André Liebich et al., "The Ukrainian Past and Present: Legacies, Memory and Attitudes," in *Regionalism without Regions: Conceptualizing Ukraine's Heterogeneity*, ed. Ulrich Schmidt and Oksana Myshlovska (Budapest: CEU Press, 2019).

The differentiation between "legacies" and "memory" is analytical and should not be essentialized. On the one hand, legacies are often seen as placing constraints on memory politics. According to Ukrainian-Canadian historian Serhy Yekelchyk, "states and intellectuals do not have a free hand to invent or manipulate national traditions and memories because, as Arjun Appadurai noted back in 1981, history is not 'a limitless and plastic symbolic resource'."[8] And yet, legacies themselves are cultural and political constructs. Take, for example, the Russian imperial expansion and colonization of the northern Black Sea region in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Seen today as a "Russian imperial legacy," at the time the (geo)political project of Catherine II and Prince Potemkin was conceived as a "Greek project." The ideology of the Russian imperial conquest was framed in terms of references to the earlier legacies of ancient Greece and Byzantium, as testified today by local toponyms—see the Greek names of Kherson, Mariupol, Odesa, and Simferopol, among others.

Which legacies became salient and seen as worth preserving (or requiring disposing of) in a certain historical moment is also a highly political question. The Russian imperial legacy was rejected in the early Soviet era but had already been partly rehabilitated under Stalin. As will be illustrated below, despite some continuity of the historical narrative of Cossackdom, rather different elements of the Cossack legacy in the region were institutionalized in Soviet and post-Soviet Ukraine as well as in post-Soviet Russia.[9]

Moreover, it should be noted that legacies as social constructs are often inherently contradictory; their "dark" and "bright" sides are contested by different social groups and political communities and re-evaluated under different political regimes. The Russian imperial legacy in the region has been interpreted rather differently in post-Soviet Ukraine and in Russia.[10] An object of "decolonization" in Ukraine, it was partly re-appropriated by local actors as part of the regional identity in such places as Odesa, where it has been an important part of the "foundation myth."[11] Russia's ruling elites have used the Russian imperial legacy to legitimize the annexation of Crimea and, most recently, of further Ukrainian territories.

The Soviet legacy is especially controversial in Ukraine, where the crimes of the Communist regime, and in particular the Holodomor (the Great Famine of 1932/33), overshadow what many still see as the largely "positive" legacy of Soviet modernization, industrialization, and urbanization. An important part of the Soviet legacy is the heroic myth of the "Great Patriotic War" (i. e., World War II) sustained by the So-

8 Serhy Yekelchyk, *Stalin's Empire of Memory: Russian-Ukrainian Relations in the Soviet Historical Imagination* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 7.

9 Andreas Kappeler, *Die Kosaken: Geschichte und Legenden* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2013).

10 Andreas Kappeler, "Ukraine and Russia: Legacies of the Imperial Past and Competing Memories," *Journal of Eurasian Studies* 5 (2014): 107–15.

11 Tanya Richardson, *Kaleidoscopic Odessa: History and Place in Contemporary Ukraine* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008); Oleksandra Haidai et al., *Polityka i Pamiat: Dnipro, Zaporizhzhia, Odesa, Kharkiv vid 1990-h do siohodennia* (Lviv: FOP Shumylovych, 2018).

viet veteran organizations, the Russian and (until 2014) the Ukrainian Communists, and especially by the Russian authorities. In Ukraine, this part of the Soviet legacy has been radically re-evaluated over the last decade; the Soviet regime has been increasingly equated with the Nazi one, and Stalin's mass repressions against the Crimean Tatars and other ethnic groups are now classified as genocide. From today's perspective, (southern) Ukraine in the twentieth century appears as an object of subsequent occupational regimes: Soviet, Nazi and Romanian, and Soviet again.[12]

The chapter is divided into two parts: In the following, I first deal with the Russian imperial and Soviet histories of public memorialization on the northern Black Sea coast and then address the contemporary "wars of monuments" in post-Soviet Ukraine and Russia.

2 Histories of Monumental Commemoration from Catherine II to Gorbachov's Perestroika

During Russia's "long nineteenth century," an imperial commemorative culture had emerged that glorified the territorial expansion, military power, and civilizing mission of the Russian Empire on the northern Black Sea coast, in particular by erecting public monuments to the tsars, their administrators, and their military leaders. This Russian imperial legacy became contested and re-evaluated during the turbulent first half of the twentieth century, when the Bolsheviks sought to create an alternative canon of revolutionary heroes—an attempt interrupted by World War II and the German-Romanian occupation of the region. The post-World War II decades, with their relative political and social stability, saw a consolidation of the Soviet commemorative culture, centered around the myths of the October Revolution and the "Great Patriotic War" but also partly rehabilitating the Russian imperial legacy and at the same time granting some space for the (Soviet) Ukrainian commemorative canon. The collapse of the Communist regime and the dissolution of the USSR turned this Soviet commemorative culture into a part of the "Soviet legacy," albeit a politicized and highly contested one.

2.1 Glorifying the Russian Empire

Before Peter I ("the Great"), historical events and personalities were commemorated in Russia according to the Orthodox tradition: by building churches, monasteries, and chapels. The idea of a secular monument in the form of an obelisk or statue, like other Western innovations, arrived in Russia with Peter's reforms but began to be implemented only during the reign of Catherine II ("the Great"). These first monuments, mostly glorifying Russian military victories and military leaders, were architectural

12 Olena Stiazhkina, *Zero Point Ukraine: Four Essays on World War II* (Stuttgart: Ibidem, 2021).

rather than sculptural and constructed in classicist style. They were often placed on the territory of imperial residencies and aristocratic estates and rarely in the public space. Sculptural monuments became more widespread during the reign of Nicholas I, who personally initiated some of them. In the last decades of the nineteenth century and up to World War I, monumental commemoration, often related to anniversaries of historical events (military victories, territorial gains) and historical personalities, became an important part of public life. The local elites and society played an active role in such activities by initiating monuments and raising funds.[13]

On the northern Black Sea coast, which in the eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth century was an arena of geopolitical contestation between two empires, the Russian and the Ottoman, the monumental commemoration followed—and glorified—the military conquest and colonization of the newly acquired territories and their integration into the Russian Empire. Previously, Ottoman and Cossack territories as well as Crimea, annexed from the Crimean Tatar Khanate, became the Russian province of Novorossiia (New Russia). Monuments erected on these territories commemorated Russian imperial rulers, military leaders, and heroes of Russian imperial wars as well as statesmen who contributed to the colonization of the new province.

Among the imperial rulers, Catherine II, the mastermind of the Russian territorial expansion to the south, was by far the most prominent. Monuments devoted to her presented the empress as a benevolent ruler who brought peace, economic flourishing, civilization, and enlightenment to the "Wild Fields" previously populated mostly by nomadic tribes. During the "long" nineteenth century, monuments to Catherine II were erected in several towns founded during her reign: in Ekaterinoslav, now Dnipro in Ukraine (erected in 1846), in Ekaterinodar, now Krasnodar in Russia (1907), in Nakhichevan-on-Don, now part of Rostov-on-Don in Russia (1894), in Odesa (Russian: Odessa) in 1890, and in Simferopol in 1890. These monuments were meant to express the adoration, gratitude, and loyalty of the imperial subjects who saw themselves as greatly benefitting from the imperial policies of territorial conquest, colonization, and resettlement.[14] For example, the monument to Catherine II in Nakhichevan-on-Don expressed the gratitude of the local Armenians who had founded the town upon their resettlement from Crimea. In a similar way, the monument in Ekaterinodar (which means "Catherine's gift") was an expression of gratitude and love of the "children"—as the Black Sea Cossacks called themselves—to their "mother-empress" who had given them territories on the right bank of the Kuban River freed from nomadic tribes.[15] The monument to the empress in Odesa was initiated by the city to mark

13 Kiril Sokol, *Monumenty imperii* (Moscow: Grant, 2001).

14 On the commemoration of Catherine in Ekaterinoslav, see Andrii Portnov, *Dnipro: An Entangled History of a European City* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2023), 52–58.

15 Aleksandr Polianichev, "Ekaterina II kak kazachia mat: Pamiatnik imperatritse v Ekaterinodare i zaporozhskii mif Kubani," in *Chetyrekhsotletie doma Romanovykh, 1613–2013: Politika pamiati i monarkhicheskaia ideia,* ed. Vladimir Lapin and Iuliia Safonova (St. Petersburg: European University Publishing, 2016).

the centenary of its foundation. The ten-meter-high monument was crowned by the statue of Catherine pointing to the port with one hand and holding the order for the founding of the city in the other. With her foot, she was trampling the Ottoman flag. Catherine's statue was surrounded by four figures showing her companions who contributed to the foundation of Odesa: Prince Grigorii Potemkin, commander-in-chief of the Russian army, who captured the Ottoman fortress of Hacıbey on which the city was built, Platon Zubov, the governor of Novorossiia, José de Ribas, the first mayor of Odesa, and François Sainte de Wollant, a Flemish engineer and the author of the first city plan.

Other monuments to Russian imperial rulers included the one to Peter I in Taganrog (erected in 1903) on the occasion of the bicentenary of the city founded by the tsar, who had been a predecessor of Catherine II in her politics of territorial expansion to the south (the Azov Campaigns in 1695/96). The annexation of Bessarabia, another territorial gain of the Russian Empire in the northern Black Sea region, was celebrated by a monument to Alexander I in Kishinev, now Chișinău, the capital of Moldova. Russian statesmen and close associates of the imperial court engaged in the colonization of the Russian south received their monuments too. Prince Potemkin, apart from his statue on the monument to Catherine II in Odesa, was also memorialized in Kherson, founded under his administration in 1778 to host the first Russian Admiralty on the Black Sea coast (the Kherson admiralty moved to Nikolaev [today: Mykolaiv] in 1829). The monument to Potemkin in Kherson was erected in 1836 in front of the Orthodox cathedral, where he was buried in 1791. One of the most popular monuments in Odesa, which has become a symbol of the city, belongs to the Duke of Richelieu, a French aristocrat and statesman who after the French Revolution made a career in the Russian imperial army; in 1803 he became the governor of Odesa and later of the Novorossiia province. The bronze statue of Richelieu, the first monument in Odesa, was erected in 1828 at the top of the famous Odesa steps. The second monument in the city was unveiled in 1863 and memorialized Prince Mikhail Vorontsov, a nobleman, field marshal, and governor-general of Novorossiia and Bessarabia who died and was buried in the city.

In a region shaped by a long progression of Russian-Ottoman wars, it is probably no surprise that many monuments were dedicated to Russian military commanders and war heroes, as well as to the architects and admirals of the Russian Black Sea Fleet. The latter had not only military but also huge political and symbolic significance: Control over the Black Sea strengthened Russia's status as a European naval power and brought it closer to the ultimate dream of bringing Istanbul under Orthodox rule. One example is the monument to the Russian field marshal Aleksandr Suvorov in Ochakov (today: Ochakiv in Ukraine's Mykolaiv oblast). Initially it was built in the nearby Kinburn fortress to commemorate the Battle of Kinburn in 1787, which resulted in Russia's victory over the Ottomans. This bust monument to Suvorov, who had led the defense and was heavily wounded in this battle, was destroyed during the Crimean War. A new, more impressive statue of Suvorov was erected in Ochakiv in 1907, on the occasion of the 120th anniversary of the Battle of Kinburn. Another example is the monument to Aleksei Greig, an admiral of the Imperial Russian Navy of Scottish descent and the

commander of the Black Sea Fleet in 1816–33. The monument commissioned by the navy was erected in 1873 in Nikolaev, a city hosting the Russian admiralty and the main center of Russian shipbuilding on the Black Sea.

But the richest and most impressive memoryscape referring to the glory of the Russian army emerged in Sevastopol, the main base of Russia's Black Sea Fleet. The powerful Sevastopol myth,[16] which has survived both the Russian and the Soviet Empire and was instrumental in the annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014, had been formed in the second half of the nineteenth century in the aftermath of Russia's defeat in the Crimean War. Britain and France, who supported the Ottomans in this conflict, invaded Crimea and besieged Sevastopol in 1854. Despite the heroic resistance of its defenders, Sevastopol fell one year later, and Russia lost the war. The siege of Sevastopol and its heroes were memorialized in the city in various ways. The remains of the Russian admirals Pavel Nakhimov, Vladimir Kornilov, and Vladimir Istomin, who fell during the siege, as well as the commander of the Russian fleet Mikhail Lazarev (who had died shortly before the Crimean War), were buried in St. Vladimir's Cathedral, constructed in Sevastopol as a memorial to the war heroes. In the subsequent decades, Sevastopol received separate impressive monuments to Lazarev (1867), Kornilov (1895), and Nakhimov (1898). The charismatic Pavel Nakhimov, the hero of the Battle of Sinop, especially popular among the Russian public, was memorialized in Sevastopol's central square, named after him, in the presence of Nicholas II. In 1909, a particularly impressive monument was erected to Eduard Totleben, military engineer and general of the Russian imperial army, who was in charge of fortification during a number of military campaigns, including the Crimean War. The general's statue was surrounded by six bronze figures representing the defenders of Sevastopol—Russian soldiers and sailors (see fig. 17).

Finally, worth mentioning is the Monument to the Sunken Ships erected in 1905 in memory of Russian warships scuttled in Sevastopol Bay in 1854/55 to prevent the enemy from entering the city from the sea. The monument in the form of a Corinthian column, built on an artificial granite rock and crowned with the Russian imperial eagle, has become a symbol of Sevastopol.[17]

2.2 Monuments in Troubles: Revolution, the Early Soviet Era, and World War II

Monumental commemoration reached its peak in the last decades of the Russian Empire. However, the Russo-Japanese War and the revolution of 1905 had already halted some projects. More serious consequences resulted from the February Revolution of

16 Serhii Plokhy, "The City of Glory: Sevastopol in Russian Historical Mythology," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 35, no. 3 (2000): 369–83. See also Kerstin Jobst, *Geschichte der Krim: Iphigenie und Putin auf Tauris* (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2014), 214.

17 Sokol, *Monumenty imperii*; Plokhy, *The City of Glory*.

Fig. 17: The monument to General Eduard Totleben in Sevastopol.

1917, which rejected the Russian imperial tradition and prompted a vehement public discussion on the value of imperial monuments. Soon after the fall of the monarchy, the monument to the controversial Russian minister Petr Stolypin in Kyiv was dismantled, and statues of Catherine II in Ekaterinoslav and Nakhichevan-on-Don were toppled.[18]

What was a sporadic initiative of revolutionary actors supported by frustrated masses, became a consistent policy of the new Soviet government after the Bolshevik Revolution. In the spring of 1918, Vladimir Lenin came up with the "monumental prop-

18 Sokol, *Monumenty imperii*, 16.

aganda" (*monumentalnaia propaganda*) plan, which proposed the removal of the tsarist monuments and the mass construction of new ones.[19] According to a Soviet government decree of April 12, 1918, "monuments devoted to tsars and their servants which have neither historical nor artistic value" were to be removed and either stored in museums or utilized.[20] At the same time, the government issued a list of historical personalities recommended for monumental commemoration. It represented the new Bolshevik canon of progressive thinkers and leaders of revolutionary and working-class movements, critics of tsarism, and activists of the democratic movement in Russia, as well as Russian cultural figures reinterpreted as bearers of the democratic tradition. (The list also included the Ukrainian poet Taras Shevchenko and the Ukrainian philosopher Hryhorii Skovoroda.) The Soviet government decided to remove the "ugliest idols" and install the first new Communist monuments already on the occasion of May 1, 1918. These efforts were, however, mostly limited to Moscow and St. Petersburg; the government lacked resources and, moreover, did not have control over much of the territory of the former Russian Empire. A couple of monuments erected in Kyiv in 1919 (to Lenin, Karl Marx, and Karl Liebknecht) did not survive occupation by the White Army.[21] In the southern parts of Russia and Ukraine, due to the chaos of the Civil War and the allied military intervention, it was not until the 1920s that the Soviet authorities began to implement their monumental propaganda plans.

As in other parts of the former Russian Empire, monuments to imperial rulers, statesmen, and military heroes in the region were either destroyed or dismantled and removed from public space. Behind this politics, especially later in the 1920s, was not only revolutionary iconoclasm but also more pragmatic motives, such as the need for precious metals like bronze. Those monuments that were lucky enough to survive were re-contextualized, as was the case with the statue of Prince Vorontsov in Odesa. After initial attempts to remove the monument, it was supplemented by a new plaque citing an unflattering epigram by Aleksandr Pushkin, Vorontsov's competitor in love affairs and his subordinate during exile in Odesa.[22] In many cases, plinths left from old imperial monuments were used by the Bolsheviks for new Communist ones. For example, the monument to Prince Potemkin in Kherson mentioned above was veiled in 1917, removed in 1921, and stored in the local museum. His place was

19 Christina Lodder, "Lenin's Plan for Monumental Propaganda," in *Art of the Soviets: Painting, Sculpture and Architecture in a One-Party State, 1917–1992,* ed. Matthew Cullerne Bown and Brandon Taylor (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), 16–32.

20 Sovet Narodnykh Komissarov RSFSR, "Dekret o pamiatnikakh Respubliki," Decree of April 12, 1918, Electronic Library of the History Department of the Moscow State University, www.hist.msu.ru/ER/Etext/DEKRET/18-04-12.htm.

21 Evgenii Golodryga, "Kultura v Kieve-1919: Isskustvo nachinaetsia s ulitsy," *Big Kyiv*, April 23, 2019, https://bigkyiv.com.ua/kultura-v-kieve-1919-iskusstvo-nachinaetsya-s-ulitsy/.

22 "Half milord, half merchant, / Half wise man, half ignoramus, / Half scoundrel, but there's hope./ He'll finally become a full one." Richard Pevear, "Introduction," in Alexander Pushkin, *Novels, Tales, Journeys: The Complete Prose of Alexander Pushkin*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2016), xi.

taken by a Karl Marx statue, which was destroyed during World War II. The Potemkin statue, too, disappeared during the German occupation.

The monument to Catherine II in Simferopol (erected in 1890 to celebrate the centenary of the annexation of Crimea) was destroyed in 1920 after the occupation of Crimea by the Red Army. The plinth was later used for a new "monument to freedom": It depicted a proletarian breaking the chains binding the globe, his naked figure surrounded by statues of Lenin, Marx, and Engels. This Communist monument was destroyed by the Nazis during World War II.[23] The monument to Catherine in Odesa was veiled in 1917 and dismantled in 1920. The statue of the empress was partly destroyed, but its fragments—as well as the statues of Catherine's companions—were stored in the local history museum. In 1921, on the first anniversary of Soviet rule in Odesa, the plinth of the destroyed monument was crowned with Karl Marx's head; later, the head was replaced with a full Marx statue. When the statue was destroyed by a storm, the plinth was crowned by a hammer and sickle (a symbol of the Bolshevik revolution and the new Soviet state).[24]

Most of the new Communist monuments did not survive World War II and Nazi occupation.[25] Monuments to Lenin, Stalin, and other Bolshevik leaders, as well as Soviet and Communist symbols in the public space were destroyed by the German army. Destroyed Communist monuments symbolized the victory over Bolshevism and were often filmed by the occupational authorities and *Wehrmacht* officers.[26] However, the occupying authorities usually had neither interest nor time to implement their own commemorative projects. In Odesa under the Romanian-German occupation (1941–44), Soviet street names were changed back to Russian imperial ones (except for those re-named after Hitler, Mussolini, and Antonescu). Gheorghe Alexianu, the governor of Romanian-occupied Transnistria (of which Odesa became the capital) came up with the idea of "resurrecting the Preobrazhensky Cathedral, levelled by the Soviets in the 1930s, as an homage to Romania's eastern expansion."[27] But the idea did not materialize, and the cathedral was rebuilt only in the 1990s. It seems that the only known case of the German occupying authorities' active involvement in commemorative politics during World War II concerned the monument to Peter I in Taganrog. Erected at the gates of the city park at the end of the nineteenth century, it was taken down by the Bolsheviks and taken to a local museum. In 1940, shortly before

23 Sokol, *Monumenty imperii*, 100.

24 Aleksandra Poliak, "Den v Istorii: 99 let nazad v Odesse poiavilas golova Karla Marksa," *Pravda za Odessu*, February 7, 2022, https://zaodessu.com.ua/den-v-istorii-99-let-nazad-v-odesse-poyavilas-golova-karla-marksa/.

25 One of the rare examples of early Soviet monumental art that have survived to this day is the gigantic statue of the Bolshevik Artem (Fedir Sergeev) in Sviatohirsk (Donbas); it was created in 1927 by Ivan Kavaleridze, a Soviet Ukrainian avant-garde sculptor and filmmaker.

26 Serhii Stelnykovych et al., "Nazi Occupation and Dismantling of Communist Monuments in Ukraine during World War II," *Intermarum: History, Policy, Culture*, no. 8 (2020): 76–87.

27 Charles King, *Odessa: Genius and Death in a City of Dreams* (New York: Norton Company, 2011), 221.

the war, the local Soviet authorities received permission from Moscow to install the monument in a different place, in front of the city port. The Germans, seeking to win the loyalty of the Don Cossacks, reinstalled Peter's statue in its initial, more prominent place. The official public ceremony took place on July 18, 1943.[28]

2.3 Soviet Monumental Culture after World War II

2.3.1 The Imperial Legacy Rehabilitated: Russian Military Glory

Soon after the end of the World War II, elements of the Russian imperial legacy, in particular Russian military glory, were rehabilitated and integrated into the Soviet historical canon. During the war, Suvorov military schools and Nakhimov naval schools had already been created by decree of the Soviet government with the purpose to raise new army and navy cadres. Decorations for outstanding military leadership named in honor of Aleksandr Suvorov, Mikhail Kutuzov, and Aleksandr Nevskii were introduced in 1942; two years later, decorations for navy officers named after Admirals Nakhimov and Ushakov followed. After the war, the restoration of damaged historical monuments became part of the agenda of the Soviet authorities. For example, the monument to Field Marshal Aleksandr Suvorov in Ochakiv (erected in 1907) was renovated in 1950; in 1951, a memorial room, and in 1960, a museum dedicated to Suvorov (one of several in the USSR) were opened in Ochakiv, featuring a diorama depicting the Siege of Ochakov in 1788.[29] In the Black Sea region alone, some five new monuments to Suvorov were erected, in Izmail, Odesa oblast (1945), Simferopol (a bust in 1951, replaced with a statue in 1984), Kherson (1950), and, during the late Soviet era, Tiraspol (1979), where later it became one of the symbols of Transnistrian identity.[30] In Soviet Kyiv, a statue of Suvorov was erected in front of the Suvorov military school.

In a similar vein, the monument to Admiral Nakhimov in Sevastopol, which had been dismantled by the Bolsheviks and replaced with a Lenin statue in 1928, returned to its old site in 1959; Nakhimov Square replaced the Square of the First International. The monument to Eduard Totleben, which had been damaged during the war, was restored as early as 1945. According to Karl D. Qualls, this interest in the history of the Crimean War "heralded a new emphasis on local identity, historical depth, and national pride."[31] In his book dealing with the rebuilding of Sevastopol during the first postwar decade, Qualls focuses on the conflict between competing visions of urban resto-

28 Margarita Kirichek, *Muzei pod otkrytym nebom* (Taganrog: IP Stadnikov, 2010), 22–23.

29 "Istoriia muzeiu im. O.V. Suvorova," Ochakivskyi viiskovo-istorychnyi muzei im. A.I. Suvorova, accessed September 21, 2023, https://ovim.ochakiv.info/uk/istoriya.

30 Stefan Troebst, "'We Are Transnistrians!': Post-Soviet Identity Management in the Dniester Valley," *Ab Imperio*, no. 1 (2003): 437–66.

31 Karl D. Qualls, *From Ruins to Reconstruction: Urban Identity in Soviet Sevastopol after World War II* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 143.

ration. While the plans of Moscow architects propagated the dominance of the symbolic triangle of Marx, Lenin, and Stalin in the public space and sought to concentrate the old monuments of the Crimean War in one particular place, Malakhov Hill, the local authorities and architects as well as the Black Sea navy opposed the plan to create a single large outdoor museum. They opted to keep the existing memorials in their traditional places and spread new ones through the city.[32] They also rejected the initial plans to dismantle St. Vladimir's Cathedral, which housed the burial vault of four Russian admirals, thus recognizing its significance as a memorial.[33] The monumental commemoration of the new heroes of the "Great Patriotic War," which had already commenced in the first weeks after the liberation of Sevastopol, was thus symbolically linked with the city's heroism in the Crimean War and its traditional identity as a stronghold of the Russian navy. The narrative of the "second defense of Sevastopol" (the city resisted for eight months before it fell to the Germans in July 1942) was inscribed in a number of memorial sites, including the Victory Monument at Cape Chersonesus and the Glory Obelisk at Sapun Gora. Fifteen years later, the memorial at Sapun Gora was upscaled with a new diorama museum, a counterpart to the Crimean War Panorama on Historical Boulevard.[34] This politics of symbolically linking the "Great Patriotic war" with the Crimean War and thus with Russia's imperial history continued in the late Soviet decades, culminating in the two hundredth anniversary of the founding of Sevastopol in 1983.

Among other commemorative projects, the monument to Kornilov, which according to the Soviet sources was stolen by the Germans during World War II, was restored in even larger scale and reinstalled Sevastopol in 1983. The identification of Sevastopol with Russian naval history and Russia's nineteenth-century state building remained strong even after the transfer of Crimea to the Ukrainian SSR in 1954.[35]

2.3.2 Memorialization of the "Great Patriotic War": The Case of Novorossiisk

Between 1941 and 1944, the northern Black Sea coast became an arena of major operations of the Axis and Soviet naval and land forces. Control over the heavily embattled Black Sea ports was crucial for both sides, and although the Soviet fleet initially outnumbered the Axis ships, German air superiority and the initial success of the *Wehrmacht* on other fronts allowed the occupation of the Black Sea coast from Odesa to Novorossiisk by the summer of 1942. It was only the defeat of the German army near Stalingrad that opened the way to the de-occupation of these territories. The level of destruction and the human cost paid by the Soviet military and civilians were enormous.

32 Qualls, 130.
33 Qualls, 136.
34 Qualls, 140.
35 Qualls, 3 and 8. See also Plokhy, *The City of Glory*.

On May 1, 1945, Stalin ordered a salute in honor of four Soviet cities (two of them Black Sea ports) which had shown particular endurance and sacrifice in the fight with the German invaders: Leningrad (today: St. Petersburg), Stalingrad (today: Volgograd), Sevastopol, and Odesa. The term "Hero City" was thus coined even before the end of the war, while the title was officially introduced on May 8, 1965, on the twentieth anniversary of the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany. Half a year earlier, Leonid Brezhnev had become first secretary of the Communist Party, and it was during his era that the full-fledged commemorative cult of the "Great Patriotic War" was developed.[36] In 1973, another two Black Sea ports—Novorossiisk and Kerch—joined the exclusive club of the Hero Cities, which until the collapse of the USSR comprised thirteen members.

Soviet war memorials and monuments were so omnipresent and numerous[37] that an overview for the Black Sea region would go beyond the scope of this chapter. Instead, I will focus on the example of Novorossiisk, a city in the southern Russian Krasnodar oblast whose official mnemonic identity as a Hero City during the late Soviet era was shaped by its connection to Leonid Brezhnev and his wartime career. Novorossiisk was extremely important for the Soviet Navy, especially after the fall of Sevastopol in July 1942, but despite the desperate resistance, the Germans occupied most of the city in September of the same year. On February 4, 1943, a small Soviet detachment landed on the outskirts of Novorossiisk near the village of Stanichka and conquered a small bridgehead that became known as Malaia Zemlia (the Little Land). Although it was only meant to be a decoy operation, the Soviet troops, after receiving reinforcement, managed to hold the bridgehead under heavy German fire for 225 days, until Novorossiisk was finally de-occupied in September 1943. Major Tsezar (Caesar) Kunikov, who led the operation and fell in the battle, was awarded the title Hero of the Soviet Union. Colonel Leonid Brezhnev, the future leader of the Soviet state, who had occasionally visited Malaia Zemlia as head of the political department of the 18th Army, was the main reason why this piece of land was later officially elevated to an almost sacred site of memory.[38]

As in post-war Sevastopol (see above), the urban reconstruction of the utterly destroyed city went hand in hand with its commemoration. The first modest Soviet war monument was already erected in Novorossiisk two months after the liberation, and its site, Heroes' Square, was to become the symbolic center of the commemorative landscape that emerged in the subsequent decades. Major Kunikov's remains were reburied there shortly after the war. In 1958, Heroes' Square became the third place in the Soviet Union to receive a permanent eternal flame. It arrived from Sevastopol, another Hero City, which received it from the Field of Mars in Leningrad, and this transfer was

36 Boris Dubin, "Goldene Zeiten des Krieges. Erinnerung als Sehnsucht nach der Brežnev-Ära," *Osteuropa,* no. 4–6 (2005): 219–34.

37 Mischa Gabowitsch, "Soviet War Memorials: A Few Biographical Remarks," *Chto delat*, no. 37 (2014): 6–8.

38 Ivo Mijnssen, *Russia's Hero Cities: From Postwar Ruins to Soviet Heroarchy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2021), 142.

meant to symbolize the continuity of the revolutionary and Soviet military traditions and the deep links between the three maritime cities.[39]

Some more monuments appeared in Novorossiisk during the Khrushchev era, such as an impressive memorial to the Unknown Sailor which was erected on the promenade in 1961.[40] In September 1963, a nine-meter-tall stela was opened on Malaia Zemlia celebrating the landing operation of February 4, 1943, and the heroic defense of the bridgehead.[41] And yet, the city authorities continued to lobby for a new, more ambitious monument worthy of the significance of Novorossiisk in the official war memory; they proposed a project developed by the local sculptor Vladimir Tsigal, who himself had participated in the legendary landing.[42]

With Leonid Brezhnev's election as first secretary of the Communist Party in 1964, the consolidation of the commemorative cult of the "Great Patriotic War" became a high priority for the Soviet government. The Order of the Patriotic War First Class that Novorossiisk received in 1966 contributed to the approval of the Tsigal project.[43] But the most important event took place in 1973: On the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the liberation of Novorossiisk the city was awarded—together with Kerch—the official title of Hero City. The recognition of the key role of the city in the history of the "Great Patriotic War" opened the door to a further proliferation of war monuments. When a year later Leonid Brezhnev came to Novorossiisk to officially hand over the Gold Star of the Hero City, he was taken to Myskhako, a part of the Malaia Zemlia bridgehead, where his headquarters were based back in 1943. Here, an impressive memorial landscape, "The Valley of Death," had been created featuring several elements, such as the expressionist sculpture *Vzryv* (Explosion), the *Kamennyi kalendar aprelskikh boev* (Stone Calendar of the April Fights) displaying the chronology of the battle, and the *Kolodets zhizni* (Well of Life) symbolizing the source of precious drinking water.[44]

Meanwhile, Tsigal's ambitious monument on Malaia Zemlia, after years of lobbying and negotiations with Moscow, was in the process of construction. Planned for 1978, the opening was delayed due to numerous technical problems: The monument had to be built directly on the water.[45] A political complication emerged due to the Brezhnev cult, which reached its peak in the late 1970s. In 1978, Leonid Brezhnev's memoir, entitled *Malaia Zemlia*, was published and immediately became the "central symbol of official war memory in the political elite—bypassing even Stalingrad and

39 Vicky Davis, "The City as a Work of Monumental Culture: The Hero-City Novorossiisk as a Site of War Myth and Memory," in *The City in Russian Culture,* ed. Pavel Lyssakov and Stephen M. Norris (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), 92–93.

40 Davis, "The City as a Work of Monumental Culture," 93.

41 Mijnssen, *Russia's Hero Cities*, 159–60.

42 Mijnssen, 169.

43 Mijnssen, 167.

44 Davis, "The City as a Work of Monumental Culture," 97.

45 Mijnssen, *Russia's Hero Cities*, 169–70.

Leningrad in terms of propagandistic attention."[46] The memoir, ghostwritten by a Moscow journalist four years before Brezhnev's death, presented him as a key military figure in the Battle of Novorossiisk.

The publication of the memoir invested the project with even more political prestige, but caused further delays, as it was decided to feature Brezhnev quotations on the walls of the monument. The monument, whose construction had taken more than ten years, was finally opened in a grand ceremony on September 16, 1982, less than two months before Brezhnev's death (see fig. 18).

Fig. 18: The Malaia Zemlia Memorial in Novorossiisk.

The twenty-two-meter-high triangular construction rising from the sea symbolizes the prow of a ship landing on the beach. On the external walls, sculpted figures depict the landing troops coming out of the water. The monument is integrated into the surrounding landscape still bearing traces of fortifications and a protected area. With its monumental gigantism typical of the Brezhnev era's commemorative cult of the "Great Patriotic War," it testifies to the special status of Novorossiisk in the ranks of the Hero Cities.[47]

46 Mijnssen, 171.
47 Mijnssen, 168 – 76.

2.3.3 The Canon of the October Revolution Consolidated

Another aspect of post-war Soviet monumental commemoration was the consolidation of the canon of the "Great October Revolution." While first monuments celebrating the Bolshevik leaders and heroes of the Revolution and the Civil War had appeared in the 1920s and 1930s, most of them, as mentioned above, did not survive World War II. After the war, sometimes even immediately after de-occupation by the Red Army, the Soviet authorities reinstalled Lenin and Stalin monuments. They were supposed to mark in a symbolic way the return of Soviet rule over the territories of the northern Black Sea region, which had remained under Nazi occupation for two or three years, thus exposing the local population to anti-Bolshevik and anti-Soviet propaganda. In Bessarabia, which was annexed by the Soviet Union in 1940 and became part of Romania again from 1941 to 1944, the "monumental propaganda" of the Soviet regime was even more important, as it was a means of Sovietizing the newly acquired territories.

During the first post-war decade, monuments to Stalin were produced en masse, usually reproducing some approved samples. Sometimes Stalin was portrayed together with Lenin: A popular subject presented Stalin visiting Lenin in his Gorki summer residence. The meeting of the two leaders, the already rather sick Lenin and his successor Stalin, symbolized the continuity of the Bolshevik leadership and the legitimacy of Stalin's rule. After Stalin's death in 1953 and especially the Twentieth Party Congress in 1956, which denounced his "cult of personality," monuments to Stalin began to be dismantled. After the decision to remove Stalin from the Lenin Mausoleum and rebury him near the Kremlin Wall, in 1962, practically all monuments to Stalin disappeared.

At the same time, during the first post-war decades, Lenin monuments appeared in big cities and small towns, usually at central locations that served as sites of major public celebrations on May 1 and November 7. They were usually inaugurated on Lenin's round anniversaries or anniversaries of the October Revolution, which had become the foundational myth of the USSR. In the post-Stalin era, Lenin appeared on such monuments as a single leader—reflecting his special role in the pantheon of the Revolution. On some monuments Lenin was surrounded by symbolic figures of workers and revolutionary soldiers and sailors, thus underlining not only his leading role in the revolution but also his strong bond with the people. One such example is the Lenin monument in the Ukrainian city of Zaporizhzhia near the Dneprostroi Dam, the largest hydroelectric power station on the Dnipro River. One of the achievements of the first five-year plan, the dam was destroyed during World War II but later restored. The giant Lenin monument (almost twenty meters high) was created by a group of Soviet Ukrainian sculptors and architects and erected in 1964 (and dismantled in 2016 as a result of decommunization). The plinth was surrounded by bronze figures of a steelworker, a construction worker, a female farmer, and a scientist representing the unity of the Soviet people and featured a Lenin quotation: "Communism is Soviet power plus the electrification of the whole country." The monument was thus symboli-

cally linked to Lenin's plan for economic recovery and development (GOELRO—the Russian acronym for the "State Commission for the Electrification of Russia").[48]

Other Bolshevik leaders and heroes of the Civil War (who died early enough or were lucky to avoid political repressions) received their own monuments, too. Among them were Sergei Kirov, Mikhail Frunze, Mikhail Kalinin, Feliks Dzerzhinskii, Grigorii Petrovskii, Grigorii Kotovskii, Vasilii Chapaev, Mykola Shchors, and Semen Budennyi. But none of them had the same symbolic status as Lenin. The post-war pantheon of the Revolution had become more hierarchical, but also less internationalist: The pre-war public celebration of the classics of Marxism and of the German revolutionaries was mostly gone, and Lenin was honored as a founder of the Soviet state rather than a leader of the revolution. Monuments to Karl Marx were still erected during the post-Soviet decades, but none of them took a prominent place. In the northern Black Sea region, several of them were erected in areas of traditional ethnic German settlement (even though the ethnic German population almost entirely disappeared as a result of repatriation and forced deportations). One example is Artsyz in Odesa oblast, founded in the early nineteenth century by German colonists under the name of Johanneshort and later renamed to honor the Russian victory over Napoleon near Arcis-sur-Aube in France. The monument to Karl Marx stood before the headquarters of the Artsyz party committee (after 1991 the city council) and was removed only in September 2022. Another monument to Karl Marx in Kholmske, Odesa oblast, was re-dedicated to the Bulgarian revolutionary poet Hristo Botev in a vain attempt to avoid de-communization; it was also dismantled in 2022.[49]

There were some local heroes who took a special place in the pantheon of the Revolution and were extensively memorialized in the northern Black Sea region. One of these heroes was the Russian navy lieutenant Petr Shmidt, one of the leaders of the uprising in the Black Sea Fleet during the revolution of 1905. In October–November 1905, he participated in the street protests in Sevastopol and took command of the rebel ships. The uprising was defeated by the government; Lieutenant Shmidt and his comrades were arrested and, after a brief trial *in camera*, executed in March 1906. In the 1920s and 1930s, Petr Shmidt became a martyr of the Revolution and a symbol of the new Red Navy. The first monument to Shmidt and his comrades was built in Sevastopol in 1935 in the newly founded Communars' Cemetery. During the post-war decades, the commemorative cult of Lieutenant Shmidt developed in the Soviet

48 On the commemoration of Lenin in the pre-war Soviet Union, see Nina Tumarkin, *Lenin Lives! The Lenin Cult in Soviet Russia* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983) and Benno Ennker, *Die Anfänge des Leninkults in der Sowjetunion* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1997). On Lenin monuments in Soviet and post-Soviet (Central) Ukraine, see Oleksandra Haidai, *Kamianyi Hist: Lenin u Tsentralniy Ukraini* (Kyiv: K.I.S., 2018). On the post-Soviet era, see Lina Klymenko, "Choosing Mazepa over Lenin: The Transformation of Monuments and Political Order in Post-Maidan Ukraine," *Europe-Asia Studies* 72, no. 5 (2020): 815–36.

49 Ilona Iakimiuk, "Na Odeshchyni demontuvaly pamiatnyk Karlu Marksu," *Suspilne Novyny*, September 16, 2022, https://suspilne.media/282366-na-odesini-demontuvali-pamatnik-karlu-marksu/.

Union was particularly rooted in the northern Black Sea region. Monuments to Petr Shmidt were erected in Odesa (1946), where he was born, in Ochakiv (1964), where he spent the last weeks of his life as a prisoner and was brought before the court, on the island of Berezan (1968), where he and his comrades were executed, and in Berdiansk (1973), where he grew up and went to a local *gymnasium.* Moreover, museums dedicated to his memory were opened in Ochakiv and Berdiansk.[50]

Another, even more powerful, local myth was the mutiny on the battleship *Potemkin* in June–July 1905. The uprising was sparked by outrage over spoilt food; it expressed a long-accumulated frustration with the conditions of the navy service and animosity toward the officers. The revolutionary committee, elected by mutinous sailors, decided to set course for Odesa in order to seek out the support of the striking workers. With the arrival of the *Potemkin*, protests in the city escalated and loyalist troops fired into the crowd. Despite the initial hopes, the uprising failed to spread to other ships. This episode of the Russian revolution of 1905 was immortalized by Sergei Eizenshtein in his famous silent film produced in 1925. According to Charles King, *Battleship Potemkin* "turned Odessa into the avant-garde of revolutionary change, providing a usable prehistory for the Bolshevik revolution and, by extension, for the new Soviet state."[51] In 1965, on the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of the uprising, a monument to the mutinous sailors (Potemkintsy) was erected in Karl Marx Square, formerly named after Empress Catherine and hosting her monument until it was dismantled in 1921 and briefly replaced with one to Karl Marx. The new monument presented the figures of four sailors at the peak of the mutiny; the plinth in the form of a ship's deck displayed the inscription "The descendants to the Potemkintsy" and Lenin's words "The battleship Potemkin remained the undefeated territory of the revolution."[52] The imperial myth which related the foundation of the city to Ekaterina and Prince Potemkin was thus replaced with a new foundational myth tracing the history of Soviet Odesa back to the heroic uprising of the battleship *Potemkin.*

2.3.4 Creating the Soviet Ukrainian Canon

After the Bolshevik revolution and the Civil War, most part of the northern Black Sea and Sea of Azov coasts became part of the Ukrainian SSR; after World War II, the territory of the latter included South Bessarabia and, from 1954, the Crimean Peninsula. How was the state policy of creating a Soviet Ukrainian identity reflected in monumental commemoration? What elements of the Ukrainian historical narrative were presented in the monumental landscape of the region during the Soviet era? And how

50 Agnessa Vinogradova, *Rasstreliannaia mechta: Khronika zhizni leitenanta P.P. Shmidta* (Mykolaiv: PP Gudym, 2004).

51 King, *Odessa*, 196.

52 Andrew Osborn, "Potemkin: The Mutiny, the Movie and the Myth," *Independent*, June 14, 2005, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/potemkin-the-mutiny-the-movie-and-the-myth-225737.html.

were they reconciled with the ideologically dominant narrative of the October Revolution and the partial rehabilitation of the Russian imperial memory?

Rather than simply suppressing what they considered "Ukrainian nationalism," the Bolsheviks sought to create a canon of Ukrainian culture and history that fitted into the official ideology of social liberation and the struggle against tsarist colonialism. And as Serhy Yekelchyk shows, during the late Stalinist period, when the Russian imperial narrative was partly rehabilitated, the republic's ideologists and intellectuals found ways to reconcile "Ukrainian historical mythology with the Russian grand narrative within a framework of Russian-dominated 'friendship of peoples'."[53] The Ukrainian historical narrative was accepted "as long as it complemented, but did not undermine, the story of the Russian imperial past."[54] The memory of the Ukrainian Cossackdom, rooted in the northern Black Sea region, illustrates the ambivalence of Soviet memory politics in this respect. But before I address the Soviet monumental commemoration of Ukrainian Cossackdom, allow me to make a brief excursion into the imperial era.

Since the mid-nineteenth century, the myth of the Ukrainian Cossacks as defenders of freedom against authoritarian Russian rule has played an important role in the Ukrainian national renaissance and nation-building. For almost three hundred years, Cossacks inhabited the steppe frontier north of the Black Sea coast; they developed specific political institutions and traditions, drawing on military democracy and self-rule.[55] Skilful warriors and sailors, the Cossacks contested the rule of both the Ottoman and the Russian empires, as well as that of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The Cossack Hetmanate, an early modern state, founded in the mid-seventeenth century by the hetman of the Zaporizhian Host, Bohdan Khmelnytskyi, entered into vassal relations with the Muscovite state by signing the Pereiaslav Agreement (1654) and gradually lost its independence. The autonomous status of Cossackdom was abolished in the second half of the eighteenth century as the Russian Empire expanded to the northern Black Sea coast. In 1775, Catherine II, who saw Ukrainian Cossacks as a security threat, destroyed their last stronghold, the Zaporizhian Sich, a semi-autonomous polity on the lower Dnipro. In accordance with the empress's order, executed by Prince Potemkin, the Zaporizhian Cossacks were resettled to the territories between the River Kuban and the Sea of Azov and reorganized into the Black Sea Cossack Host (later renamed the Kuban Cossack Host). While loyalty to the empire was at the center of Kuban Cossack identity in the nineteenth century, the myth of their Zaporizhian origins and links to Ukraine played an important role.[56]

This ambivalence is reflected in the monument to Catherine II in Ekaterinodar (see above). Erected in 1907 at the initiative of the Kuban Cossack Host to express gratitude for the new lands granted to them by the empress a century earlier, the monument

53 Yekelchyk, *Stalin's Empire of Memory*, 11.
54 Yekelchyk, 11.
55 Kappeler, *Die Kosaken*.
56 Polianichev, "Ekaterina II kak kazachia mat."

depicted, along with Prince Potemkin, the three Cossack leaders Antin Holovatyi, Zakharii Chepiha, and Sydir Bilyi. After the destruction of the Zaporizhian Sich, they played a key role in the formation of the Black Sea Cossack Host and the resettlement to the Kuban region. The monument also accommodated the figure of a Ukrainian blind bard (*kobzar*) accompanied by a small boy as a guide. The bard was intended to refer to the famous Ukrainian poet Taras Shevchenko, who was not allowed to be endorsed officially in the Russian Empire due to his radical views but was held in high esteem by his friend and creator of the monument Mikhail Mikeshin.[57] The Cossacks entrusted the latter with the project of the monument, not least due to his previous creation of the Hetman Bohdan Khmelnytskyi statue in Kyiv. Destroyed after the Bolshevik revolution, the Ekaterinodar monument was restored in 2006. Another monument celebrating the resettlement of the Zaporizhian Cossacks to the new lands granted by the empress was erected in 1911 in Taman (today in the Krasnodar oblast). The figure of a Zaporizhian Cossack stepping onto the shore represents Sydir Bilyi, who led the first group of re-settlers.[58]

There is some irony in the fact that the first monuments presenting the history of (Ukrainian) Cossackdom (albeit as an element of the imperial narrative) appeared on a territory that after the Bolshevik revolution became part of the Russian Federation. While the destruction of the rebellious Zaporizhian Sich and the resettlement of the Cossacks turned loyal imperial subjects is a success story of colonization and assimilation from the Russian perspective, it is a story of collective trauma and historical defeat in the Ukrainian national narrative. At the same time, in the Ukrainian geographic imagination, the Kuban region was often considered an "ethnic Ukrainian land," a potential part of a future "Great Ukraine"; the Cossack myth served to legitimize Ukrainian claims to Kuban.

With the collapse of the Russian Empire and the beginning of the Civil War, the Kuban as well as the Don Cossacks mostly sided with those forces that strove to restore the old order. At the same time, in the Kyiv of 1917 to 1920, the Ukrainian Cossack traditions and symbols were rediscovered and played an important role in the nation-building politics of the Ukrainian People's Republic and especially in the Hetmanate of Pavlo Skoropadskyi. In this context, the equestrian statue of Khmelnytskyi, which had been erected in St. Sofia Square in 1888 as a symbol of Russian imperial triumph over Poland and the "return" of Ukraine under Russian rule, gained a new political meaning pointing to the origins of the Ukrainian political tradition as different from Russia. For the Bolsheviks, with their class approach to history, Khmelnytskyi was a feudal warlord who failed to represent the people's interests, and hence his statue was something of an embarrassment. According to Yekelchyk, during mass public cel-

57 Polianichev, 148 – 50.

58 Sokol, *Monumenty imperii*, 438 – 39.

ebrations "the monument was boarded up with wooden panels and the local bosses even considered demolishing it altogether."[59]

In the late 1930s, however, Khmelnytskyi was incorporated into the Soviet canon as a symbol of Ukrainian national patriotism; the interpretation of his role as an enemy of the Polish aristocracy fitted into the anti-Polish propaganda of the Stalinist regime. In 1943, a military decoration named after Khmelnytskyi was introduced in the context of the Soviet liberation of the Ukrainian territory from the Nazis. Finally, in 1954, the pompous celebration of the three hundredth anniversary of the Pereiaslav Agreement, seen as a historical moment of the re-unification of Ukraine with Russia, cemented Khmelnytskyi's central place in the Soviet narrative of Ukrainian-Russian relations. A popular toponym in the Ukrainian and Russian urban space, Khmelnytskyi became a symbol of the "brotherly friendship" between the two Soviet republics. Monuments to Khmelnytskyi on the anniversary of the re-unification were erected in Dnipropetrovsk (today: Dnipro), Kryvyi Rih, Donetsk, Melitopol, Kherson, and other places, and more followed in the subsequent decades.

In 1965, a Khmelnytskyi monument was also erected on Khortytsia, the largest island in the Dnipro River, historically a stronghold of the Zaporizhian Cossacks. In the 1960s, the construction of a museum of Zaporizhian Cossackdom was begun on Khortytsia (part of the city of Zaporizhzhia). The project, initiated by Ukrainian intellectuals and supported by some members of the party nomenklatura, was soon frozen when Khrushchev's thaw period ended with a new wave of repressions against Ukrainian culture. The museum had to change the initial concept, which was criticized as "nationalist" and was opened only in 1983, as a museum of local history.[60] But only a few years later, during perestroika, the initial focus on the history of Zaporizhian Cossackdom was restored. In 1990, mass celebrations of the five hundredth anniversary of Ukrainian Cossackdom, especially in Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia, contributed to the national mobilization in Ukraine on the eve of state independence.[61]

3 Nationalization of Memory, Dealing with the Soviet Past, and the Role of Monuments in the Ukrainian-Russian Conflict

The fall of the Communist regime and the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the transformation of the former Soviet republics into independent states, the emergence of new international borders—all these factors radically changed the political context

59 Yekelchyk, *Stalin's Empire of Memory*, 17.

60 Haidai et al., *Polityka i Pamiat*, 58–59; Christian Ganzer, *Sowjetisches Erbe und ukrainische Nation: Das Museum der Geschichte des Zaporoger Kosakentums auf der Insel Chortycja* (Stuttgart: Ibidem, 2005).

61 Haidai et al., *Polityka i Pamiat*, 58.

of monumental commemoration in the northern Black Sea region in the early 1990s. As new independent states embarked on nation-building, public monuments were at the center of national and local projects aimed at the creation of official historical narratives and pantheons of heroes, the search for ancient roots, and reassessment of the Soviet past. Some of these projects caused interstate tensions and even conflicts, often referred to as memory wars. Mnemonic conflicts also emerged inside the post-Soviet societies, and in combination with other factors contributed to pro-Russian separatism and political legitimation of de-facto states in Moldova, Georgia, and, most recently, Ukraine. Historical memory was weaponized in Russia's aggression towards Ukraine, leading to the unlawful annexation of Ukrainian territories in 2014 and in 2022. Reflecting dramatic political changes, geopolitical shifts, and territorial disputes, both new and long-existing monuments have often become contested sites where different, sometimes mutually exclusive narratives of the past, collective identities, and political visions have clashed.

3.1 Mnemonic Pluralism and its Limits

During perestroika, political liberalization and democratization of public life already paved the way for the pluralization of historical narratives. The politics of glasnost in the last years of the Soviet Union gave an impulse to renewed public interest in history and heated up debates about the past. Old ideological taboos were lifted, and newly formed "communities of memory" and local political actors (journalists, descendants of victims, cultural associations, groups of veterans, etc.) initiated new commemorative projects. In the subsequent two decades, Stalinist political repressions, the Holodomor (the Great Famine of 1932/33), the deportation of the Crimean Tatars, and other traumatic events of Soviet history found their place in the region's commemorative landscape. Veterans of the Soviet war in Afghanistan and the Chernobyl (Ukrainian: Chornobyl) "liquidators" created their own commemorative cultures, which included numerous local memorials. The memory of the "Great Patriotic war" became subjected to de-ideologization and democratization, and its emphasis shifted from the official triumphalist narrative of heroic sacrifice to the recognition of the immense human tragedy and to a multiplicity of victims' voices. The commemoration of the Holocaust victims, slowly but surely, became part of the local mnemonic landscape, and Jewish memory, in particular in Odesa (e. g., the memorialization of Isaak Babel and Ze'ev Jabotinsky), demonstrated a new multiculturalism that replaced the official ideology of proletarian internationalism.

Unlike in the Russian Empire or in the Soviet Union, local authorities and civil society in both Ukraine and Russia after 1991 largely had a free hand in the issue of monumental commemoration. While presidents and central governments certainly favored specific projects (such as the Poklonnaia Gora Memorial in Moscow patronized by Boris Eltsin or the Holodomor Memorial in Kyiv initiated by Viktor Iushchenko), quite some freedom was left to the regions to decide what monuments and memorials

served better for building local identities and articulating historical traditions. It is only during the last decade that the limits of this mnemonic pluralism have become obvious in both Russia and Ukraine, in rather different ways, however. In Russia, the glorification of the imperial past leaves some space for other, more particularistic narratives as long as they do not contradict the official canon implemented from above by the Russian Military-Historical Society (RVIO, Rossiiskoe Voenno-Istoricheskoe Obshchestvo). Created by presidential decree in 2012 to replicate the Imperial Russian Military-Historical Society (1907–17), it is meant to "consolidate the forces of state and society in the study of the military history of Russia, to promote the study of Russian military history and counter attempts at distortion, ensuring the popularization of the achievements of military-historical scholarship, of patriotism, and of raising the prestige of military service."[62] The website of the RVIO mentions "Monumental Propaganda" among its main activities, and indeed, since 2012, the society has erected more than 250 monuments in Russia and abroad,[63] most of them devoted to Russian imperial rulers, statesmen, military leaders, and war heroes, as well as to Orthodox saints and priests. In Ukraine, where mnemonic pluralism has been more antagonistic, the limits were set by the decommunization legislation of 2015, which banned the public use of Soviet symbols and obliged local authorities to dismantle monuments to the figures of the Communist regime.[64] The Institute of National Remembrance, which had been created in 2006 at the initiative of President Iushchenko and re-launched after Euromaidan, was entrusted with the implementation of the decommunization legislation.

3.2 Soviet Monuments, Post-Soviet Nostalgia, and the Civil War Memory in Ukraine and Russia

Public monuments of the Communist era, especially those referring to the foundational myth of the October Revolution, have lost their primary ideological function of legitimizing the Soviet regime. Only few of them were immediately dismantled—such as the iconic Feliks Dzerzhinskii statue in front of the KGB headquarters in Moscow, or the Lenin monument in October Square (now the Maidan) in Kyiv. On the periphery—and the northern Black Sea region has been a periphery of both the Ukrainian and the Russian state—changes were less dramatic, especially in those places where local identity was rooted in the history of Soviet modernization and where the Commu-

62 "Ukaz No. 1710," Rossiiskoe voenno-istoricheskoe obshchestvo, accessed September 21, 2023, https://rvio.histrf.ru/official/decree-no-1710.

63 "Monumentalnaia propaganda," Rossiiskoe voenno-istoricheskoe obshchestvo, accessed September 21, 2023 https://rvio.histrf.ru/projects/monumental-promotion.

64 Tatiana Zhurzhenko, "Legislating Historical Memory in Post-Soviet Ukraine," in *Memory Laws and Historical Justice,* ed. Elazar Barkan and Ariella Lang (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 97–130.

nist Party was still strong.[65] While in western Ukraine, where Soviet rule was established only after World War II, monuments to Lenin and other Communist leaders were quickly removed in the early 1990s, in southern Ukraine most of them survived until the "Leninfall" of 2014 and the decommunization law of 2015. In Russia, as soon as Eltsin's war with the Communists was over, the increasingly conservative Putin regime avoided any moves that could be seen as revolutionary iconoclasm: However embarrassing the remaining Communist monuments might have been, removing them and thus challenging the symbolic order of power would have been even worse from the authorities' perspective.

In general, monuments of Lenin and other Communist leaders—the remnants of the Soviet era—were dismantled, relocated, or simply marginalized due to the changing political context. But sometimes new monuments were also built, reflecting the post-Soviet nostalgia which was instrumentalized by some political forces. At the center of this neo-Soviet monumental commemoration has been the figure of Joseph Stalin, whose growing popularity can be explained by longing for a "strong hand" and the frustration with post-Soviet transition. In Russia, the erection of Stalin monuments underwent a real boom after 2015, related to the celebration of the seventieth anniversary of the Soviet victory in World War II and the nationalist mobilization following the annexation of Crimea. In most cases, these monuments were initiated by local Communists and Soviet nostalgists. More than a hundred Stalin monuments exist in Russia today, many of them in the North Caucasus, on the territories of Dagestan, and in North Ossetia.[66] In Ukraine, where his popularity is a generational phenomenon and in decline, Stalin was instrumentalized as a counter-symbol to the nationalist hero Stepan Bandera in the memory wars following the Orange Revolution. In the Ukrainian city of Zaporizhzhia in 2010, the local Communists erected a Stalin bust in front of their headquarters. It caused a political scandal and was blown up by Ukrainian nationalists.[67] A monument to Stalin as a neo-Soviet political symbol was erected in 2015 in the so-called "Luhansk People's Republic,"[68] where it also serves to deny the legitimacy of the Ukrainian state. A less ideological form of post-Soviet nostalgia ("nostalgia light") is expressed in the cult of Leonid Brezhnev, whose rule is often remembered today as an era of stability and of modest but secure social welfare. In the Russian city of Novorossiisk, a statue of the young Brezhnev was erected in 2004,

65 It was different, for example, in Odesa, where the local foundational myth drawing on the Russian imperial past made the farewell from Soviet symbols relatively easy. See Richardson, *Kaleidoscopic Odessa.*

66 Omskii Kraeved, "Pamiatniki Stalinu v sovremennoi Rossii, ili kult lichnosti 2," *Vkontakte*, October 25, 2019, https://vk.com/@kraeved55-pamyatniki-stalinu-v-sovremennoi-rossii-ili-kult-lichnosti-2.

67 Serhii Plokhy, "When Stalin Lost his Head: World War II and Memory Wars in Contemporary Ukraine," in *War and Memory in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus,* ed. Julie Fedor et al. (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 171–88.

68 "V okupovanomu Luhansku vstanovyly biust Stalina," *Ukrainska Pravda*, December 19, 2015, https://www.pravda.com.ua/rus/news/2015/12/19/7093027/.

representing a strong symbolic link between the Soviet leader and the city created in the post-war years.[69] A local Brezhnev cult also exists in the Ukrainian Dniprodzerzhynsk (before 1936 and from 2016 Kamianske), the town of his birth. The Brezhnev bust erected there in 1976 was spared dismantling under the decommunization law by being transferred to a local museum.[70]

The dramatic events of the Civil War (1917–21) in Southern Russia and Ukraine are reflected in Communist-era monuments that were meant to celebrate the "establishment of Soviet power" in the region. While in Ukraine such monuments came under criticism and are threatened with dismantling under the decommunization legislation, Russia has meanwhile seen the erection of monuments which seek to re-write the history of the Civil War from a new perspective. Two examples below illustrate such projects and the mnemonic conflicts arising around them.

3.2.1 "The Legendary Tachanka" in Kakhovka

In the autumn of 1920, the Bolsheviks, in temporary alliance with Nestor Makhno, were able to defeat the White Army in the northern Tavria steppe (today's Kherson and Mykolaiv oblasts, Ukraine). The Whites were forced to retreat to the Crimean Peninsula and the victory of the Bolsheviks ensured the establishment of Soviet power in southern Ukraine. In the subsequent decades, the Red Army and in particular the First Cavalry Army were glorified in Soviet mass culture. One of the most powerful images of the Civil War (appearing, for example, in the Soviet film *Vasilii Chapaev*) was the *tachanka*, an open horse-drawn wagon with a heavy machine gun installed at the rear. Providing mobile warfare before the era of widespread motorized vehicles, *tachankas* were cheap, especially suitable for steppe landscapes, and therefore used by various armies: the Poles, the Makhno troops, and of course the Reds. Romanticized in Soviet poems and songs as a symbol of the stormy years of the Revolution and Civil War, the *tachanka* offered a suitable motif for monumental commemoration. In 1967, a gigantic monument called The Legendary Tachanka (Russian: Legendarnaia tachanka, Ukrainian: Lehendarna tachanka) was built on an artificial hill near Kakhovka (Kherson oblast), where the headquarters of the Soviet military commander Vasilii Bliukher had been in 1920. The monument, an outstanding piece of Soviet monumental art, was designed and produced in Leningrad and installed on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the October Revolution. It depicts a *tachanka* drawn by four houses and manned by three Red Army soldiers during an impetuous attack[71] (see fig. 19).

69 Davis, "The City as a Work of Monumental Culture," 109–10.

70 On the Brezhnev cult in post-Soviet Dnipro and the region, see Portnov, *Dnipro*, 319–21.

71 A similar motif, also referencing the history of the Civil war, was used for the Tachanka monument built near the Russian city of Rostov-on-Don in 1977. A little different—presenting two horsemen of the First Cavalry Army in the moment of attack—was the monument to the fighters of the 1st Cavalry Army built in 1975 in Lviv oblast (western Ukraine) and dedicated to the Red Army defeated near Warsaw in

Fig. 19: The Legendary Tachanka monument in Kakhovka.

In 1983, another monument thematically related to the *tachanka* was erected in Kakhovka: the Girl in the Military Overcoat (Russian: *Devushka v shineli*, Ukrainian: *Divchyna v shyneli*), the protagonist of the romantic revolutionary poem by Mikhail Svetlov entitled *Pesnia o Kakhovke* (The Song about Kakhovka). With the fall of the Soviet regime and Ukraine's independence, the Legendary Tachanka monument lost its ideological significance and was repeatedly plundered by metal thieves. At the same time, the monument became a tourist attraction and the unofficial symbol of Kakhovka. An annual motorbike festival and a cycling tournament integrated the monument into their programs. After the adoption of the decommunization legislation, the future of the Tachanka and other Soviet monuments was discussed in Kakhovka. While the local monument to Mikhail Frunze, a Bolshevik leader and military commander, was dismantled after 2015, the Tachanka remained intact. In December 2019, the Institute of National Remembrance (INP) sent a letter to the local city council demanding the dismantling of both the Legendary Tachanka and The Girl in the Military Overcoat as symbols of the totalitarian Communist regime. The mayor of Kakhovka, who published the letter on his Facebook page, announced that he would not give in to the pressure from Kyiv. He was supported by local residents, some of them driven by post-Soviet nostalgia, others just attached to the monument as an important local symbol.

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the Polish-Soviet war in August 1920. Not unimportant for our story is the fact that while the monument in Rostov-on-Don was renovated in 2009, the one in western Ukraine was abandoned and finally dismantled in 2017.

Ukrainian media extensively reported on the conflict,[72] and the Russian media used the case as a pretext to criticize the nationalism of the Kyiv government.[73]

To solve the conflict, the INP organized a public discussion in Kakhovka, inviting experts, the local authorities, and activists. The director of the INP from 2019, Anton Drobovych, saw this as an opportunity to start a public dialogue about controversial Soviet monuments.[74] Some rather creative solutions were proposed, such as removing the *budenovka*, the archetypal hat of the Red Army soldiers in order to turn the Tachanka into a monument to the Insurgent Army of Nestor Makhno. A shaky compromise was finally reached: The monument was to become part of an open-air museum of totalitarian propaganda, yet to be created. The COVID-19 pandemic and then the Russian invasion halted this project; in late February 2022, Kakhovka was occupied by the Russian army.

The story of the Tachanka is not only characteristic of memory politics in post-Euromaidan Ukraine; it also illustrates a shift in Ukrainian historiography from the concept of the Civil War, which was central to Soviet historiography, to the concept of the Ukrainian-Soviet war, which ended with the defeat of the Ukrainian national revolution and eventually with the Soviet occupation of Ukraine. As we will see in the next section, in Russia the narrative of the Civil War has been revised, too, albeit in a different way.

3.2.2 The Exodus Monument in Novorossiisk and the Reconciliation Monument in Sevastopol

In April 2013, a new monument was erected on the promenade in Novorossiisk to commemorate the evacuation of the White Army in the spring of 1920. The composition, entitled *Iskhod* (Exodus), presents a White Army officer pulling his stubborn horse towards the sea. The scene refers to the dramatic events that unfolded in the port town of Novorossiisk in March 1920, when the remnants of the defeated White troops (and many civilians) fled the approaching Red Army. The idea of the monument was supported by the mayor of the city and the head of the Kuban Cossack Host. It was also welcomed by the local residents, not least because the depicted scene was reminiscent

72 Iuliana Skibitska, "'Ne chipaite moho Lenina': V chomu poliahaiut problemy dekomunizatsii i iak ikh rozviazuvaty – rozpovidaemo na prykladi pamiatnuka Tachantsi v Kakhovtsi," *Zaborona*, May 25, 2020, https://zaborona.com/problemi-dekomunizacziyi/; Dmytro Shurkhalo, "Pro kakhovsku 'lehendarnu tachanku' i radiansku monumentalnu spadshchynu: ruinatsiia chy adaptatsiia?," *Radio Svoboda*, January 19, 2020, https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/tachanka-kahovka-dekomunizatsiya/30385790.html.

73 Andrei Sidorchik, "Dekommunizatsiia Tachanki: Kiev khochet lishit Kakhovku legendarnykh pamiatnikov," *Argumenty i Fakty*, January 14, 2020, https://aif.ru/politics/world/dekommunizaciya_tachanki_kiev_hochet_lishit_kahovku_legendarnyh_pamyatnikov?from_inject=1.

74 Anton Drobovych, "Kakhovska #Tachanka sudnoho dnia," *Istorychna Pravda*, January 15, 2020, https://www.istpravda.com.ua/columns/2020/01/15/156881/.

of the popular Soviet era film *Sluzhili dva tovarishcha* (Two Comrades Were Serving, 1968), sympathetic to the tragic fate of the White officers (a partial rehabilitation of the White movement in mass culture was already underway in the late Soviet era). Half a year later, however, a scandal erupted when it turned out that the White general Anton Turkul, cited on the plinth of the monument as a witness to the chaotic evacuation in 1920, had later sympathized with the Nazis and contributed to the formation of the so-called Russian Liberation Army under the command of the notorious General Vlasov.[75] The local experts argued that Turkul's Novorossiisk episode had nothing to do with his later political trajectory and, moreover, that he had never been convicted of collaboration and his memoirs were not on the official list of extremist texts. But the activists of *Sut Vremeni* (Essence of Time)—a neo-Stalinist conservative ultra-patriotic organization founded in 2011 by Sergei Kurginian—demanded the removal of the quotation of a traitor and Nazi collaborator.[76] The activists, who presented themselves as "antifascists," drew parallels with the Euromaidan in Ukraine, which was framed in the Russian media as a fascist coup, and warned against the lack of political vigilance. Moreover, they criticized the very name of the monument, Exodus, as the assumed parallel with the Old Testament conferred victim status and thus moral superiority on one particular side, the Whites. The absence of the other force, the Reds, from the composition, testified, in their view, to a failure to take the proclaimed reconciliation seriously. Under pressure from the activists, who were able to mobilize local support, in 2015 the authorities removed the name of Turkul (but not the—now anonymous—quotation).[77]

Some years later, a similar conflict, but on a larger scale, emerged in Sevastopol, then already annexed by Russia. The idea of a monument symbolizing the reconciliation between the two sides that fought each other in the Civil War was put forward by Prince Nikita Lobanov-Rostovskii and other representatives of the Russian aristocracy at the 5th World Congress of Russian Compatriots Living Abroad, held in November 2015.[78] The idea was supported by Patriarch Kirill and by Vladimir Putin, who endorsed the official preparations for the centenary of the Russian Revolution in 1917 under the motto "reconciliation and concord."[79] In 2016, the Russian Military Historical Society (RVIO) initiated a project for the monument, which was then developed by the pro-Kremlin "patriotic" sculptor Andrei Kovalchuk. The opening was planned in the au-

75 Vitalii Chaika, "V Novorossiiske ustanovili monument s familiei natsistskogo generala?," *Komsomolskaia Pravda*, November 4, 2013, https://www.kuban.kp.ru/daily/26154.7/3042765/#comment.

76 "Iskhod vsemu? V gorode-geroe Novorossiiske pod razgovory o primirenii chtut pamiat posobnikov fashistov?," *Novorossiiskie Izvestiia*, May 19, 2014, http://www.novodar.ru/index.php/tribuna/124-history-freetr/9379-vnpropchppf-05-2014.

77 "Skandal v Novorossiiske: oskvernivshikh 'Iskhod' lishit prava na Den Pobedy," *Regnum*, April 8, 2015, https://regnum.ru/news/society/1913401.html.

78 Konstantin Klimovskiy, "V Vsemirnyi Kongress sootechestvennikov, prozhivaiushchikh za rubezhom," *Mezhdunarodnaia Zhizn* 12 (2015), https://interaffairs.ru/jauthor/material/1412.

79 Olga Malinova, "The Embarrassing Centenary: Reinterpretation of the 1917 Revolution in the Official Historical Narrative of Post-Soviet Russia (1991–2017)," *Nationalities Papers* 46, no. 2 (2018): 272–89.

tumn of 2017, on the occasion of the centenary of the October Revolution. As for the location of the monument, the initiators hesitated between Kerch and Sevastopol, but the final choice was made in favor of the latter, a symbolically much more important place for Russian identity. Sevastopol, according to this narrative, "became the last piece of Russian land for those who left their homeland. This is where the long-suffering history of the Russian White emigration began."[80]

Not everybody in Sevastopol, however, was happy about the project and the idea of reconciliation that it was supposed to represent. As in Novorossiisk, protests were initiated by Essence of Time activists; this organization had been already successful in similar campaigns (having forced the RVIO to take down a memorial plaque dedicated to Finnish marshal Karl Gustav Mannerheim in St. Petersburg, for instance).[81] During 2016/17, the Sevastopol branch of Essence of Time organized street protests, collected signatures, initiated open letters and even went to court opposing the project, primarily for ideological reasons. The activists argued that "under the pretext of reconciliation, Soviet history is being denigrated in every possible way and the monarchical period is extolled by all means, fascist collaborators in the Great Patriotic War and war criminals of the Civil War are being rehabilitated and glorified."[82] They pointed to Ukraine, Spain and other countries where, in their view, the idea of reconciliation is used to rehabilitate fascism and argued that the "Great Victory" in World War II had already reconciled warring political camps. Instead of "reviving anti-Soviet myths from the perestroika era," they called for celebration of the centenary of the October Revolution.[83]

The protests against the "de-Sovietization of Russian history" and the "White revanchism" were supported by the Communist Party of the Russian Federation and by a number of local organizations: the Soviet War Veterans, the Association of the Children of War, the Union of Soviet Officers, the veterans of the war in Afghanistan, and the "Immortal Regiment," as well as by local journalists and architects. To the surprise of those in Moscow who saw the triumph of the "Russian Spring" in Sevastopol as a manifestation of political unity, the Soviet nostalgic and the neo-imperial narratives, which before 2014 had coalesced in the protests against the alleged Ukrainization, turned out to be antagonistic and divided the local community. In a similar way, since annexation public opinion in Sevastopol on the issue of the city's official symbols

80 Nikita Lobanov-Rostovsky [Rostovskii], "Open Letter," *Russkaia Mysl*, April 22, 2021, https://russianmind.com/open-letter/.

81 "Controversial St. Petersburg Memorial Removed," *The Moscow Times*, October 14, 2016, https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2016/10/14/controversial-st-petersburg-memorial-removed-a55743.

82 "V Sevastopole obsudili vopros ustanovki pamiatnika Primirenia," *Krasnaia Vesna*, June 8, 2017, https://rossaprimavera.ru/news/v-sevastopole-obsudili-vopros-ustanovki-pamyatnika-primireniya.

83 "Sevastopol dobilsia obshchestvennykh obsuzhdenii pamiatnika Primirenia," *Krasnaia Vesna*, July 15, 2017, https://rossaprimavera.ru/news/obshchestvenniki-rasskazali-smi-o-pamyatnike-primireniya-na-press.

has been divided between the "communists" and the "monarchists."[84] In the subsequent years, numerous attempts failed to replace the Soviet flag and coat of arms (showing the Monument to the Sunken Ships and the Gold Star medal of the Hero City) with the imperial one displaying the griffin and the monograms of the two emperors, Nicholas I and Alexander II.

Having faced local protests, the RVIO had to put the project on ice. Putin himself supported the demand of the Soviet war veterans to build a new memorial to the defenders of Sevastopol during the siege in 1941/42 at the spot initially designated for the controversial reconciliation monument. But the issue was not closed. In the autumn of 2019, Sevastopol saw the return of the contested project and the foundation stone was laid during the official ceremony, which was attended by, among others, the minister of culture and head of the RVIO, Vladimir Medinskii, and the famous Russian film director Nikita Mikhalkov. This time, a different location was chosen—Quarantine Bay with its view of ancient Chersonesus. The monument was supposed to be officially inaugurated in November 2020, on the occasion of the hundredth anniversary of the "Russian Exodus" but due to the covid pandemic the opening was postponed and took place on April 22, 2021 (Lenin's birthday was probably chosen to further humiliate opponents).

The monument is a female statue on top of a twenty-five-meter stele. She represents Mother Russia stretching out her hands over the two figures of the White Guard officer and the Red Army soldier. Between them, the eternal flame burns in a bowl in the form of an olive wreath. Contrary to the secular Soviet tradition (according to which one eternal flame was ignited from the other; see the section on post-war Novorossiisk), this time the flame was brought, in a kind of hybrid ritual, from St. Volodymyr's Cathedral in Sevastopol. In this way, the Christianization of Russia and the myth of the siege of Sevastopol were connected to the eventual end of the great split brought by the Bolshevik Revolution and the Civil War.[85]

The protests against the monument continued even after the official inauguration, and the local community remained divided.[86] Over the five years from the idea to the realization of the contested project, the name has changed several times, reflecting the uneasy search for compromise: from the Reconciliation Monument to the Monument to the Unity of Russia to the Monument to the 100th Anniversary of the End of the Civil War. It is also known as the Monument to the Sons of Russia who fought in the Civil War and as the Monument to the Victims of the Civil War. On November 4, 2021, the Day of National Unity, the site was finally visited by Vladimir Putin, who spoke

84 "Sevastopoltsy vosprotivilis smene gerba i flaga goroda," *Sevas*, March 10, 2015, http://news.sevas.com/politics/obrashhenie_protiv_smeny_flaga_i_gerba_sevastopolya.

85 Iulia Krymova, "V Sevastopole otkryli pamiatnik okonchaniiu Grazhdanskoi voiny," *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, April 22, 2021, https://rg.ru/2021/04/22/reg-ufo/v-sevastopole-otkryli-pamiatnik-okonchaniiu-grazhdanskoj-vojny.html.

86 Dmitrii Okunev, "'Potoki lzhi': pochemu pamiatnik Primirenia ne ustroil ni krasnykh, ni belykh," *Gazeta.Ru*, November 3, 2020, www.gazeta.ru/science/2020/11/03_a_13344577.shtml.

about the eventual end to the "fraternal war" and the tragedy of the "Russian exodus"[87] (see fig. 20).

Fig. 20: The Reconciliation Monument in Sevastopol, visited by Vladimir Putin on November 4, 2021.

This was just a couple of months before the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, one of the dramatic consequences of which was the mass emigration of Russians fleeing the country from the war and mass mobilization.

3.3 The Ukrainization of the Commemorative Landscape: Ambivalence and Conflict

The unmaking of Soviet memorial culture went hand in hand with nation-building and the "territorialization of national memory" in Ukraine and Russia. From the Orange Revolution in Ukraine in 2004, the antagonism of key historical narratives in Ukraine and in Russia resonated with the diverging (geo)political orientations of both countries. While Russia built on its unique "civilization" and the continuity with the imperial and Soviet past, Ukraine embraced an anti-colonial identity and the pro-European path. And yet, there was a lot of room in Ukrainian–Russian relations for ambivalent historical symbols and narratives inherited from the Soviet era. One of them was the "invented tradition" of Cossackdom, which lent itself to appropriation by different actors and was given both Ukrainian nationalist and pro-Russian interpretations. Another exam-

87 "Pozdravlenie s Dnem Narodnogo edinstva," *President Rossii*, November 4, 2021, http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67065.

ple is the legacy of Kyivan Rus and the figure of St. Volodymyr/Vladimir, a historical symbol which refers to the national origins, to Europe, and to Orthodox Christian tradition simultaneously.[88]

The Ukrainization of the commemorative landscape after 1991 did not challenge the Soviet Ukrainian canon and reflected the inertia of Soviet symbolic politics. This primarily concerned prominent cultural figures whose cult had been established in the previous decades—Lesia Ukrainka, Ivan Franko, and, of course, Taras Shevchenko. Their monuments, which under Communism had symbolized the "friendship of peoples" and the multinational character of Soviet culture, gained a new meaning in independent Ukraine—they became markers of the Ukrainian cultural space in a largely Russian-speaking region. On the northern Black Sea coast, where Aleksandr Pushkin and Leo Tolstoy had been among the key *lieux de mémoire*, such a visualization of the Ukrainian culture was especially important. Thus, the monument to Ivan Franko was unveiled in Odesa in 2006 and Lesia Ukrainka received some new statues and memorial plaques in Crimea (in addition to the monument built in 1972 in front of the museum to her in Yalta).

3.3.1 Monuments to Taras Shevchenko

But most telling was the erection of monuments to Taras Shevchenko, who in the Soviet era was principally seen as a representative of the "revolutionary democratic tradition" but in post-Soviet Ukraine gained the prominent position of the main national bard, founder of the national literature, and a symbol of the anti-colonial fight. While the first real monument to Shevchenko was erected in Odesa in 1966 (replacing a cheap plaster statue), many new—albeit if less impressive—monuments in Kherson, Odesa, Mykolaiv, and Zaporizhzhia oblasts followed, especially in the last Soviet and first post-Soviet decades. This development was particularly visible in Crimea, where there had not been a single monument to Shevchenko before 1991. The monopoly of the Russian language and the marginal status of Ukrainian in Crimea was seen with concern by many in Kyiv, especially against the background of the Ukrainian–Russian tensions surrounding the future of the Black Sea Fleet and the territorial claims to the Crimean Peninsula voiced by Russian nationalists. The erection of Shevchenko monuments in Crimea were thus attempts by some Ukrainian actors to challenge the dominance of Russian culture and to mark the peninsula as part of Ukraine. The first Shevchenko monument was erected in Simferopol in 1997 as a gift from the western Ukrainian town of Kalush and replaced an old Soviet sculpture of the same poet built on the site in 1964, on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of his birth. In

88 Tatiana Zhurzhenko, "The Monumental Commemoration of St. Volodymyr / St. Vladimir in Ukraine, Russia and Beyond: The Nationalisation of the Past, the Orthodox Church and 'Monumental Propaganda' before and after the Annexation of Crimea," in *Official History in Eastern Europe*, ed. Korine Amacher, Andrii Portnov, and Viktoriia Serhiienko (Osnabrück: Fibre Verlag, 2021), 173–217.

2001, a monument to Shevchenko, created by a local sculptor, appeared in Kerch as a symbol of partnership between the city and Kyiv and at the initiative of both mayors. The monument in Sevastopol was unveiled in 2003 in front of the Gagarin district council and is the product of a cooperation between Lviv sculptors and a local Sevastopol architect. The four-meter-high statue stands on a plinth in the form of a traditional Ukrainian musical instrument, the *bandura.* The monument to Shevchenko in Yalta was erected in 2007, already against the background of mnemonic tensions following the Orange Revolution. It was sponsored by a Ukrainian diaspora couple from Toronto and made by the famous Canadian Ukrainian sculptor Leo Mol, the creator of several Shevchenko monuments in different countries. Transported by ship from Argentina, it was officially inaugurated in the presence of Ukrainian officials and activists despite the protests of some pro-Russian organizations.[89]

The annexation of Crimea changed the meaning of the Shevchenko monuments: They became sites of dissent and potential resistance to the Russian occupation.[90] In particular, the Russian occupational authorities tried to prevent public gatherings at these sites on Ukrainian national holidays. At the same time, Ukrainian cultural associations loyal to Moscow and various "societies of peoples' friendship" were allowed to re-appropriate the Shevchenko monuments to demonstrate the unity of the residents of Crimea and their consent to the annexation. While some radical Russian nationalist voices demanded the dismantling of the Shevchenko monument in Sevastopol, the authorities obviously did not see him as a politically subversive symbol. (After all, monuments to Shevchenko, a legacy of Soviet "internationalism," exist in several Russian cities.)[91]

3.3.2 Ukraine as a Black Sea Naval Power: Antin Holovatyi in Odesa and Hetman Sahaidachnyi in Sevastopol

As shown in section 2.3.4, the memory of the Ukrainian Cossackdom, rooted in the northern Black Sea region, was already institutionalized during the Soviet era. After 1991, the Cossack tradition took on new significance in the context of Ukrainian nation-building. Based on the Soviet tradition, the Cossack cult developed in Dnipro and Zaporizhzhia. Odesa with its strong imperial myth was, however, a new territory for the monumental commemoration of Ukrainian Cossackdom. In 1999, the monu-

89 Serhii Konashevych, "Istoriia ta dolia pamiatnykiv Shevchenkovi v Krymu," *Holos Krymu – Kultura*, October 6, 2020, https://culture.voicecrimea.com.ua/uk/zloveshchye-symvoly-ukraynskoj-okkupatsyy-istoriia-ta-dolia-pam-iatnykiv-shevchenkovi-v-krymu/.

90 Andriy Ivanets, "On the 200th Anniversary of Shevchenko, Crimeans Oppose the Occupation," *Virtual Museum of Russian Agression*, March 9, 2014, https://rusaggression.gov.ua/en/event-article.html?object=50d810b4496a36faa7bcb15fc3c4bbf0.

91 Konashevych, "Istoriia ta dolia pamiatnykiv."

ment to Antin Holovatyi (Russian: Anton Golovatyi) was inaugurated in Odesa in the presence of President Kuchma (see fig. 21).

Holovatyi was a prominent Cossack leader who after the destruction of the Zaporizhian Sich played a crucial role in the formation of the Black Sea Cossack Host and the resettlement of the Black Sea Cossacks to the Kuban region. The Cossack troops of Holovatyi took part in the Russian conquest of the Northern Black Sea and distinguished themselves as a naval force during the siege of Ochakov, Akkerman (today: Bilhorod-Dnistrovskyi) and Izmail. By order of Prince Potemkin, Holovatyi captured the Ottoman fortress of Hacıbey in 1789, and, in this way, contributed to the foundation of Odesa. The Odesa monument depicts the Cossack leader as sitting deep in thought, with his horse close by. It is worth remembering that Holovatyi was already depicted on the monument to Catherine II in Ekaterinodar. He thus illustrates perfectly the ambivalence of the myth of Ukrainian Cossackdom: the claim to autonomy and a distinct political tradition and, at the same time, loyalty to the Russian Empire and the contribution to the Russian colonization project. While part of the Ukrainian historical narrative, he also belongs to the imperial myth of Odesa.

A less ambivalent monument to a Ukrainian Cossack leader was, however, erected in Sevastopol in 2008. Since removed, it was devoted to Petro Konashevych-Sahaidachnyi, hetman of the Zaporizhian Cossacks from 1616 to 1622, a political and military leader whose key achievement was the transformation of the Cossack Host into a regular

Fig. 21: The monument to Antin Holovatyi in Odesa.

army. Sahaidachnyi defeated the Ottomans in the Battle of Khotyn (1621) and supported the Polish military campaign against Moscow (1618). From the Ukrainian perspective, it is especially significant that long before Russia became a hegemonic force in the region, daring Cossack sea raids had challenged Ottoman control over the northern Black Sea coast.[92] It was under the leadership of Sahaidachnyi that the Zaporizhian Cossacks became famous as a naval force. In 1616, his troops captured Caffa (today: Feodosiia) on the Crimean Peninsula and, according to the legend, released many Christians from slavery. These military credentials (as well as his "geopolitical" sympathies) made Sahaidachnyi a suitable figure as a patron of the Ukrainian naval forces. Following the division of the Black Sea Fleet between Russia and Ukraine in the 1990s, the frigate named after Hetman Sahaidachnyi became the flagship of the Ukrainian navy for over twenty years.[93] The monument to Hetman Sahaidachnyi was erected in Sevastopol in June 2008 on the 225th anniversary of the city at the initiative of the then naval commander of Ukraine, Admiral Ihor Teniukh. The idea of the monument was long due: Sevastopol, which since the division of the Soviet Black Sea Fleet had hosted both Russian and Ukrainian naval forces, was dominated by the Russian narrative of imperial military glory. Ukraine needed its own naval symbol which would anchor its claim to Crimea and Sevastopol and historically legitimize its role as a naval force in the Black Sea. At the inauguration ceremony, the governor of the city appointed by President Iushchenko argued that "from now on nobody will have doubts about Sevastopol as a Ukrainian city."[94] The erection of the monument coincided with the peak of memory wars in Ukraine; in Sevastopol, an alternative project intended to celebrate the 225th anniversary of the city was supported by the local elites, to the irritation of Kyiv: a monument to Catherine II (to be discussed in the next section). The Sahaidachnyi monument—which locals also called "the dancing hetman" due to his pose—was seen as an unwanted gift from the capital.

Little wonder, therefore, that only some weeks after the annexation of Crimea, the Moscow-appointed governor of Sevastopol ordered the dismantling of the Sahaidachnyi monument (as well as the memorial plaque dedicated to the tenth anniversary of the Ukrainian navy). On April 25, 2014 the monument was "carefully" removed: The Russian occupational authorities stressed the "civilized way" they dealt with monuments—unlike Ukrainians toppling Lenin statues.[95] One year later, the monument was re-inaugurated in Ukrainian Kharkiv—the local mayor had offered refuge to the displaced het-

92 Charles King, *The Black Sea: A History* (Oxford University Press, 2005), 129–34.

93 The frigate *Hetman Sahaidachnyi* was moved to Odesa after the annexation of Crimea in 2014; in March 2022, the ship, which had been in the Mykolaiv dock for refitting and upgrading, was scuttled by Ukraine to prevent her from falling into the hands of the invading Russian forces.

94 "U Sevastopoli vidkryly pamiatnyk Sahaidachnomu i 'pidpilno' Kateryni II," *Radio Svoboda*, June 14, 2008, https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/1139584.html.

95 "Vchera po resheniiu gubernatora Sevastopolia byl akkuratno demontirovan 'pamiatnik' getmanu Sagaidachnomu," *ForPost Novosti Sevastopolia*, April 26, 2014, https://sevastopol.su/news/vchera-po-resheniyu-gubernatora-sevastopolya-byl-akkuratno-demontirovan-pamyatnik-getmanu.

man.[96] In April 2022, after the full-scale Russian invasion, Hetman Sahaidachnyi was declared patron saint of the military forces of Ukraine by the head of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, Metropolitan Epifanii.[97] On May 7, the Russian army dismantled —reportedly at the initiative of local residents—another monument to Sahaidachnyi erected in 2017 in Manhush on the outskirts of Mariupol at the initiative of the Azov Battalion and the right-wing National Corps Party.[98]

3.4 The Uses and Abuses of the Russian Imperial Legacy

As shown in section 2.3.1, a partial rehabilitation of the Russian imperial past took place as early as the late 1930s and the 1940s and continued during the late Soviet era. Being instrumental for patriotic education, imperial history did not endanger the meta-narrative of the "Great October Socialist Revolution" because the former was firmly perceived as "the past"—a chapter that had closed long ago, historical and cultural heritage that belonged in the museum, something hardly relevant politically. This changed after 1991: The fall of the Communist regime allowed a re-evaluation of imperial history, especially its last period. The public condemnation of the crimes of the Communist regime opened the way to the rehabilitation of the Romanov family as victims and—at the initiative of the Russian Orthodox Church—martyrs of Bolshevik terror. With the Soviet era seen as a "deviation" in Russian history, the imperial past gained new significance.

Under Eltsin, Russia saw itself as a young democracy striving to integrate into the West. With ideological taboos no more, some Russian tsars could be interpreted as Westernizers and modernizers, and none suited this role better than Peter I, who according to Pushkin opened for Russia "a window to Europe." The erection of the gigantic (ninety-eight-meter-high) monument to Peter I in Moscow had strong public resonance. Created by the prolific Georgian-Russian sculptor Zurab Tsereteli, a friend of the mighty mayor of the Russian capital, Iurii Luzhkov, it was meant to celebrate the three hundredth anniversary of the Russian navy, but was inaugurated only two years later, during the pompous celebration of the 850th anniversary of Moscow. In southern Russia, where Peter's era is associated with his Azov campaigns of 1695/

96 "V Kharkove otkryli pamiatnik getmanu Sagaidachnomu," Kharkov: Ofitsialnyi sait Kharkovskogo gorodskogo soveta, gorodskogo golovy, ispolnitelnogo komiteta, last modified August 22, 2015, https://city.kharkov.ua/ru/news/-29016.html.

97 "Metropolitan Epifaniy Proclaims Hetman Petro Sahaidachny the Patron Saint of the Ukrainian Army," Religious Information Service of Ukraine, last modified April 20, 2022, https://risu.ua/en/metropolitan-epifaniy-proclaims-hetman-petro-sahaidachny-the-ukrainian-army-patron-saint_n128525.

98 "V Mangushe otkryli pamiatnik getmanu Sagaidachnomu," *0629com.ua*, October 13, 2017, https://www.0629.com.ua/news/1826562/v-manguse-otkryli-pamatnik-getmanu-sagajdacnomu-fotovideo; Elena Blokha, "V osvobozhdennom Mangushe demontirovali pamiatnik getmanu Sagaidachnomu," *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, May 8, 2022, https://rg.ru/2022/05/08/v-osvobozhdennom-mangushe-demontirovali-pamiatnik-getmanu-sagajdachnomu.html.

96, new monuments to him were erected in addition to the pre-revolutionary statue of Peter I in Taganrog, which survived all the turbulences of the twentieth century. The monuments usually depict Peter I as a young and determined ruler and military leader who expanded the boundaries of the Russian state and founded the Russian military fleet. In 1996, on the three hundredth anniversary of the Russian navy, a monument to Peter I was erected in Azov (Rostov oblast). In 2009, it was supplemented by a monument to Peter's close associate, Aleksei Shein, who during the Second Azov Campaign was the commander-in-chief of the Russian land troops. Monuments to Peter were also built in Sochi (2008), Rostov-on-Don (2018), and Astrakhan (2007), which Peter visited in 1722, and in Makhachkala (the former Petrovsk fortress) in Dagestan (2019).[99] After the annexation of Crimea, a bust monument to Peter I was built in Kerch (2016). The conservative turn in Putin's Russia did not diminish the popularity of Peter I, now seen as the founder of the Russian Empire rather than as a "progressive" and pro-Western tsar.[100]

Some imperial monuments which had been destroyed in the early Soviet era were restored after 1991 at the initiative of local authorities, business, and the Church. Among them is the statue to Alexander I in Taganrog, built in 1830 (five years after the unexpected death of the imperator during his stay in the city) and dismantled in the 1920s. The statue was restored in 1998 on the three hundredth anniversary of Taganrog. Another example is the monument to Catherine II in Krasnodar (formerly Ekaterinodar) initiated by the Kuban Cossacks and built in 1907 (discussed in detail in section 2.3.4). Destroyed in the 1920s, it was rebuilt in 2006. In southern Russia, constructions of new monuments referring to imperial history were relatively rare during the first two post-Soviet decades, not least because such projects faced the opposition of the Communists and the Soviet-minded majority of the local population. Where such monuments were built, their main function is the popularization of local history and the consolidation of local founding myths (for instance, the Monument to the Founders of Novorossiisk featuring General Nikolai Raevskii, Vice-Admiral Mikhail Lazarev, and Counter-admiral Lazar Serebriakov, built in 2011). One exception seems to be Sochi, the capital of Russian Black Sea tourism (including Putin's summer residence) and the venue of the 2014 Winter Olympics. Besides the statue of Peter I, in this health resort crammed with public sculptures one also finds bust monuments of Catherine II, Alexander II, and Nicholas II. They have no direct relation to the local history and primarily serve touristic purposes. During the last decade, Russia's southern regions have seen a proliferation of relatively cheap and standardized busts of Russian emperors, generals, and Orthodox clerics. Most of them have been sponsored by the Krasnodar businessman Mikhail Serdiukov and his project "Alley of Russian Glory"

99 "Svod petrovskikh pamiatnikov Rossii i Evropy," Institut Petra Velikogo, accessed September 21, 2023, https://petersmonuments.ru.

100 Marina Koreneva, "Isolated Russia Celebrates Tsar who Opened 'Window to Europe'," *The Moscow Times*, June 9, 2022, https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2022/06/09/isolated-russia-celebrates-tsar-who-opened-window-to-europe-a77959.

(Russian: Alleia rossiiskoi slavy). Serdiukov sees his mission in a revival of Russian patriotism.[101] The ideological function of these objects obviously outweighs their value as public art.

In southern Ukraine, similarly to in Russia, the restoration of imperial monuments destroyed during the Soviet era (and rarely the erection of new ones) contributed to the construction of local historical narratives and founding myths by the local political elites.[102] In 2003, on the occasion of the 225th anniversary of Kherson, the monument to Prince Potemkin, moved to the local museum in 1921 and lost during the Nazi occupation, was restored according to the original but diverging in some details. Two bust monuments to Potemkin were unveiled in Mykolaiv, one in front of the former Admiralty headquarters (2007) and another one in the grounds of the local yacht club (2009). But while in the Russian regions the (re)construction of imperial monuments resonated with the general trend for the nationalization and re-imperialization of history and public memory, in southern Ukraine the narrative of Russian colonization and the "golden" nineteenth century contradicted the Ukrainian national narrative. Not only pro-Ukrainian activists, but also other groups—most notably the Crimean Tatars—opposed the glorification of the Russian imperial past. The respective monuments, in particular those celebrating Catherine II, thus became sites of tensions and political conflicts. They have been particularly pronounced in Odesa, where the Monument to the Founders of the City was restored at its original site, replacing the Soviet monument to the mutiny on the battleship *Potemkin.* This example will be analyzed more in detail in section 3.4.2. More than just a celebration of local founding myths, imperial monuments in southern Ukraine were often used by local actors as sites of resistance against Kyiv, as instruments of mnemonic protest or even "mnemonic separatism."

This was the case in Sevastopol, where the idea of constructing a monument to Catherine II as the founder of the city emerged in the mid-1990s, when the pro-Russian elites were negotiating Crimea's autonomy status with Kyiv. The idea was put forward by the Council of Veterans of the City of Sevastopol, and the monument's design was developed by locally known sculptors and architects. The project was postponed as the compromise between Kyiv and Simferopol was finally reached and the Big Treaty between Ukraine and Russia signed in 1997. It was implemented only in 2008, on the 225th anniversary of the city's foundation and against the background of political tensions between Kyiv and Moscow following the Orange Revolution, in particular concerning the future of the Sevastopol naval base. The idea of the monument was opposed by the Kyiv-appointed head of the city administration Serhiy Kunitsyn; instead, he supported the project of the Monument to Hetman Sahaidachnyi, which symbolized the Ukrainian claim to Crimea (see the previous section). But the project of the monument to Catherine II endorsed by the City Council was eventually realized,

101 "Proekt 'Alleia Rossiiskoi Slavy'," accessed September 21, 2023, https://alroslav.ru.

102 Haidai et al., *Polityka i Pamiat*, 50–82.

even despite a negative court ruling.[103] The representation of Catherine II follows the tradition established in the nineteenth century: The three-meter-high bronze statue of the empress depicts her with symbols of imperial power and holding the decree ordering the foundation of the city. The inauguration, held in the early morning to prevent pro-Ukrainian protests and the interference of the city administration, was attended by members of the pro-Russian parties and representatives of the Russian Duma; the event was guarded by pro-Russian nationalists and Cossacks.[104]

3.4.1 Monuments in Service of Neo-imperial Expansion

The annexation of Crimea in 2014 changed the meaning of the existing monuments, such as those to Catherine II and to St. Volodymyr/Vladimir in Sevastopol. With state boundaries being moved unilaterally and violently, these monuments lost their ambivalence and came to legitimize the territorial gains of Russia and justify its historical rights to Crimea.

Even more importantly, after the annexation dozens of new monuments were built with the aim of the symbolic consolidation of Russia's presence on the Crimean Peninsula.[105] The most significant of them refer to the Russian imperial past seen by Moscow and the local authorities as the key symbolic resource for legitimizing Crimea as part of Russia. For example, the conquest and colonization of Crimea by Catherine II and her close associate Prince Potemkin are celebrated by several bust monuments, sponsored by the "Ally of Russian Glory" project. Moreover, the impressive monument to Catherine II and her associates in the center of Simferopol (erected in 1890 but dismantled by the Bolsheviks) was restored in line with the original in 2016. It is supplemented by a memorial plaque declaring that the "monument was rebuilt on the occasion of the re-unification of Crimea with Russia in 2014 forever."[106] But the most ambitious project referring to the era of Catherine II is still in the making: a gigantic statue of Prince Potemkin in Sevastopol. The idea was put forward in 2015 by several deputies of the Russian Duma, including its chairman Sergei Naryshkin (later the director of the foreign intelligence service) and the leader of the Communists, Gennadii Ziuganov. The twelve-meter-high statue was supposed to be erected in the historical center

103 Olga Naidanova, "Pamiatnik imperatritse Ekaterine II v Sevastopole: Kratkaia istoriia sozdaniia," *Komsomolskaia Pravda*, March 11, 2022, https://www.crimea.kp.ru/daily/27375.5/4556870/.

104 Felix Münch, "New Symbols of the Old Empire: Re-Bordering through Historical Remembrance on the Crimean Peninsula," in *De-Bordering, Re-Bordering and Symbols on the European Boundaries,* ed. Jaroslaw Janczak (Berlin: Logos, 2011), 97–114.

105 Daria Chubukova, "Pamiatniki rossiiskogo Kryma: Simvolicheskoe zakreplenie poluostrova v sostave Rossii," in: *RSUH/RGGU Bulletin: Literary Theory, Linguistics, Cultural Studies,* no. 4 (2019): 95–116.

106 Chubukova, "Pamiatniki rossiiskogo Kryma," 100.

of Sevastopol, on the seafront.[107] Local architects, however, criticized the megalomanic project, which would dissonate with the urban environment, and the local media complained about yet another instance of Moscow voluntarism.[108] Since then, the size of the statue has been reduced to six meters and various alternative locations have been discussed, but no decision has been taken. One reason might be that the foundation (under the telling name "Krym nash," Crimea is ours) that had been established to raise money for the project, fell victim to the collapse of its bank in 2019.[109]

Apart from the era of Catherine II, another period of Russian history receives much attention in annexed Crimea: the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century. According to Daria Chubukova, the commemorative projects referring to the last decades of the empire fit the narrative of a "Russia that we lost." While the last Russian emperor, Nicholas II, who was honored with three bust monuments, represents the loss, his father, Alexander III, represents what was lost—power, stability, and prosperity.[110] The inauguration of the impressive monument to Alexander III—he is depicted sitting on a rock and leaning on his saber—took place in Yalta in November 2017 in the presence of President Putin. The pedestal bears words ascribed to the emperor and often quoted by Putin: "Russia has only two allies—its army and navy"[111] (see fig. 22).

One can only agree with Chubukova that the monumental commemoration of the imperial past in Crimea is the expression not only of nostalgia and mourning for the "Russia that we lost", but also of the triumph of Russia's imperial revival which started with the annexation in 2014.

With the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the Russian imperial legacy took on yet another meaning. Its instrumentalization became part of the Kremlin's strategy aiming to de-legitimize the Ukrainian state as an artificial construct and justifying the annexation of further territories of southern Ukraine. In his speech at the annexation ceremony on September 30, 2022, Putin underlined that this act "is based on historical unity, in the name of which the generations of our ancestors won, those who from the origins of Ancient Rus for centuries created and defended Russia. Here, in Novorossiia, Rumiantsev, Suvorov, and Ushakov fought, Catherine II and Po-

107 Gennadii Kravchenko, "Pamiatnik Potemkinu: rossiiskaia vlast 'metit' territoriiu Sevastopolia," *Krym.Realii*, April 15, 2019, https://ru.krymr.com/a/sevastopol-pamyatnik-potemkinu-rossiyskie-pamyatniki/29863581.html.

108 Irina Ostashchenko, "Potemkin: Darenomu koniu v zuby ne smotriat," *Informator*, May 31, 2015, https://ruinformer.com/page/potjomkin-darjonomu-konju-v-zuby-ne-smotrjat.

109 Maria Mukutina, "Sobrannye deputatami dengi na pamiatnik Potemkinu propali v banke-bankrote," *TVRain*, July 25, 2019, https://tvrain.tv/news/sobrannye_deputatami_dengi_na_pamjatnik_potemkinu_propali_v_banke_bankrote-490211/.

110 Chubukova, "Pamiatniki rossiiskogo Kryma," 104.

111 "Putin Agrees with Emperor that Russia's Only Allies are Army and Navy," *TASS*, April 16, 2015, https://tass.com/russia/789866.

Fig. 22: The monument to Alexander III in Livadiia, Yalta (Crimea).

temkin founded new cities. Here our grandfathers and great-grandfathers stood to death during the Great Patriotic War."[112]

Preparing for the referendum on the occupied territories, Russia used imperial symbols and narratives along with political slogans such "Forever with Russia." Not only the occupational authorities and Ukrainian collaborators but also other political actors in Russia joined these efforts. In occupied Kherson, the pro-Putin United Russia Party sponsored street posters glorifying Grigorii Potemkin, Aleksandr Suvorov, and Aleksandr Pushkin bearing the slogan "Kherson is a city with Russian history." In June 2022, the head of the Kherson occupational administration appointed by Russia, the collaborator Volodymyr Saldo, wrote a letter to the head of the RVIO, Vladimir Medinskii, requesting support for the construction of a monument to Catherine II in the city. According to Saldo, generations of Kherson residents had dreamed about such a monument.[113] In November of the same year, however, the Russian troops had already retreated from Kherson; they took with them the Soviet era monuments to General Suvorov and Admiral Ushakov as well as the monument to Potemkin restored by the Ukrainian city authorities in 2006. Even more bizarrely, the Russian occupiers also exca-

112 "Podpisanie dogovorov o priniatii DNR, LNR, Zaporozhskoi i Khersonskoi oblastei v sostav Rossii," President Rossii, last modified September 30, 2022, http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/69465.
113 Denys Karlovskyi, "Okupanty zbyraiutsia vstanovyty v Khersoni pamiatnyk Kateryni II," *Ukrainska Pravda*, June 19, 2022, https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2022/06/18/7353323/.

vated and took with them Potemkin's bones, which were buried in the local cathedral.[114]

In Ukraine, the Russian invasion accelerated the de-Russification and de-colonization of the public space. In Odesa, the Monument to Catherine II became a site of renewed protests. Other imperial monuments, such as the statue of Suvorov in Izmail (Odesa oblast), were dismantled. Even monuments to Aleksandr Pushkin came to be seen as an imperial symbol and were dismantled in many Ukrainian cities, including Nikopol, Zaporizhzhia, Mykolaiv, and Dnipro.[115]

3.4.2 From Memory Wars to Decolonization: The Monument to Catherine II in Odesa

The fate of the monument to Catherine II in post-Soviet Odesa is a classic case of a highly politically contested monument.[116] It was disputed on the local level, caused tensions between Odesa's local authorities and Kyiv, and, finally, contributed to the Ukrainian-Russian memory wars. Discussions about a possible restoration of the monument (see the story of its erection and removal in section 2.1 and 2.2) started in Odesa in the early 1990s. Like in other post-Soviet cities, the interest in local history and the re-discovery of the traces of the pre-Soviet past in Odesa inspired the return to old toponyms and plans for the reconstruction of the historical center. In Odesa, however, it was the powerful myth of a multicultural, cosmopolitan, and globally connected harbor city that has become the key to local identity politics. Notions of Odesa's distinctiveness and exceptionality, popular in the public discourse, offered an answer to the continuing provincialization of the city after the collapse of the Soviet Union and at the same time to the pressure of Kyiv's nationalizing policies.[117] In the frame of this Odesa myth, the Russian imperial past was seen as proof of the city's imagined Europeanness—in opposition to its still very much Soviet reality—while the Ukrainian historical narrative appeared too narrow and particularistic for a cosmopolitan city.

The first attempt to restore the monument in the mid-1990s was blocked by President Kuchma, but the City Council returned to the idea ten years later, after the Orange Revolution. The new political context was shaped by memory wars in Ukraine

114 Marc Santora, "Why Russia Stole Potemkin's Bones from Ukraine?," *The New York Times*, October 27, 2022, https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/27/world/europe/ukraine-russia-potemkin-bones.html.

115 Charlotte Higgins, "Pushkin Must Fall: Monuments to Russia's National Poet under Threat in Ukraine," *The Guardian*, May 5, 2023, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/may/05/monuments-to-russia-national-poet-pushkin-under-threat-in-ukraine.

116 See also Olivia Durand, "The Statue of Catherine II 'the Great' or the Monument to the Odessa Founders" (Contested Histories Occasional Paper X, Institute for Historical Justice and Reconciliation, The Hague, May 2022), https://contestedhistories.org/wp-content/uploads/OP-X_Catherine-the-Great_Ukraine.pdf.

117 Richardson, *Kaleidoscopic Odessa.*

as well as between Kyiv and Moscow. In 2007, a decision was taken to restore the historical appearance of Ekaterininskaia Square, including the monument to Catherine II. To make space for it, the Soviet monument to the Heroes of the Battleship Potemkin Uprising, which had stood there from 1965, was relocated closer to the port. The Catherine II monument was rebuilt according to old drawings that were found in the local archive; the original statues of her associates had survived in the museum, but the plinth and the granite column as well as the statue of the empress were produced anew (see fig. 23).

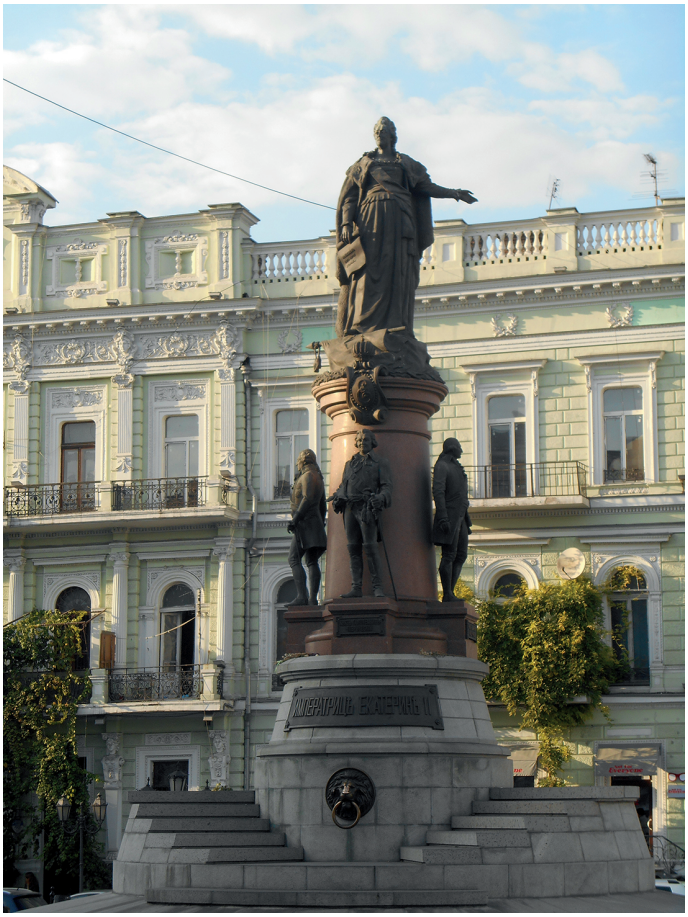

Fig. 23: The Monument to the Founders of Odesa (Catherine II).

The historical buildings surrounding the square were renovated too. The monument was opened in October 2007 in a pompous public performance reenacting the official inauguration of 1900, including a costume parade.

Ever since then, the monument has become a contested site. For the initiators and supporters of the monument, the figure of the empress symbolized the "golden age" of Odesa's history and the city's special role in Russia's expansion towards the Black Sea, which brought economic prosperity to the region. Ukraine, in their eyes, still profits from these developments. The opponents blamed Catherine II for the abolishment of Cossack autonomy, the destruction of the Zaporizhian Sich, and the introduction of serfdom in Ukraine.[118]

For the pro-Ukrainian activists, Ukrainian Cossack associations, and nationalists such as the Svoboda Party, the restoration of the monument was clearly a pro-Russian manifestation. In the following years, the monument became a site of public protests and sometimes even acts of vandalism: The statue was daubed with red paint and decorated with Ukrainian symbols, the plinth covered with insulting inscriptions, and an effigy of the empress was burned.

The official name Monument to the Founders of the City (Russian: *Pamiatnik osnovateliam goroda*, Ukrainian: *Pamiatnyk zasnovnykam mista*) was "a conscious choice to avoid focusing exclusively—and perhaps celebratorily—on Catherine II"[119] and to reinterpret the imperial symbol as a symbol of local patriotism. However, the reduction of the city's history to the Russian imperial period met with criticism from some local historians and activists for whom such an interpretation silences the earlier history of Cossack and Tatar settlements on the territory of today's Odesa. Some of them propose including in the city's historical narrative the Ottoman fortress of Hacıbey, the conquest of which by the Russian troops is celebrated as the moment of Odesa's birth.[120] What is contested, therefore, is not just the historical role of Catherine II but the founding myth of Odesa. While in 1994, the city officially celebrated its bicentenary, in 2015 the then governor of Odesa oblast, Mikheil Saakashvili, supported the idea of celebrating the six hundredth anniversary of the city, which was supposed to include the region's Cossack legacy.[121]

The Euromaidan protests which broke out in November 2013 invested the monument to Catherine II with an additional geopolitical meaning: It now embodied Russia's continuing influence over Ukraine in opposition to its desired European future. Following the annexation of Crimea and Russia's instigation of the military conflict in the Donbas, Odesa appeared as the next target of the Kremlin's hybrid aggression. In the context of the Kremlin's Novorossiia project, the Odesa monument to Catherine II came to symbolize Moscow's territorial claims to a region historically shaped by Russian colonialization politics.

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118 "Piat let nazad v Odesse ustanovili pamiatnik osnovateliam Odessy," *Dumska*, October 27, 2012, https://dumskaya.net/news/pyat-let-nazad-v-odesse-ustanovili-pamyatnik-osn-022464/ua/.

119 Durand, "The Statue of Catherine II," 8.

120 "Kateryna II – zasnovnytsia Odesy chy okupantka Khadzhybeiu?," *Yuzhne.City*, June 23, 2022, https://yuzhne.city/articles/218126/katerina-ii-zasnovnicya-odesi-chi-okupantka-hadzhibeyu.

121 Haidai et al., *Polityka i Pamiat*, 50–51.

The de-communization laws of 2015 took aim at Soviet symbols and ideology and thus did not concern the monument to Catherine II. And yet the ongoing conflict with Russia and the mass dismantling of the Soviet-era monuments now perceived as symbols of colonial subjugation kept tensions surrounding the monument high. In 2019, the Supreme Court of Ukraine confirmed the legitimacy of the monument's construction and thus put an end to a legal battle between the City Council and its opponents that had dragged on for more than a decade.[122] But the protests demanding the dismantling of the monument continued; in 2020, they resonated with the Black Lives Matter movement demanding the decolonization of the public space and the removal of monuments representing colonial power.[123]

Since February 24, 2022, the public mood has changed. According to a local commentator, "the shock and trauma of Russia's invasion has convinced many Odessites to abandon their previous enthusiasm for the city's Russian imperial heritage and has sparked a surge in public demands for the removal of Catherine."[124] In the summer of 2022, an electronic petition calling for the dismantling of the monument received the necessary 25,000 signatures, prompting President Zelenskyi's appeal to the City Council to consider the issue. Ukraine's minister of culture Oleksandr Tkachenko supported the call for its dismantling. The mayor of Odesa, Gennadii Trukhanov, was reluctant, however. He argued that Odesa is an intercultural capital of Ukraine and the hatred of Russian culture worries him; he opposed the dismantling of the monument and called for compromise with Russia.[125]

In September 2022, protests against the monument and vandalistic actions continued; against the backdrop of the public discussion about decolonization and the responsibility of Russian culture for the neocolonial war in Ukraine, local authorities in some cities preferred to remove controversial monuments in order to avoid violent actions. Eventually, Mayor Trukhanov agreed to dismantle the Catherine monument "in a civilized way" and to move it to a prospective "park of the imperial and Soviet past" to be created in Odesa. On November 30, 2022, the City Council voted for the removal of the Catherine and Suvorov monuments.[126] Reacting to these developments,

122 "Verkhovnyi Sud uzakonyv odeskyi pamiatnyk Kateryni II," *LB.ua*, April 8, 2019, https://lb.ua/news/2019/04/08/424036_verhovniy_sud_uzakonil_odesskiy.html.

123 Durand, "The Statue of Catherine II," 15.

124 Oleksiy Goncharenko, "Odesa Rejects Catherine the Great as Putin's Invasion Makes Russia Toxic," *Atlantic Council*, November 14, 2022, https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/odesa-rejects-catherine-the-great-as-putins-invasion-makes-russia-toxic/.

125 Diana Zubar, "Vid zberezhennia do povnoho demontazhu: iak zminiuvalosia staavlennia mistzevoi vlady Odesy do pamiatnyka Kateryni II," *Suspilne Novyny*, November 7, 2022, https://suspilne.media/311428-vid-zberezenna-do-povnogo-demontazu-ak-zminuvalosa-stavlenna-miscevoi-vladi-odesi-do-pamatnika-katerini-ii/.

126 Iryna Lysohor, "Odeska miskrada pidtymala rishennia demontuvaty pamiatnyk Kateryni II," *LB.ua*, October 30, 2022, https://lb.ua/society/2022/11/30/537571_odeska_miskrada_pidtrimala.html. On the discussions surrounding the Suvorov monument, see Diana Zubar, "Nikoly ne buv u misti: Iake vidnoshennia do Odesy maie Oleksandr Suvorov ta chomu tut stoit ioho pamiatnyk," *Suspilne Novyny*, November 9,

Russia promised to investigative the "desecration" and preparations for the dismantling of the monuments. The authorities of the Russian city of Rostov-on-Don came up with the proposal to evacuate the Catherine monument and erect it in their city. Before the Bolshevik revolution, Rostov already possessed such a monument (initiated, as mentioned above, by the local Armenian community). In the last two decades, there had been several attempts to restore it at the initial location, but they were blocked by the neo-Stalinists: Essence of Time protested against the removal of the Karl Marx statue which stood in its original place. It is quite unlikely that Odesa's Catherine will go into Russian exile, but even if the decision to remove it is not the end of the story, it reflects, according to one Ukrainian observer, "the city's decisive turn away from the imperial myth-making that Putin has tried so hard to exploit."[127]

4 Conclusion

The Russian imperial, Soviet, post-Soviet Ukrainian, and Russian histories of public commemoration in the northern Black Sea region are reflected in the dramatic biographies of monuments. Having been erected, inaugurated, and celebrated, many of them become forgotten for decades and then suddenly turn into targets of political passions, being dismantled only to be restored later—and sometimes toppled again. Material objects of public art, meant to signify the closure of a certain historical era and to provide future generations with a final judgment about its achievements, monuments are in practice restless creatures which can only dream about eternity and are unable to escape the tides of history.

It is tempting to cite here an old Soviet joke: "The future is certain; it is only the past that is unpredictable." The future is, however, not certain anymore, and it is least certain on the northern Black Sea coast, which since 2014 and particularly since 2022 has become an arena of the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian war. A devastating military conflict with far-reaching consequences for both countries, the war has made the historical past even less predictable. In some sense, the choice of material for the statue of the "grandma with the Soviet flag" installed in Russian-occupied Mariupol is symptomatic: Cheap and disposable plastic appears ideal for the export version of Russian post-modern neo-imperialism. In general, the preference for a certain material can be seen as related to the mode of temporality central to each historical era. Bronze for the Russian imperial monuments and granite for the late Soviet ones represent both regimes' claims to eternity; turbulent times of revolutions, wars, and changing occupation regimes often express themselves in "temporary" monuments, such as the plaster statues of Lenin and Marx in the 1920s. Having said this, we

2022, https://suspilne.media/313024-nikoli-ne-buv-u-misti-ake-vidnosenna-do-odesi-mae-oleksandr-suvorov-ta-comu-tut-stoit-jogo-pamatnik/.

127 Goncharenko, "Odesa Rejects Catherine the Great."

might, however, ask ourselves if the fates of monuments on the northern Black Sea coast are indeed so unique. The "death of the monument" has been a recurrent topic in the critical arts and architecture discourse for decades. Indeed, modern democratic societies seem to have increasing difficulties with the traditional idea of the monument, while "stone exoskeletons for those who hold power"[128] are still in demand in autocracies and illiberal regimes. De-commemoration—the politically motivated removal of monuments and renaming of places—has become a global phenomenon accelerated by decolonization, feminist movements, and the discourse of minority rights.[129] Some of these tendencies and their implications in the context of de-communization and de-Russification are vigorously discussed in the Ukrainian cultural milieu; potential regime change in Russia might trigger a critical debate about the "monumental propaganda" of the Putin era. At the same time, a big war is often followed by the consolidation of a heroic narrative and a new wave of monumental commemoration.

128 Martin Zebracki, "Coming Out of the 'Death of the Monument'," *Espace*, no. 127 (2021): 40, https://www.erudit.org/fr/revues/espace/2021-n127-espace05876/95145ac/.

129 Sarah Gensburger and Jenny Wüstenberg, eds., *De-Commemoration: Removing Statues and Renaming Places* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2023).