

COMPARATIVE REPRESENTATION OF HISTORICAL KNOWLEDGE IN COLLECTIVE MEMORY (UKRAINE AND RUSSIA SAMPLINGS)

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The subject of this paper is the study of a personal motivation attitude and a frame of thinking patterns which are the contents of collective consciousness.

The study of the contents of collective consciousness is especially fruitful in the times of social and economic transformations. Proceeding from psychological trends of selection of certain types of information some analysts propose studying the schemes (thinking patterns) obtained in this way as products of special memory – the collective or social memory. The latter creates a certain mental space with different trends of recollection of people of different age and social groups (9). According to P. Sorokin every cultural metasystem “has its own mentality, its own system of truth and knowledge, its own philosophy and world outlook, its own religion... finally, its own type of personality with its own mentality and behaviour” (7). In this way, social and cultural space “shapes” mentality, predilections, behaviour style, ideas, convictions, “the general repertoire of interpretations and explanations” (6). At the same time, “individual voices” of collective memory at a social and historical turning point are coloured by feelings, by a personal emotional attitude. Some authors believe that “responses”, “individual voices” also express “psychic attitude to notions and ideas” (8). Thus, in new social and economic conditions it seems important to identify settled schemes (thinking patterns) against the background of a flow of earlier unknown information on the most important historical events and heroes of a country. Some data was received in the course of studies (5). It has been demonstrated that there are differences in assessment, moral standards and in the hierarchy of important events depending on whether the person lives in the central or remote, for example, a rural region. The question is whether there is stability of thinking patterns containing moral

reference points of the Soviet metaculture among the citizens who used to live in one and the same territory and recently were united in a common state with the common metaculture of Soviet people, but are now citizens of different states. To answer this question the authors made a comparative analysis of data received from respondents in Ukraine and Russia under a common scheme.

The respondents were asked: 1) to assess the importance of historical knowledge under a 7 points scale (1 – “very important”, 7 – “unimportant”); 2) to name 5 of the most important events of the 20th century in the order of priority starting with the most important (1) to the least important (5); 3) to name the 5 most prominent historical figures of the 20th century placing them in the order of priority from “the most important” (1) to the “least important” (5).

There were 105 respondents from Russia (including 64 Moscovites and 41 residents of the Tver Oblast) and 98 respondents from Ukraine (Kharkov), in total 203 persons.

The samplings were comparable by social and demographic characteristics. The age range was 30-65 years, the average age was 40. The conclusions of this study are of a preliminary nature due to the limited representation of the samplings.

Results and Discussion

The judgements on the importance of historical knowledge help to bring to the conscious level the emotional attitude to historical knowledge and the schemes of ordinary consciousness on the criteria of importance and their differentiation in respect of historical knowledge. At the same time, the current historical moment has been incorporated into the consciousness and, simultaneously, looks like a certain limited fragment interpreted depending on one's life experience and memory. In other words, the schemes are formed and realized in accordance with the information space with which the person is in contact and in which the person is immersed, and the laws thereof.

Let us look at Table 1, which represents the average criteria of importance of historical events by two respondent samplings. Let us remind you that the assessment was done in accordance with a 7-points scale: the highest point (1) was attributed to the most important criterion, the lowest point (7) was attributed to the least important criterion.

Table 1
Average assessments of historical knowledge importance criteria in respect of 2 samplings

Criterion	Russia	Ukraine
1. brings up loyal citizens	4.1	3.8
2. brings up critically thinking persons	2.6	3.1
3. teaches how to make decisions	3.1	3.2
4. helps to understand current problems	1.9	3.1

The data of Table 1 shows that criterion 1 has similar value in both respondent groups, that is the role of historical knowledge in bringing up loyal citizens is considered less significant. The Russian sampling highly assesses criteria 2 and 4 while the Ukrainian sampling does not make difference between criteria 2, 3 and 4. In other words, while there is little confidence in historical knowledge as a factor for bringing up loyal citizens, the Russian respondents value highly the significance of historical knowledge under the criteria of "bringing up critically thinking persons" and "help in the understanding of current problems". The Ukrainian respondents do not make difference in their evaluation of the same criteria of historical knowledge significance. The analysis of one's own assessment of historical knowledge has shown differences between the Moscow and Kharkov groups in comparison with the Tver one. One should stress that the Russian samplings consisted of two groups of respondents representing Moscow (64 persons) and Tver (41 persons) while the Ukrainian sampling represented only Kharkov residents (98 persons). The Moscow and Kharkov groups are close in terms of characteristics of megalopolises. The personal criteria of historical knowledge assessment actualized on the level of commonplace consciousness demonstrate the dominant thinking patterns typical of each group of respondents. The sampling of Tver Oblast respondents is somewhat different in terms of emotionally charged positive assessment of the historical knowledge significance which means: "to be proud of one's ancestors", "to respect the ancestors' traditions", "to love one's country, land, people", "to know and understand one's roots". In other words, the patriotic "voice" is dominant. The Moscow and Kharkov samplings may be united due to the similarity of another "cultural resource" and "voice" which shows the dominance of a cognitive scheme stressing common culture, links between epochs and people, understanding one's place in the world. The cultural schemes common for the groups, apparently, are conceived as cultural models the function of which is interpretation of experience. Schemes, which make the framework for experience and knowledge, correspond to the idea of culture as internal meaning and moral reference points, which are detached from their material carriers (4).

This approach allows to tend a thread linking the assessment of the importance of historical knowledge with significant events and persons of the 20th century. In this way the hierarchy of evaluative judgements and memory of the past is built with the help of the cognitive schemes of individuals.

Let us look at Table 2 in order to see in detail the hierarchy of significant events of the 20th century demonstrated by both samplings of respondents.

Table 2

Significant events of the 20th century by Russian and Ukrainian samplings (frequency of each event by each sampling)

Significant events	Moscow	Tver Oblast	Total for Russia	Ukraine (Kharkov)
1. 2nd World War	59	39	98	83
2. October Socialist Revolution	47	54	101	85
3. Perestroika	44	34	78	73
4. 1st World War	27	11	38	32
5. Scientific and technical revolution, space travel, nuclear weapons	21	9	30	27
6. Local wars	4	12	16	7
7. 20th CPSU congress	4	12	16	2
8. Ukraine Independence	—	—	—	22
9. Ecological problems, Chernobyl	2	7	9	22
10. Integration of Europe	6	—	6	2
11. Cold War	—	—	—	12
12. Stagnation period	—	3	3	—
13. Disintegration of the colonial empires, "silver age"	—	—	—	5

It should be noted that the "significant events" in items 1-5 have been grouped. For example, the Second World War includes the Great Patriotic War, the division of Europe, victory over fascism, liberation of Europe. The October Revolution of 1917 includes civil war, famine, repressions, collectivization, fall of the monarchy, victory of the Bolsheviks. Perestroika includes the following events: disintegration of the socialist system, break-up of the Soviet Union, presidential elections, August 1991, October 1993, end of the Cold War, forced migration, victory of democracy. The scientific and technical revolution includes the invention and use of nuclear weapons (Hiroshima, Nagasaki), conquering space, Gagarin's flight, and the newest telecommunications. Local wars include the wars in Vietnam, Afghanistan, Chechnya, and Tajikistan. It should be clear from this comment that cognitive schemes related to the October Revolution are very frequent. If we turn to historical memory, it would not be difficult to prove the predominance of the cognitive scheme on the revolutionary events among rural residents who settled in a local territory for decades. Historical knowledge obtained during history lessons is intertwined with parent's-collective memory of the past experience

embodied in specific objects (for example, one elderly woman pointed to a nearby house which used to belong to her family). Thus, the collective memory is not only represented by the cognitive scheme, but is materialized through specific evidence, something which creates a double existence in the past and in the present at one and the same time. During the revolutionary transformations Ukraine suffered terrible famine the memory of which has not been erased until today.

Thus, in both samples (in the case of the Russian sample it is rural) there is the domination of the thinking pattern which emphasizes the significance of the revolution, though not just as "the greatest event of the epoch" as one might assume in accordance with the "programme to be a Soviet person". The collective memory demonstrated the layers of unofficial discourse, the "worldly ideology" (M.M. Bakhtin's term) complementing the contents of official consciousness. As for the other events, the Second World War was perceived by the majority of respondents as the Great Patriotic War. This trend is more expressed in the sample of Tver and Kharkov respondents. It should also be noted that local wars also dominate in the responses of the Tver respondents. This fact can be explained since in the rural areas the death of local people in local wars called for participation in certain rituals and did not remain an abstract fact. This represents substantial social interaction among the individual consciousness of different persons.

The human experience is mediated by cognitive schemes which "channel the individual thinking structuring the selection, keeping and use of information". As the responses of both samples of respondents have demonstrated, the human experience is oriented to the things which the historical and cultural consciousness shows through significant events of major importance for the country or location. It is appropriate to quote now J. Wertsch "Speaking of the speech genres as mediators we are constantly aware of the fact that the indirect action is intrinsically linked to the historical, cultural and social situation and that the social sources of an individual's thinking transcend the limits of the intersubjective" (3). Therefore, the information on the significant events of the Second World War in the memory of our respondents seem substantial. For the citizens of Russia and Ukraine the Second World War (the Great Patriotic War in the consciousness of the majority) is the most significant event of the 20th century. The war scheme represented by the most important events looks in the following way. The Russian sample identified the Stalingrad battle as the most important event of the war (73 per cent of respondents), the Moscow battle – 62 per cent, the Kursk battle – 49 per cent, the fall of Berlin (Victory) – 47 per cent, the opening of the Second Front and the formation of the anti-Hitler coalition – 44 per cent of the Russian sample. However, there are differences between the Moscow and Tver group of respondents concerning the "background" events. Thus, the Moscow group adds to the war picture the division of Europe, bombardment of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Nuremberg trial (32, 15 and 14 per cent) while the Tver respondents name the following events on the same priority scale: 22 June 1941, Brest siege (19 and 17 per cent), the partisan movement, battles on the Rzhev–Vyazma direction (12 and 10 per cent).

The first two rank positions in the Ukrainian sample are given to 22 June 1941 and the occupation of Ukraine by the Hitlerite troops together with the Kursk battle and the liberation of Ukraine (54 and 53 per cent), the third rank position is given to the Stalingrad battle (50 per cent), the Victory (fall of Berlin, the parade on Red Square) – 41 per cent, the beginning of the war in Europe – 38 per cent, the siege of Leningrad, the opening of the Second Front and the defence of Moscow – 25 per cent. Events of the lower rank such as the post-war division of Europe, the bombardment of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the Nuremberg trial coincide with the group of Moscow respondents. Just like the Tver sample the Ukrainian sample includes in the significant events of the Second World War the events which are significant for the Ukrainian territory (Dnieper battle, occupation and liberation of Ukraine, the Sevastopol battle).

Thus, the reconstruction of the past through emphasized schemes of separate individuals clarifies the representation of dominating events and identifies certain differences depending on the group to which the question is addressed. On the whole, however, the range of events from the point of view of morals and values turned out to be stable in the new social and political situation. At the same time, it does not mean an unambiguously positive attitude to the drawn up hierarchy in accordance with the metacultural evaluation of the main events for the country which used to be uniform. The evaluations disclose the emotional attitude of our respondents to the drawn up hierarchy of significant events in a clearer way if we address the hierarchy row of the significant persons of the 20th century.

Table 3
Significant persons of the 20th century

Name	Russia	Ukraine	Total	Kharkov
	Moscow 64 persons	Tver region 41 persons		
1. Lenin	58	38	96	58
2. Stalin	50	37	87	68
3. Hitler	32	14	46	42
4. Gorbachev	26	17	43	44
5. Roosevelt	23	8	31	23
6. Churchill	17	7	24	16
7. Sakharov	15	7	22	13
8. Yeltsin	11	7	18	-
9. Khrushchev	10	10	20	8 Brezhnev, Kravchuk
10. Ghandi	8	-	8	-
11. Tolstoy	7	-	7	9 Grushevsky
12. Zhukov	2	21	23	15

The aggregate data of Table 3 allow us to assume that the significant events and persons of the 20th century are tied in one knot. However, the analysis of responses of respondents by location shows certain differences. Thus, Zhukov occupies the third position after Stalin in the Tver Oblast sample, while the Ukrainian respondents ranked Zhukov between Churchill and Sakharov. The Russian and Ukrainian samples differ in one more respect: the respondents of each of the samples give preference to their heroes, leaders and cultural figures of "local" scale. One should note the differences in the status band of priority persons between the samples: the Tver respondents are oriented to the heroes of the war and revolution, contemporary generals and the generals of the past and prominent contemporaries (Ushakov, Suvorov, Kornilov, Karbyshev, Rokossovsky, Castro, Lebed, Kirov, Kohl, Gaidar, and N. Mikhalkov). Emphasis on the military leaders and war heroes of the past (19th century) when the subject is the Second World War symbolically interacts with the fragment of the responses of the same sample on the significance of historical knowledge for bringing up patriotic generation. In this way the symbolic individual consciousness is represented according to M.M. Bakhtin (2). The Moscow respondents filled out the list of important persons by including prominent writers, scientists and political figures (Dostoyevsky, Exupery, V. Soloviev, N. Rerich, Solzhenitsyn, Likhachev, Mother Teresa, Patriarch Tikhon, N. Mandela, Trotsky, Chubais), while the list of the Ukrainian respondents included such persons as Stolypin, Nicholas II, John Kennedy, Gagarin who are common for all the samples except for Grushevsky and Kravchuk.

Thus, against the background of low confidence in historical knowledge under the criterion of "bringing up loyal citizens" the row of moral and value reference points reflects the high confidence in the historical knowledge which was demonstrated by the respondents of Russian and Ukrainian samples in 1986 – 7.5 and 7 points, respectively (the absolute confidence was determined as 10 points). In 1996 the confidence in historical knowledge was assessed at 4.5 and 4.3 points in respect of the Russian and Ukrainian samples, respectively. Only 10 percent of the respondents of both samples believe that the confidence in historical information increased.

At the same time, the lower confidence in historical knowledge agrees with the search for and identification of other persons reflecting the latent trend of changing moral standards. This trend becomes more obvious if we analyse the assessments concerning the hierarchy of significant persons of the 20th century. The assessment have a wide range, including both poles of assessment: positive, negative and neutral. The neutral assessments of the prominent persons (Lenin, Stalin, Gorbachev, etc. occupying the first five positions) is usually expressed in the terms of their contributions to the development of world history. The positive pole consists of judgements on the greatness, legendary nature, positive symbolicness, great will, intellect, etc. The negative pole includes such events and phenomena as repressions, tyranny, totalitarianism, break-up, negative changes in the living standards, etc.

Thus, it is not just difficult, but practically impossible to withdraw the past from contemporary assessments when part of the respondents emphasize their belief in what their “father and grandfathers” used to believe. In respect of such respondents one may quote S. Moskovichi who said that “Lenin created the Soviet people”. However, the “conventional cross-section of the actuality” demonstrates values and moral standards collected at the other pole of judgements, which allows us to conclude that those who used to believe blindly are now sceptical. This assertion may be supported by the wider range of the significant persons of the 20th century, which includes Sakharov, Vernadsky, Ghandi, and Solzhenitsyn.

One may say that the recreation of the past along the cognitive scheme allows us to establish certain limited contents of the consciousness; such recreation of the past is “symbolical, conventional by its nature. However, through the symbol or myth people touch the live flesh of the past” (1).

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