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COMMUNIST HERITAGE IN BELARUS AND EU COUNTRIES: THE PROBLEM OF INTERPRETATION AND THE RELEVANCE OF CONSERVATION

Collection of articles

КАМУНІСТЫЧНАЯ СПАДЧЫНА Ў БЕЛАРУСІ І КРАІНАХ ЕС: ПРАБЛЕМАТЫКА ІНТЭРПРЭТАЦЫІ І АКТУАЛЬНАСЦЬ ЗАХАВАННЯ

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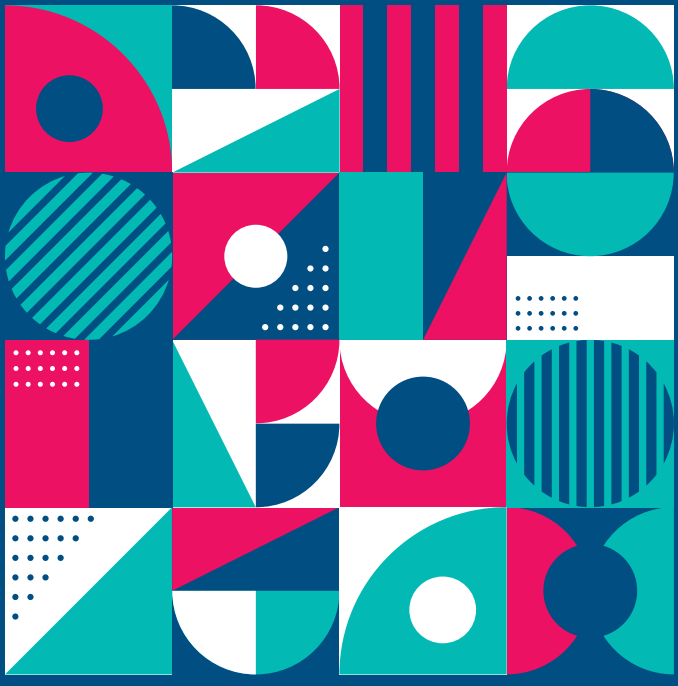

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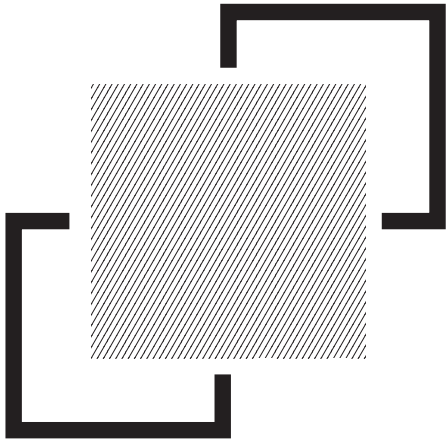

Contents:

Змест:

DECOMMUNISATION POLICIES: EXPERIENCES OF CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE, AND BALTIC STATES, WITH A VIEW TO BELARUS

Kiryll Atamanchyk

Issues related to comprehension of the soviet/communist legacy in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) as well as former USSR countries have always appeared problematic. Across the region, ambiguity and disputability in approaches to the interpretation of the soviet past and soviet historical and cultural heritage always cause bitter debates, since they contain numerous sociocultural traumas, nostalgic experiences, ideologies, identity issues, and geopolitics, producing multiple interpretations of the soviet historical and cultural legacy. In this article, I will try to present various approaches to the decommunisation policies through the prism of interpreting and using the 'soviet historical and cultural heritage'.

Before dwelling on the 'soviet heritage', it is yet necessary to define this broad concept. Under soviet heritage, I understand *the universe of tangible and intangible heritage, as well as the universe of historical, sociocultural and spiritual values, originating from the territory of former USSR and member states of the Warsaw Pact since the moment of appearance until the end of existence thereof, or objects directly associated with the soviet period at a certain territory.*

The article aims at identifying constructive areas of interpreting the soviet historical and cultural heritage in Belarus in the context of social and cultural perceptions of this heritage by varying discourses, while taking into account experiences of CEE and Baltic States. To reach the set goal, the article can be split into several parts:

- The beginning focuses on discourses of sociocultural perceptions of the soviet historical and cultural heritage in CEE and Baltic States, and Belarus, and identifies peculiarities of these discourses;

- Later, it is important to present the problems of approaching interpretations of the soviet historical and cultural heritage in the defined countries;

- In the end, I will attempt at coming up with 'a view to Belarus' and its prospects in desovietisation policies as well as practices of utilising and interpreting the soviet historical and cultural heritage.

It is therefore an effort to articulate one of possible ways towards decommunisation policies in Belarus, based on experiences of CEE and Baltic States, yet with consideration to Belarusian reality and possibilities.

DISCOURSES OF SOCIOCULTURAL PERCEPTION OF THE SOVIET HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE IN CEE AND BALTIC STATES, AND BELARUS

Toward the transformation

After the dissolution of the USSR, the CEE and Baltic States, as well as the countries of the European part of USSR (Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova), started a new and freer stage of implementing their own national projects as sovereign states. While the Russian Federation assumed the duties of the USSR successor, it exacerbated many cultural traumas, national disputes and other problematic aspects, which belong to the 'us vs. them' dimension of thinking. Opposing the soviet/communist and, importantly, the Russian identity, became an essential component of the national mobilisation in newly independent former soviet republics. According to a theorist of nationalism Miroslav Hroch, the nation-building involves three key elements: the 'memory' of the joint past, interpreted as a 'group fate'; density and intensity of linguistic and cultural ties, ensuring more social communications within than beyond the group; and the concept of equality of all group members organised as the civil society (Андерсон Б., Бауэр О., Хрох М. 2002, 121). In countries selected for this article, Hroch sees the problem in the vacuum of national elites, which opened up after the collapse of the USSR. In this framework, the old regime-raised new elites quickly occupied the dominant position in the society by switching to the leading role in national movements (Андерсон Б., Бауэр О., Хрох М. 2002, 121). Rather than odd, this situation is natural. Authoritarian and totalitarian political systems are about controlling the society. When the transformation starts, it is mostly run by the same people who are either affiliated with or influenced by the system, as they lived in the country.

We know well from theory that, in fact, any memory is largely a construct. In particular, in her book *Cultural Heritage in the Global World*, Rasa Cepaitiene refers to three concepts (Jürgen Habermas, Nicholas Abercrombie and Pierre Bourdieu) in general reducible to the idea that any dominant ideology and, certainly, social and political groups behind it, always seek to consolidate and impose their values upon other social actors (Чепайтене, 2010, 38). The urban landscape, including inter alia street toponymy and items of historical and cultural heritage, serve as communicators of this dominance. The urban space constitutes an enclave of the society's memory, including the dominant (the present state ideology, which significantly influences the interpretation of the cultural heritage) and multiple 'small groups', predominantly marginal, which possess their own memory enclave and interpretation thereof. In a significant degree, the cultural heritage is the resource used by all the groups, both dominant and small ones, while interpretation of the heritage fluctuates depending on attitudes of any given group toward this heritage. By and large, the heritage is a marker of certain identities. It will hardly be a revelation to claim that almost any CEE country, Baltic states, as well as Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, or Russia, all have their own discourses of and approaches towards interpreting and, thus, using the soviet historical and cultural heritage. Different interpretations engender different discourses resting on sociocultural perceptions of this heritage.

Three discourses and three examples

Situations in each CEE and former USSR countries obviously differ. Each country has its own national project, or features thereof, and specific attitudes to the soviet/communist past. In a very generalised manner, I would outline three main discourses of perceiving and using the soviet historical and cultural heritage:

- *Antagonism discourse.* This discourse of the soviet historical and cultural heritage is defined

by predominantly negative connotation, focusing on elements such as repression, occupation, and militarism. Development of *the antagonism discourse* relies on numerous sociocultural traumas and phobias, historical grievances, and radical emotional interpretation of certain events associated with the soviet historical and cultural heritage. Bearing a certain code for sociocultural perception of the soviet historical and cultural heritage, the radicalism of emotional interpretation might result in destructive, ubiquitous and thoughtless elimination of symbols of the soviet/communist historical epoch, and forgetting it. Having a right to exist, this approach appears not completely constructive in the context of a 'healthy nation' capable of healing the sociocultural traumas and phobias, historical grievances and problems of the past via reflection and interpretation. Demolition is definitely the most drastic tool of *the antagonism discourse*. Each CEE country and many former USSR countries have examples of demolishing soviet historical and cultural heritage. Existing thanks to the radicalism of certain social and political groups, this discourse is by far not always systemic in nature.

- *Transformation discourse*. This is a form of predominantly constructive remaking, modifying or reshaping the heritage. In *the transformation discourse*, contemporary practices of representation are based on the memory policy and sociocultural construct of dominant social groups and their values, while avoiding radical approaches towards using the heritage. Like any other heritage, the soviet historical and cultural legacies are prone to transformations. This process is the most pronounced in CEE and Baltic countries. Rooted in contradictions, discussions and compromises, when and how was t*he transformation discourse* born? Most likely, tracing it back to the fall of the Berlin Wall on 9 November 1989 would be a right choice. A part of the wall was demolished. A part of it was preserved as a piece of art. Some other fragments were placed in museums around the world as a symbolic reminder. In other words, the object was transformed, so that the memories of it remain in real world, beyond documents and photos. Reconciliation with the traumatic memories and constructive approach to using the soviet historical and cultural heritage are the main characteristic of *the transformation discourse*.

- *Nostalgia discourse*. According to Franklin Rudolf Ankersmit, rather than an experience of distorted objective reality beyond the known, the nostalgic experience is the one of difference (between the present and the past), which demands simultaneous presence of both the present and the past, therefore enabling the subject and the object to co-exist at the same time (Анкерсмит 2003). This discourse is defined by preservation or conservation of the soviet heritage in its multiple forms. This discourse presents the soviet/communist past as a period with its own tragic and heroic connotations, which is also marked by magnificence of its cultural and political lifestyle. An important difference of this discourse from other discourses is its relatively systemic nature. Currently, this discourse dominates mostly in Belarus and partially Russia. Russia became the successor of USSR after the latter collapsed in 1991. In fact, this moment comes as a point of departure for the new foreign policy of Russia, where, in addition to its sociocultural status, the nostalgia discourse enjoys a foreign policy status; in some situations of conflict, the governments of Belarus (in a much lesser degree) and Russia exploit other countries' soviet heritage for their own internal political goals. Many factors determined the domination of *the nostalgia discourse* in Belarus, such as the sociocultural trauma, official memory policy, and the state ideology.

Importantly, none of the countries in this analysis is solely characterised by one exclusive discourse. It is always a synthesis of two or three. To illustrate the abovementioned discourses, one can refer to three cases of soviet historical and cultural heritage, relatively close by their essence (one in each of the regions studied): Memento Park of communist statues (Hungary),

the park of soviet sculptures in Grutas (Lithuania), and the historical and cultural complex Stalin's Line in Belarus. Why were these facilities selected? First, because all of them emerged after 1990s. Second, each of them constitutes a rather large-scale project aiming at interpretation of the soviet historical and cultural heritage of the countries in question. Third, these objects function as touristic and educational undertakings, representing attitudes to the soviet/communist past, which, in its turn, illustrates the manner of interpreting and using the heritage of those times, and the dominant sociocultural discourse around the perception of this heritage. These three peculiarities enable comparisons among these places. However, it is important to stress in the beginning that the issues related to the 'contested past' always provoke conflicting interpretations; such interpretation quite often might prove destructive in relation to the preservation of this heritage. Social groups routinely use heritage as a tool for highlighting their ideology or opposing the views of other social groups.

The communist political regime in Hungary was one of the most oppressive in CEE countries. The aftermath of the anti-communist uprising of 1956 largely pre-determined the course of history in Hungary and attitudes of Hungarians towards the communist power and its legacies. It was as early as on 23 October 1956 when a protesting crowd destroyed the first Stalin monument. While serving their criminal term for this act, these people would later informally refer to themselves as 'sculptors' (Мадонь-Митцнер 2003, 194-195). After the abolition of the communist government in 1989, Hungary opted for a parliamentary republic, market economy and European integration. Having condemned the communist ideology, the new Hungarian government started a clampdown on communist symbols. Therefore, the official memory policy and the national project of today's Hungary sees the soviet legacies as a threat rather than a part of history to be preserved. It is hard to find monuments to soviet warriors or soviet public figures in the public space of Budapest or other Hungarian cities. Importantly though, the urban landscape of Hungarian cities is full of soviet/communist architecture. A specialised park of communist sculpture was established as an echo of the retiring communist epoch. Opened in 1993 outside of Budapest, Memento Park gathered a collection of communist statues. The concept of the park is based on the principle "not about Communism, but about the fall of Communism" (Memento Park 2021). Being in the park produces a peculiar effect. Rather than a reservation area or a cultural ghetto, the park is constructed as a kind of 'sculptural zoo'. The place is not big, and the sculptures are densely sited. The Park concept emphasises: "Not irony – remembrance" (Memento Park 2021); yet, it is very hard to agree with. For example, a souvenir shop is full of posters and T-shirts with ironic jokes about communist leaders. Promotional booklet of the park stresses it as a place with 'the largest communist sculptures', instilling a stereotype about the soviet heritage as monumental, rude and blocky. However, Memento Park is used as an educational platform for youth. The sculptures are preserved and reflect the spirit of the epoch. This is a positive aspect of the park since communist sculptures are difficult to find in Hungary. Currently, Memento Park has about 40 items on display.

In contrast to Hungary, Lithuania had no major unrest similar to events of 1956 in Budapest. The situation in Lithuania was little different from other Baltic soviet republics. The soviet government cracked down on armed post-war anti-soviet resistance and dissident groups. These and other factors, such as Russification and sovietisation, exerted quite a strong influence on mentality of Lithuanians. They welcomed the collapse of the Soviet Union on barricades near Seimas and TV tower of Vilnius, opposing soviet tanks and armed units of soviet military forces. On 13 January 1991, 14 people died in Vilnius, and more than 1.000 suffered injuries (Vilniaus Universitetas 2021). These and many other events shaped the perception of soviet power as repressive anti-Lithuanian force, which definitely triggered protests. As the soviet

heritage appeared alien in nature, Lithuania dismantled most soviet monuments after the collapse of the USSR. Like other Baltic republics, Lithuania also prohibited the soviet symbols and the communist party. After the collapse of the USSR, Lithuania officially followed Hungary in building multiparty parliamentary republic, market economy and EU integration. However, unlike Memento Park in Budapest, the park of soviet sculptures in Grutas did not emerge by a direct political decision in Lithuania. Established in 2001 by a Lithuanian businessperson Viliumas Malinauskas, the park in Grutas is private by the form of ownership (Gruto Parkas 2021). The Hungarian project of Memento Park was the first in its kind; yet, Malinauskas, the founder of the park in Grutas, thinks that his Hungarian colleagues "took things dangerously too far": "Their park is about mocking the Russian people. Who gave the right to mock nations? Our goal is to show the history, as it was, adding nothing. God forbid us from deriding any peoples. I will never allow it until I am alive", - noted Malinauskas in his RFE/RL interview (Радио Свобода 2006). The display of Grutas Park is indeed well more intense in content than the Memento Park. While Grutas is a kind of reservation where soviet heritage lives in 'natural environment', the display of Memento Park resembles a zoo of sculptures.

It is true that, apart from exposing the sculptural monuments of communist figures, the soviet reservation of Grutas also enables to recall soviet childhood by visiting a zoo, a soviet amusement park, and even a soviet-style café or library. As notes Lithuanian researcher Rasa Cepaitiene, the impression produced by Grutas illustrates paradoxical, ambiguous and complex memories of the soviet times. The exhibition provokes anger, shame, laughter, and a sense of trauma, loss, or quite the contrary, nostalgia (Чепайтене 2010, 261). This park also presents memories of repressions and deportations. In general, Grutas offers multiple interpretation options. It exemplifies a synthesis of several discourses of perceiving the soviet historical and cultural heritage. However, in my opinion, *the transformation discourse* dominates.

Meanwhile, the example of the historical and cultural complex Stalin's Line in Belarus is also illustrative. Touching upon a number of problematic issues in contemporary interpretation of soviet legacies in Belarus, this facility is a case for scrutinising policies of remembrance and approaches to the heritage. The historical fact is that the German troops entered Minsk on the seventh day of the Great Patriotic War[1] (28 June 1941). The website of Stalin's Line notes that this is "a monument to those who met the enemy at the Stalin's Line; a monument to the people, which was preparing to defend the state" (Линия Сталина 2021). In this way, the contemporary state historiography of Belarus legitimises Stalin's Line as a quite significant location in the history of the Belarusian (and Soviet) people, and an essential component of the victory over the foes of these peoples. This legitimisation involves a whole range of problems: historical discussion and democratisation of knowledge; mythmaking and manipulation of history; the problem of Belarusian identity; the relevance of memorialising the soviet heritage; and the collective and individual memories. "The revolutionary model of time[2] claims to know the elements of the past that must be preserved to prepare for the future. It is also known what must be altered, forgotten, or violently destroyed if need be. In this case, the concept of historical time rests on the aspiration to break with the past", - notes Pierre Nora (Нора 2005). This point interestingly interacts with the Stalin's Line situation, which clearly prescribes things to remember (the achievement of a soviet soldier and heroism of the soviet people, as well as nationwide struggle of soviet Belarusians against the 'German occupants'), things to forget (coercive mobilisation of peasants to construct the fortified areas, and the so-

[1] Established in the soviet historiography of the World War II, the term 'Great Patriotic War' singles out the period of USSR's participation in the war. This article uses this term as a representative rather than ideological marker.

[2] The model of time typical for XX and XXI centuries, with very quick development of events or 'acceleration of history', another Nora's term.

viet leadership's ideological cleansing of soldiers and officers), as well as things to delete from memory altogether (exceptional ineffectiveness of these defence facilities and large-scale repressions against the 'enemies of the people'). However, it is hard to deny that Stalin's Line is a place of remembrance. The memory policy has done its work. It is true that this place is artificially created and has no factual authenticity. It is true that this is propaganda oriented. It is also true that it has its own 'colour of interpretation'. Yet, how meaningful is this place for the future of Belarusians? What is its semantic charge? According to Paul Ricœur, memory places are reference points of fading memories. They confront the oblivion. "Places 'live' in the same manner as recordings, monuments and maybe documents, while oral memories float and bend to the will of the words", - notes Ricœur (Рикёр 2004). Indeed, upholding the memory of war and the power of the winning state is a kind of "concrete", which authors believe should consolidate the nation on the basis of collective memories. This way or another, Stalin's Line is a strong example of *the nostalgia discourse*.

To summarise this part, it is important to underline that today's Hungary, Lithuania and Belarus have different constructs of memory and national projects. Varying interpretations of soviet historical and cultural heritage produce different discourses of sociocultural perception thereof. Each epoch reconstructs the discourse in line with its own fundamentals, adjusting the past to fit the context of today. The remembrance of the past depends on the way of its representation in memory policies of certain social groups (Миненков 2010, 66-67). "Paradoxically, rather than the heritage per se, the preservation of the cultural heritage is motivated by external reasons and interests, such as education, social or political prestige and legitimisation of a government, the progress and image of a state in question, or the economic profit. Isolated analysis of the heritage problem makes no sense without deep understanding of the historical culture of a certain country because it is no longer enough to know when, why and how values are preserved; it is necessary to understand the role of the social memory in fluid societies," – notes a Lithuanian researcher Rasa Cepaitiene (Чепайтене 2010, 27-28). Constructing a sociocultural discourse of heritage perception is a rather lengthy process affected by internal and external factors. It is thus important to keep in mind that it can transform, change its format and integrate new constructs over time. This is an integral component of society development in any country.

PROBLEM OF APPROACHES IN INTERPRETING AND USING THE SOVIET HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

When deliberating on the soviet heritage, it is difficult to find a universal answer to a question: what is valuable and what is not? In line with the previous part of the article, the heritage has several general perception discourses, which means that, as of today, there is no common approach towards interpreting and using it. In this part, I will try to have a look at the soviet historical and cultural heritage through the prism of theoretical approaches in interpretation and usage thereof, also including its preservation as a value.

Is comprehensive interpretation of the soviet historical and cultural heritage possible?

Guided by the assumption that a common approach in interpreting the soviet heritage does not exist today, and there are at least three discourses of perception thereof, an answer to the abovementioned question most likely should be: "No, it is not possible". However, we can get closer to comprehensiveness. Freeman Tilden's *Interpreting Our Heritage* can be helpful by offering six key interpretation principles, which are useful for comprehending the processes of interpretation of the soviet historical and cultural heritage in discourses of sociocultural

perceptions thereof by groups of society in CEE and Baltic countries, and Belarus.
The first principle of interpretation provided by Tilden is: "*Interpretation that does not somehow relate what is being displayed or described to something within the personality or experience of the visitor will be sterile. Interpretation should be personal to the audience*" (Tilden 2007, 18). Let us imagine a situation whereas several groups of visitors enter the History Museum of the Great Patriotic War (hereinafter GPW Museum), for example: former prisoners of soviet caps, former Belarusian underground fighters, Belarusian schoolchildren, and a group of Italian tourists. After watching the display of the GPW Museum, they proceed to the Museum of Occupation and Freedom Fights in Vilnius. Anyone who has visited these museums would obviously notice the difference in ideological connotation; yet, interesting is the personal perception of these museums by the identified groups. First, these are absolutely different personalities with their peculiarities (views, values, understanding of the history of WWII, life experience etc.). Second, interpretations provided by these two places would produce different impacts, most likely conflicting. Finally, groups would experience various reactions to the place of being; someone would be shocked, someone proud, while someone indifferent. This rather simple example shows the meaningfulness of the first principle of interpretation as applied to the soviet historical and cultural heritage. In addition, we see the direct dependency of this principle of interpretation upon the discourses of sociocultural perception of soviet historical and cultural heritage in specific countries or by specific groups.

"Information, as such, is not interpretation. Interpretation is revelation based upon information. Successful interpretation must do more than present facts". (Tilden 2007, 18). This principle is both simple and challenging in understanding. Theoretically, there is nothing difficult about interpretation based on information. However, the most puzzling question remains: how objectively and comprehensively is this information used in interpreting a certain object?

"Interpretation is an art, which combines many arts. The material for interpretation is offered by science, history and architecture". (Tilden 2007, 18). All these components are directly present in the soviet historical and cultural heritage. Let us look at several examples. The Palace of Culture and Science in Warsaw is a building exemplifying the soviet architecture, science and history. There are several highly controversial attitudes in Poland towards using this object. Someone wanted this building demolished, and someone preserved. While emotions and trauma-related sentiments prevail in the first idea, the second one is driven by either transformation-oriented (pragmatic, commercial) thinking or nostalgia (symbolic considerations). Soviet sculptures on the Green Bridge in Vilnius is another example. Sustained in the post-war soviet style, the four bronze sculptures have certain historical and architectural value (as the architectural value, we refer to the Green Bridge in its entirety). However, we again face discordant approaches to interpretation thereof. The Lithuanian Department of Cultural Heritage added these items to the list of historical and cultural values; nevertheless, the statues were removed for restoration in 2015 and remain unreturned by the time of writing, despite their legal status. These two simple examples illustrate the problem of interpreting the soviet historical and cultural heritage even when objects fit some common norms or have a legal status, yet face confrontation with discourses of sociocultural perception of the soviet past. By the way, this applies not only to soviet heritage. Global developments in 2020 and Black Lives Matter movement, too, sparkled discussions around monuments and perception thereof. Despite monuments to personalities with histories of exploiting slaves had (or have) some status, changes in sociocultural discourse entails review of values in social groups, rendering science, history and architecture helpless against the political will in some cases.

"The chief aim of interpretation is not instruction, but provocation," – the fourth principle of inter-

pretation according to Tilden (Tilden 2007, 18). It is probably the most complicated principle, rather poorly applied to the soviet historical and cultural heritage for a number of reasons. The countries under review are marked by rather insisting on a certain framework of perception towards the soviet past than provoking comprehensive and multiple-perspective thinking. This principle of interpretation touches upon the most complicated issues related to state ideologies and national projects as well as to psychological perception, personal life experience and education, phobias, and memory traumas of entire nations. Notably, while *discourses of nostalgia and antagonism* severely underuse this principle, it is more pronounced in *the transformation discourse*.

The fifth principle: *"Interpretation should aim to present a whole rather than a part, and has to target large audiences"* (Tilden 2007, 18). This is another complex and very important principle hardly applied in *antagonism* and *nostalgia discourses*, yet somewhat present in *the transformation discourse*. To illustrate problems of applying this principle, places like Khatyn (Chatyń) and Kurapaty in Belarus are very telling; while only a part of the history of these places is visible, another part is always hidden behind ideology's scenes. This principle is important not least because it helps the society to cure phobias and traumas of the memory and show the nation's maturity.

As for the sixth principle, which is related to interpretations for age groups, it is of secondary significance for the topic in question, and therefore left without detailed consideration.
Naturally, a single principle of interpreting the soviet historical and cultural heritage is impossible given the complexity of the topic. I would nevertheless note that it is a theoretically reachable, yet hardly achievable (at least in Belarus) aim of a society consensus. This is why the material above clearly demonstrates the degree of compliance of sociocultural perceptions with the Tilden's principles of interpretation. In other words, there principles can partially apply, bus mostly only in one of the three discourses.

In the end of this part, I would like to introduce a theoretical example of applying Tilden's principles to Chatyń, a landmark place for the historical memory of Belarusians. The Belarusian schoolchildren are taught that Chatyń was "burnt down by German fascist occupants", or, in a simplified versions, by Germans. However, the fact that not so many "Germans" as members of the Ukrainian punitive battalion joined the operation (Petrouchkevitch 1999) is omitted for a number of reasons, i.e. the interpretation does not go beyond the distinction of 'us vs. them' and 'good vs. evil'. Moreover, full representation of events demands references to causal links leading to such punitive actions, namely the provocations from soviet partisan fighters (Бачышча 2008, 193-194). This information, too, poorly fits the ideologically charged narrative. Yet, should blind spots of interpretation be filled, the interpretation of Chatyń would be even more thought provoking and open-minded about the problems of war, as predominantly grey-coloured drama, rather than black and white story. Naturally, broader and sounder interpretation is hardly imaginable in Belarus, as long as *the nostalgia discourse* dominates.

Is any soviet monument a value?

When studying opinion polls on soviet monuments, many experts encounter a rather common opinion of many citizens: "This is also a part of our history; leave this monument here". This is an interesting point, worth examining in a number of theoretical frameworks. As known, there is no single current definition of the cultural heritage value as of today. It is also a question what exactly constitutes a monument.[3]

[3] In Belarusian, monument is a cognate word to 'memory', which has to 'remind'.

Researcher and philosopher Regis Debray outlines a monument as message, a monument as form, and a monument as trace (Чепайтене 2010, 41-42). According to Debray, any monument fulfils certain tasks. A monument-message includes an obelisk, a crypt, a chapel, and a memorial. This is constructed predominantly for symbolic purposes, as a rule in places like bridges, squares, crossroads, battlefields, or cemeteries. Marking a certain memory/ideology, which agents of counter-memory may disapprove, such monuments are the most frequent targets of vandals (Чепайтене 2010, 41-42). In Debray's opinion, a monument-form is a 'successor of castle or church', i.e. constitutes a traditional 'historical monument'. It may be architectural, societal, religious, old or new, aesthetical or decorative; it does not bring a strong message from the past (Чепайтене 2010, 42). Finally, the monument-trace is just a 'document of the past' with no particular aesthetical motivation. Rather than reminding something, it was created to serve. Claiming no originality or aestheticism, it usually has no architectural value (Чепайтене 2010, 42).

Debray's classification is somewhat generic; yet, it offers insights into purpose and perception of heritage. As noted by Pierre Nora, the societal memory became more democratic by emancipating 'small cultures'; it means the memory grew bigger (Нора 2005). The urban space is an enclave of the societal memory, which includes a dominant (the current state ideology playing a major role in interpreting the cultural heritage) and an abundance of 'small groups' (both influential and marginal, having their own enclave of memory and interpretation thereof). In many regards, while the cultural heritage is the resource used by all social groups, the interpretation is subject to their take on it. The heritage is largely composed of markers of certain identities. In this discussion of perceptions, the key role, though, belongs to the value of an object in question. In terms of the value of heritage, one might refer to the typology of values offered by researchers such as Jukka Jokilehto, Bernard Feilden, and an Austrian researcher of late XIX and early XX century Alois Riegl whose concept is re-actualised.

Riegl introduces terms of 'intentional and unintentional monuments'. By the first ones, the author implies classical monuments created by a generation to transmit memories to another one. The unintentional monuments, according to Riegl, constitute the 'art will' of contemporary artists, architects and designers, who create their works for personal motivation and needs (Lamprakos 2014). As examples of 'intentional monuments', one can refer to monuments of Lenin or soviet soldiers, while 'unintentional' ones include e.g. the buildings of state circus or opera in Minsk. Disclosing the term of monument's 'art-value' and 'historical-value' is an important point in Riegl's work. In particular, the author notes that 'we refer as historical to everything that existed previously and will no longer exist" (Lamprakos 2014).

Riegl's key point is that every monument of history is also a monument of art, and vice versa, each monument of art is a monument of history (Lamprakos 2014). Moreover, Riegl suggested a triple definition of a monument's value. From his point of view, a monument can serve as a source of upholding historical (documental) or artistic-historical value. However, the author also places the value of age in the row of commemorative intention (Чепайтене 2010, 67). In addition, Riegl introduces the 'present-day' value, which is characterised by use for utilitarian purposes and distinguishes a monument from archaeological relics that bear only historical (documental) value. Finally, Riegl has subdivided the art-value to 'relative' and 'newness' values (Чепайтене 2010, 68). In general, Riegl's concept is one of essential tools to understand the value of historical and cultural heritage as such. He was one of the first to reveal controversies inherent in coexistence of values. For example, the value of age is in conflict with the value of newness, and is a threat to the historical and utilitarian value. In the meanwhile, the utilitar-

ian value can clash with the artistic and historical values (Чепайтене 2010, 70).
At the same time, as Jean-Michel Leniaud put it, there are three main values: commercial, scientific and communicative (Чепайтене 2010, 77-78). The commercial value depends on the material used to produce something, the quality of work and market demand-supply relations. However, in the case of monuments of history and culture, and other immovable heritage assets, it is rather difficult to define their value component correctly. Nevertheless, this component exists. The second value by Leniaud is scientific; it transforms an object into a document of the past. The third, communicative, is understood primarily as a symbol (sign). A community appropriates a symbol to use it for defining their identity and self-image. Communication can be of various nature: political, social, aesthetical, etc. (Чепайтене 2010, 78).

Jokilehto and Feilden suggested one of the broadest schemes of values. This scheme divides the values that influence attitudes to the heritage into two key areas: cultural values and contemporary social and economic values. In their turn, cultural values are divided to identity values, relative artistic and technical values, and rarity values, while the contemporary social and economic values are subdivided to functional values, origin values, and social and political values. Economic value is included in both areas (Чепайтене 2010, 78-79).

To be more practical, we can apply the theoretical schemes of values onto the case of Lenin monument at the Independence Square in Minsk.

- This is an intentional monument, created on purpose to leave a message from the previous generation of Soviet Belarusians. Is it possible to 'read' and 'delete' this message? Yes, it is.

- Currently, this object is a part of Belarus' state ideology. However, should the ideology change, it is very likely that this monument can become a commemoration item for a certain 'small group' within a society, or a target of counter-memory groups.

- Up to a point, this is a monument of 'history and art', being its inalienable part in a certain way, like any other Lenin monument in Belarus. This is a communicative sign or symbol left in the urban space by a previous generation. However, as the society's identity changes, this monument is losing its value.

According to the above-mentioned concepts of values, the soviet historical and cultural heritage appears to be quite important, as it includes a number of characteristics that, notably, conform to the spirit of the historical epoch they represent, which means they are an integral part of the world's history. This is a fact to be counted with regardless of the perception discourse. No matter how much we judge this epoch and argue about interpretations of certain heritage objects, this heritage is nevertheless relevant for reflections over the past and as a tool for addressing conflicts of the future. In other words, it is already valuable for this reason alone. Analysed above, the concepts of values can help us in comprehending this heritage. They will help in categorisation thereof and choosing approaches towards interpreting and using it. Yet, should the question be "Is any soviet monument a value?", the answer is not as obvious as might appear at first sight; it is all a matter of a perspective and value characteristics applied by a beholder. What is important, though, is to see the heritage as primarily 'the heritage of the previous epoch'; it will render the interpretation and usage the most successful and constructive.

PROSPECTIVE LINES OF INTERPRETING AND USING OBJECTS OF SOVIET HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE IN BELARUS

The previous chapters looked into the discourses of perceptions of soviet heritage and identified no single universal discourse as of today. They also pointed out issues related to interpreting and using the soviet heritage. The following part of my work will attempt at summarising these points, something that I believe can bring us closer to understanding the prospects of using, interpreting and, potentially, preserving the objects of soviet historical and cultural heritage in Belarus. The endeavour will partially build on experiences of CEE, Baltic countries and Ukraine. This is an effort to conceptualise the least radical and, if possible, the most reasonable and constructive approach to the transformation of this heritage in Belarus. Moreover, I would undertake to be practical and substantive in my assessments.

Belarusian identity: soviet versus national?

Interpreting and using the historical and cultural heritage are closely connected with many factors. Identity is one of the main ones. The Belarusian identity offers multiple challenges for research. This work does not aspire to come up with detailed analysis of the Belarusian identity, a topic for broad studies and debates. Of particular interest for this work is a question whether the soviet heritage owns a place in the identity of Belarusians, and if yes, what is this place?

The issue of the Belarusian identity is essential for understanding the general situation of the historical and cultural heritage in Belarus. Obviously, it is rather different from that in CEE and Baltic countries. For USSR countries and member states of the Warsaw Pact, the end of 1980s and beginning of 1990s marked the launch of transition from soviet/communist to national systems. "The country was in action. Actually, the entire Eurasian world was in action, and we as a part of it. Anti-communist enthusiasm was strongly energetically charged <...> However, it came up quite soon that anti-communism as such was not an alternative to communism; this alternative was yet to be articulated", - said the Belarusian philosopher Valiantsin Akudovich in his book *The Code of Absence* (Акудовіч 2008, 120). Naturally, ruining a system implies a search for alternative. Like other nations, Belarusians were looking for it. The present-day Republic of Belarus is the product of this search. Being a part of the Soviet Union for a long time made a strong contribution to the identity of Belarusians. Anyway, the Soviet Union does not exist anymore. Belarus is a sovereign state, which has inherited a lot of soviet historical and cultural objects along with the sovietised society. The combination of these two and some other components have mostly shaped the new Belarusian identity.

The institutions of soviet power were dismantled in Belarus in 1991; the system of soviet values, though, has transformed itself, but not disappeared. The soviet culture in today's Belarus is a kind of simulacrum, because its referent disappeared back in 1991; however, it continues its existence as a phantom and defines identity and praxis of many Belarusians (Ластовский 2008, 80). The victory at the 1994 presidential election of Aliaksandr Lukashenka who actively capitalised on soviet nostalgia proved that anti-soviet scenario had no appeal in Belarus. The rehabilitation of the soviet heritage reached its peak in 1996, when soviet symbols of BSSR were reintroduced to ultimately consolidate the ties with the soviet past (Ластовский 2008, 81). "The nostalgia of former socialist camp countries towards the recent past is really paradoxical since this feeling is usually similar to sadness about a lost home or a certain 'golden age'. This case brings up associations with a kind of sociocultural Stockholm syndrome", notes

Cepaitiene (Чепайтене 2010, 256). In a way, this is so for a part of Belarusians who were raised in BSSR and determine state policies in Belarus today. However, the Belarusian society is in need for analysis of what happened in early 1990s when progressive reformers faced lack of understanding and underestimated the Belarusian identity crisis. "Having had some desovietisation talks between 1989 and 1991, the soviet and post-soviet intellectuals decided it was more than enough, <...> while, in 1991, publicists, ideologists and policy-makers decided it was all over and not worth revisiting" (Мацкевич 2008, 8). Therefore, the status quo is that, raised in line with soviet traditions, a part of the Belarusian society sticks to these values, while another generation of Belarusians does not understand the values of the soviet past and views this period mostly as a historical timeframe with no value sentiments attached. However, the first group still dominates in the elite and tries to construct a neo-soviet state ideology.

Philosopher Mikalai Siamionau identifies six modi of 'soviet' manifestations in the Belarusian society: the modus of sadness (longing for old times and the experience of nostalgia, constructing the sociocultural nostalgia discourse towards the soviet past); the modus of anger (our world was destroyed; habitual symbols lost during the liquidation of USSR; weak recognition of the new national project symbols, leaving the national project with shaky grounds); the modus of perseverance (typical for 'idealists' who care about leading by example, 'honours board' and 'fighting for better future'); the modus of restoration (Belarusian 'façade thinking', shaping the externally attractive world while hiding the problems); the modus of sticking to 'positive things' about the soviet past (active capitalisation on good memories and articulation of soviet successes while forgetting unpleasant pages of the soviet history of Belarus); and the modus of historical justification and 'reconciliation' ('this is also our history that we must appreciate') (Семёнов 2008, 36). In approaches towards the transformation of soviet heritage in Belarus, this condition of a segment of the Belarusian society must be counted with. In addition, Aliaksei Lastouski identified four main sociocultural channels that kept the soviet past in the public discourse of today's Belarus:

1. The rhetoric of the current government reinforced by supportive media ('we are soviet people'), resulting in a rather strong self-identification of the Belarusian population as 'soviet', as reported by opinion polls;
2. Reincarnation of the soviet culture;

3. The presence of soviet past in the Belarusian landscape via monuments, monumental buildings, and street names;

4. The transformation of the educational process, e.g. by introducing a course on the history of the Great Patriotic War.

These channels communicate the soviet past in the language of myths and stereotypes (Ластоўскі А, Казакевіч А, Балачкайце Р. 2010, 82).

As previously mentioned, the neo-soviet identity is mostly being imposed via sociocultural channels by a certain part of population currently in charge. It does not mean, however, that the Belarusian society itself identifies itself with the soviet values. This is true that the challenge is in finding an alternative to the soviet values. It is not a secret that Belarusians do not agree on a 'national idea' or a 'national project'. In this regard, the society is segmented. The majority is indifferent about the national Belarusian values, yet cares about the value of independence of Belarus (SATIO 2020). To put it simply, the 'soviet values' are attractive for a minority of Belarusians today; however, they prevail in one or another form, because

the Belarusian society cannot change the paradigm naturally, since it cannot replace the political elite by elections. In addition, the ruling political elite actively opposes the society's small groups in order to preserve the neo-soviet identity in Belarus, since it fully identifies itself with this identity and sees anyone questioning it as a threat to its very existence. This is a major problem unnaturally hindering the public debate and attempts to deal with problematic pages of the soviet past in Belarus.

The Great Patriotic War as a key argument of 'perfect' soviet past

"There is an opinion that a national identity is linked to wide-spread memories about common historical past of people who do not know each other, hence the identification problems of the Belarusian nation, which largely remembers itself collectively only since the Great Patriotic War. <...> As a national identity is embedded in a certain social, political, aesthetical, and historical context, it is a social construct, or a narrative. All attributes of national identity may be embodied in urban landscape", - notes Stsiapan Stureika (Стурейко 2010, 31). Researcher Yuliya Halinouskaya notes that, like every person has his or her own 'sphere of things', the same applies to a state. Belarus is 'a country of Chatyń, glory mounds, tanks, obelisks, and Lenin monuments in all positions', with streets named Sovetskaya, Proletarskaya, Kommunisticheskaya, and Komsomolskaya, and soviet-style visuals (Галиновская 2008, 52). After the collapse of the USSR, Belarusians remained alone in their desymbolised world; having found no new model, they opted for the old symbols (Галиновская 2008, 53). Moreover, the political crisis in Belarus in 2020 and 2021 clearly indicates that the Belarusian state ideology actively leans towards the glorification of the Great Patriotic War (GPW). It can be explained by the fact that there have been no major accomplishments since the rule of Lukashenka usable for political propaganda. This is why the propaganda piggybacks on and exploits the topic of GPW, while presenting themselves as successors of those who won against Nazism in Europe. Along with exploiting the tragedy, the propaganda communicates the paradigm presenting Lukashenka's political opponents as 'aids of fascists', and labelling the Belarusian national symbols, white-red-white flag and Pahonia coat of arms, as symbols of collaborators. In this regard, the soviet historical and cultural heritage is taken hostage by the political situation, since both the glorification and manipulation leave a footprint on it as well, by naturally making some parts of the society view these objects as markers of the state ideology.

By the soviet tradition, the commemoration of the war victory serves as a major tool of legitimation of the current state regime in Belarus. Having de facto monopolised this memory, the government oversees access to interpreting it in the historical science and communication channels of cultural memories (Ластоўскі А, Казакевіч А, Балачкайце Р. 2010, 255). According to opinion polls, the Victory Day (9 May) and the Independence Day (3 July) are the key events on the calendar of state celebrations (SATIO 2020). Names of about 35% streets in Minsk are directly linked to the soviet past of Belarus (Ластоўскі А, Казакевіч А, Балачкайце Р. 2010, 268-269); the map of Minsk shows that these streets are mostly located in the centre. It builds the central topos of the past. As Minsk is the capital of Belarus, this topos factually corresponds to the official historical narrative. Comparisons to names of streets in capitals of neighbouring states (e.g. Lithuania, Latvia and Poland) obviously show that central topoi present official historical narratives, which are not soviet/communist.

As regards the soviet monuments or commemoration places associated with the soviet history of Belarus, these objects and places remained where they were in early 1990s with no or little change (unlike e.g. Baltic or CEE states). Moreover, such commemoration places deliberately expanded in a certain regard, an example being opening Stalin's Line in 2005. In addition,

opinion polls indicate that, this way or another, the majority of Belarusians support preservation of the soviet toponymy, monuments and other parts of historical and cultural heritage (BISS 2019). It makes objects related to GPW untouchable in essence, at least in today's political reality. However, an issue of the competition of ideologies will emerge eventually, which is likely to generate a need for new interpretation and usage of the soviet heritage. Guided by this assumption, I will provide my subjective overview of this heritage in Belarus and attempt at tentative categorisation of usage thereof, having in mind an unavoidable need for compromises and common ground in the society.

The soviet historical and cultural heritage in Belarus: preserve vs. destroy

It is very difficult to speak about adoption of the European experience of transforming the public space and soviet historical and cultural heritage under current conditions, whereas Belarus is dominated by the nostalgia discourse, the population displays weak national identity, while the state authorities use sociocultural channels to construct the national identity of a community with neo-soviet values and attitudes. This is a strong difference between Belarus and other countries, which demands substantial and evolutionary path (*transformation discourse*). There is no doubt that some groups would be tempted by *antagonism discourse* as a sort of revenge; however, they would run a risk of ending up in a trap of early 1990s, when the majority of population rejected this approach, especially given the fact that the soviet cultural and historical heritage is a value for a significant share of Belarusians. What should be done in this situation? What are possible ways towards evolutionary practices of utilising the soviet heritage? As a basis for deliberations and discussions, I would undertake an attempt to categorise the soviet historical and cultural heritage in Belarus in several groups, so as to outline possible ways for interpreting and using it.

Group A

The top group, which can include objects of the soviet immovable historical and cultural heritage of high national and international/regional importance or already functioning as attractive touristic destinations. Examples may be:

- Brest Fortress Memorial;
- Belarusian State Museum of History of the Great Patriotic War in Minsk;
- State Memorial in Chatyń, Minsk Region;
- Stalin's Line, Minsk Region;
- Kurapaty Memorial, Minsk;
- Viskuli, the state residence in Bielavieža Forest, Brest Region;
- Ensemble of the Independence Avenue including buildings and facilities, zoning, landscape, and integrated architectural complexes in Minsk.

These places are, by and large, either the most well-known objects of the soviet historical and cultural heritage for Belarusians, or the most significant objects for well-balanced representation of different pages of Belarus' soviet history. The GPW Museum, Brest Fortress and Chatyń stand out as one of the most touristic places in Belarus; however, their concepts require significant upgrade to include the underrepresented aspects of war and depart from soviet-style glorification. Having emerged in 2005, Stalin's Line fully lives up to the term of soviet historical and cultural heritage; over the years, many guests have visited the place, both from Belarus and abroad. The investments in this object are worth retaining. Moreover, I would support keeping the name of the place as it is. However, the memorial needs to be reframed and reconceptualised.

Compared to the previously mentioned objects, much fewer people visit Kurapaty. In addition, as a place of counter-memory in the today's framework, it is a target of vandalism. However, Kurapaty is of very high symbolic importance that demands top attention, protection and integration into the narrative of Belarus' 'national project'.

As for Viskuli, this place is strongly underestimated, in my opinion. While included in tourist guides, it has no sustainable brand in Belarus itself; however, it is a landmark object and a key symbol of USSR liquidation, which can feature as a brand of international as well as national significance. On the contrary, seen by hundreds of thousands every day, the Independence Avenue in Minsk serves as a business card of Stalin's Empire style and the most visited object of the soviet historical and cultural heritage in Belarus.
In general, all these places can serve as representations of the soviet heritage in Belarus; however, re-interpretation thereof by the state and the society is of key significance.

Group B
This group can include large commemorative monuments (of Belarusian national and regional scale), and famous or significant (*included in the State List of Historical and Cultural Values – K.A.*) buildings or architectural ensembles/sites, public locations such as libraries, cinemas, museums and expositions, railway stations, and non-military cemeteries, or engineer installations, such as bridges, towers, stadiums, etc.

There are quite many such objects, and some of them already have the status of historical and cultural values, recognition and multi-functionality. Minsk is particularly outstanding in this group, featuring the National Opera building, the architectural complex of Kirov/Engels/Red Army/Marx streets, the National Museum of Arts, the ensemble of the Government Building, the Belarusian State Circus, the complex of buildings of the Belarusian National Technical University, the Subway of Minsk, the Pieramoha/Victory cinema, the Museum of the First Congress of the Russian Social Democrat Labour Party, the Central Post Office and Minsk Hotel Complex, Uschodnija/Eastern Cemetery, and many other objects. Apart from Minsk, many other places in Belarus have such objects: the historical centre and the railway station of Brest, the historical centre and Kirov Street architectural ensemble including the railway station and the Pryvakzalnaja/Station Square in Viciebsk, and the Drama Theatre in Viciebsk. Homiel is quite rich in this kind of heritage, including the former Commune House, the Palace of Culture of Railway Employees, architecture of Kirov Street and Lenin avenue, the Regional Drama Theatre, the Lenin Regional Library, the architecture of Pushkin and Soviet Street, the Circus building, etc. In Mahiliou, this is the famous ensemble of Lenin Square; in Hrodna, the regional drama theatre.

Most of these objects have characteristics of historical and cultural heritage as well as economic / utilitarian importance. The experience of CEE and Baltic states demonstrates that the immovable soviet/communist historical and cultural heritage is an informal symbol of the city or touristic attraction for thematic tours.

Group C

Subgroup C1: soviet war burials and mass graves, monuments and memorials to victims of the Great Patriotic War.

Subgroup C2: monuments of other armed conflicts, militarist monuments and monuments

of soviet military glory (except GPW).
Subgroup C3: thematic military and historical museums.

Subgroup C4: sites of mass soviet repressions (atrocities, torture and deportations) against civilians or officers.

There are also quite a few such places. The most famous of them are the Victory Monument at Victory Square in Minsk, Minsk Hero City Obelisk, and the Monument of Internationalist Soldiers in Minsk. Other regions are represented by the Breakthrough Memorial in Ušačy, fortifications of 68th fortified district in Hrodna, the Mould of Glory and Katyusha Memorial in Orša, memorial of prisoners of death camp in Azaryčy, Talash grave in Pietrykau, Bujničy Field Memorial in Mahiliou, and countless mass graves, graves of soviet soldiers and partisans, graves of victims of Nazi, and citizen memorials of victims of soviet repressions. In my opinion, this group is the most challenging for interpreting, preserving and using. Marking places of memories and historical traumas, these objects demand historical and public debates for dealing with the trauma. Some sites obviously must be preserved. Some can become a part of a bigger object, for example by organising military cemeteries or adding some items to displays of bigger museums. Extremely underrepresented on the list of protected heritage, the subgroup C4 needs more memorialisation. Public consensus is crucial for solid interpretation and subsequent usage and preservation of the C group heritage. Given the experience of CEE and Baltic States, it is also necessary to prepare for external pressures (primarily from Russia).

Group D

Subgroup D1: monuments and busts of Belarusian figures of politics, science and culture established in times of BSSR (Alaiza Pashkevich, Yakub Kolas, Yanka Kupala, Maxim Bahdanovich etc.).

Subgroup D2: monuments and busts of soviet figures of politics, science and culture of Belarusian descent (Klimuk in Brest, Masherau in Viciebsk, Sukhi and Hramyka in Homiel, Kavalionak in Krupki, etc.).

Subgroup D3: monuments and busts of soviet figures of politics, science and culture of non-Belarusian descent (monuments of Lenin, Dzierzynski, Kalinin, Gorky, Ordzhonikidze, etc.).

This group, too, is marked by some issues. While subgroups D1 and D2 suggest a relative consensus about using, preserving and interpreting, the subgroup D3 inherited by Belarus, however, is not so simple. As known, objects of this type are typical markers of a political regime. However, we know from opinion polls that, currently, Belarusians are inclined to preserve the soviet-time monuments as 'a part of history' (BISS 2019). In this regard, a potential compromise would be to follow the examples of Grutas and Budapest by creating a soviet-epoch park at Stalin's Line. I believe that the D3 subgroup belongs there; given the number of such monuments in Belarus, this could be the biggest park of soviet sculptures in the world.

Group E
This group is the most massive. It includes typical buildings of residential, maintenance or social purpose ('Khrushchev-style' houses and other kinds of housing; typical schools, preschools and department stores), and social monuments, such as the monument of long-range aviation (TU-16 aircraft) in Balbasava settlement. This also includes industrial heritage of so-

viet times in the form of numerous factories, plants etc., and energy sector facilities, such as the building of power plant in Biaroza.

Germany can be used as an example of dealing with this group of soviet historical and cultural heritage. After the unification of Germany, campaign "GDR to museum" was launched in 1990s. The campaign sought to preserve objects of day-to-day life in socialist epoch (Чепайтене 2010, 258). Multiple buildings that are usual today for Belarusians ('Khrushchevkas', palaces of culture, village clubs, kolkhoz buildings, typical schools, department stores, etc.) are not such for foreign tourists, e.g. from Western Europe or US or can recall nostalgic memories for people from CEE and Baltic States. Interpreted right, such objects can constitute a valuable resource for tourism in Belarus. Apart from day-to-day life, Belarus is also quite promising in terms of industrial heritage. The country has preserved many manufacturing facilities associated with the soviet historical and cultural heritage. Several criteria are applicable in defining their value: authenticity of materials, construction, industrial design, and functions; derivative values (historical value, mapping); external values; and supplementary values (commemorative places, city-planning values, landscape dominant values, and symbolic values) (Стурейко 2010, 86-88). Using these objects can add more colours to the general list of historical and cultural heritage items. The global practices show that regional and international tourism increasingly focuses on objects of this type. Some sites of industrial heritage are put on the UNESCO list, e.g. Völklinger Hütte metal factory in Essen, Germany (UNESCO 2009, 441), Zollverein Coal Mine (Essen, Germany) (UNESCO 2009, 667), Wieliczka Salt Mine in Poland (UNESCO 2009, 36), and other objects. Belarus already has experience of adding some industrial heritage items to the State List of Historical and Cultural Values, e.g. the building of a former factory kitchen in Minsk, the Biaroza power plant in Bielaaziorsk, BelDRES power plant building in Arechausk, and the shoe factory building in Minsk. Another opportunity to consider is broader use and protection of potassium mines in Salihorsk, unique for Belarus and the surrounding region.

Group F

It is impossible to ignore the manifestations of soviet legacies integrated in the contemporary urban landscape of Belarus in the form of numerous street names, minor tangible objects (such as soviet symbols and mosaics on facades of buildings, writings of soviet times etc.), and decorative and park sculptures, including fountains. They can be designated as items of tangible or spiritual heritage according to the Law on Protection of the Historical and Cultural Heritage (Мартыненко 2001, 12-13). Therefore, these objects deserve a special place among the groups of soviet historical and cultural heritage.

This group may include street nameplates or names; fountains and fountain compositions (e.g. Kupalle in Minsk); emblazonments (such as Svietlahorsk Land in Svietlahorsk; Pioneers in Minsk); mosaics (e.g. October and Partisans in Minsk); spatial compositions (e.g. glass composition at Kalvaryjskaja in Minsk); stained glass windows (e.g. Maskva cinema or the St. Simon and Helen Church in Minsk); and tapestries (e.g. Native Land of Belarus in Minsk). Some items in this group definitely can have historical, cultural, economic, and communicative value, and claim a right to be preserved. Toponymy, though, is the most challenging part. In terms of ideological communication, these markers of soviet heritage are among the most influential, which calls for sensible approach in preserving or transforming e.g. street names. Creating toponymical commissions in each regional or district centre could be a valid idea. The role of the commission would be to represent opinions of many groups in the society in determining the importance of each particular street name in their city or town. This would also encourage local self-government and public debate.

Group G

This large group includes objects of intangible soviet historical and cultural heritage, such as symbols, holidays, literature and arts, and other possible objects of intangible heritage as well as ideology and propaganda. These items are strongly integrated into day-to-day life in Belarus. The current state flag and coat of arms of the Republic of Belarus are the easiest examples, as well as the contents of school textbooks on the history of Belarus, heavily relying on updated soviet historiography, or celebration of the October Revolution as the state holiday. Unfortunately, meaningful and detailed examination of using and interpreting this heritage in Belarus is beyond the scope of this paper, since its every item requires in-depth deliberation. However, it must be singled out as a separate group for further studies.

Group H

This group includes the areas in Belarus contaminated by radioactive substances after the 1986 Chernobyl disaster. Occupying about 23% of the area of Belarus (Бачыша 2008, 253), this territory harbours quite many objects of tangible heritage, including evacuated settlements; their unique nature offers relevant and promising ways for interpreting and using, especially should transnational permits be agreed with Ukraine (in particular, for visiting the power plant in Chernobyl). Limited in economic value, these places are significant in terms of communication. This heritage could be used much more if international tourism-friendly environment were created. Chernobyl is anyway a part of image of Belarus; interpreted right, this group can serve as a good destination of domestic and international tourism for educational and historical purposes.

As a final note to summarise, the outlined groups are just an attempt towards segmentation and structuration of the soviet heritage, which currently constitutes a significant part of the Belarusian historical, cultural etc. heritage. Each group needs in-depth and solid comprehension for interpretation and use. Obviously, discussion of each group and the entirety of soviet heritage will sparkle big debates in the future. Public discussion may strongly contribute to deliberation on this historical period in Belarus; currently, the Belarusian society obviously misses reflection on this subject. It takes efforts and constructive inter-group dialogue to agree on divisive issues. This dialogue needs realisation that heritage is neither an ideological enemy, nor a debate opponent. Heritage is a part of history, which is already out there; the dialogue and debates, though, are among people. The culture of dialogue, discussion and debate are first and foremost about arguments, different perspectives and facts, while ideology and emotions come second. Learning from positive and negative examples of using soviet historical and cultural heritage in CEE and Baltic countries and Ukraine can equip Belarusians for the best possible comprehension thereof. Awareness of others' experiences, as well as drawing conclusions and avoiding mistakes, all facilitate the conceptualisation of traumatic historical memories so that it offers exhaustive answers to the most problematic and painful questions, even if we do not like some of the answers.

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