

The shaping of historical memory in Ukrainian society is accompanying with a set of problems, among which the most important is the problem of determining a person's own identity in a diverse and contradictory world; positive acceptance and respect for the choices of others, integration and consolidation of community, based on human values.

Taking into account the fact, that the past continues to be the subject of political manipulations and means of social disintegration, an important task of a historical museum is social understanding and reconciliation regarding the controversial and sensitive pages of historical memory. To unite different versions of historical memory which exist in different regions of Ukraine and to reach consensus is a daunting task of society and museum as a social and cultural institution.

Formování historické paměti v ukrajinské společnosti je doprovázeno řadou problémů. Nejvýznamnější z nich jsou: problém stanovení vlastní identity každého jedince v tomto rozmanitém a rozporuplném světě; pozitivní akceptování a respektování rozhodnutí druhých a také integrace a upevňování komunity založené na lidských hodnotách.

Vezmeme-li v úvahu skutečnost, že minulost je i nadále předmětem politické manipulace a prostředkem sociální dezintegrace, důležitými úkoly pro historická muzea se stávají sociální porozumění a usmíření – pokud jde o kontroverzní a citlivé stránky historické paměti. Sjednotit různé verze historické paměti, které existují v různých regionech Ukrajiny, a dosáhnout shody, je náročný úkol jak pro společnost, tak pro muzeum jako sociální a kulturní instituci.

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# Historical memory problems reflected in the tasks of museum

Search for national identity, collective understanding of the common past in post-totalitarian society caused its facing some problems and challenges. On the one hand, Ukrainian society is characterized by cultural diversity, in particular, multi-ethnicity and multiconfessionalism which have strong historical roots. Multiculturalness reflects cultural and national diversity of the Ukrainian society, promotes recognition of the right of all people to preserving, developing and enriching their cultural heritage, contributes to bringing up in them mutual understanding, respect and tolerance, ability for intercultural dialogue.

On the other hand, in Ukrainian society there is no consensus concerning a common historical past and common historical memory. In the society there has been drawn a conflict line, which was only made deeper due to inconsistent historical memory policy. And current political situation testifying to increasing disintegration, intolerance and violence and its various faces which affect people's lives.

Thus contemporary socio-political processes in Ukraine formulate the important social task – preparation of citizens, who are capable of coexisting peacefully, respecting the rights of others for choice and preservation of their own identity, of perceiving tolerantly social differences and reaching understanding.

The discovered tendencies actualize the reinterpretation of the role, place and strategy of the historical museum in modern social and political conditions. A number of modern scientific researches are devoted to problems of conflicting historical memory. But the historical memory problem as reflected in the tasks of modern historical museum has been researched insufficiently. Thus, this article is aimed at finding out the potential of a historical museum in overcoming the conflict in historical memory which is

a factor of destabilization in modern Ukrainian society interfering with its integration and democratic development.

In recent years the interest to historical memory in Ukraine has significantly grown. The problems of historical memory started to be widely discussed in the social discourse. Common perception of the historical past, collective historical memory is a significant basis for the integration and consolidation of the society. But the situation aggravates when **'in a community of one nation there exist several opposing or even conflicting in their content, canons of 'historical memory', where three partially intertwined interpretations of the past borrowed from three sources in different proportions from**

**1) romantic historiography** of the early-middle 19th century representing the Cossack (romantic) vision of the past, mostly cultivated in the central Ukraine;

**2) the populist academic historiography** of late 19 – early 20th centuries – perception of the past as a battle field for twin Slavic nations – Ukrainian and Russian – for the Orthodox faith and social justice (this version of 'historical memory' still holds strong in the South and East);

**3) the nationalist historiography** of the 20th century, mostly originating from the diaspora – a version of the past colored with strong nationalistic aspirations, in particular with the cult of heroes from OUN-UPA as fighters for the Ukrainian statehood, inherent to the Western Ukraine and partially Volyn.<sup>1</sup>

Under such circumstances history turns into a political tool, a victim of various interpretation of the same historical past by different

<sup>1</sup> YAKOVENKO, N. The Image of Self – the Image of the Other School History Textbooks. In: *Materiály robochoj narady z monitoryngu shkylnykh pidruchnykiv istoriji Ukrainy*. Comp. and ed. N. Yakovenko. Kyiv: Olena Teliha Publishing House, 2008.

political forces. Contemporary American researcher of Eastern Europe T. Snyder pointed out that “history, memory and politics are different areas, and the relations between them are far from perfect.”<sup>2</sup>

The structure of collective memory has two components: individual memory comprised of recollections of separate individuals about the events where they took part, and the collective national memory making a basis for common perception by a certain community of the events in the national history. As opposed to the historical science, historical memory is a simplified collective perception of the past events by the members of national community. Thus, the content of memory is made not of the past facts but rather of subjective understanding and evaluation of those facts by people.

In relation to this, it was rightly noted by Ukrainian scholar Natalia Yakovenko: ‘historical memory’ is a beautiful metaphor, nothing more. The human memory does not reach farther than three generations back, so what we are talking about here is a fictional image of the past – a certain ‘collective experience’ which brings the community together with help of common ‘reminiscences’ about seemingly the same ancestors, about the commonly gained/developed lands, about jointly experienced success and failures. In this sense ‘historical memory’ is in fact identical with a myth, because it picks out of a chaotic flow of existence some values necessary for the community and helps it to resist temporality and transience of human life.<sup>3</sup>

In the opinion of researcher M. Khalbvaks, collective memory is always socially stipulated and marked, the process of remembering is, depending on the object and techniques of perception, exclusively social, and even if it belongs to an individual, it is only declaratively, nominally, indirectly, through his belonging to society. The researcher contrasted history and memory: memory is unreliable, effective only when repeated, it makes the recollections modern; while history is documented, deals with unique events and is critically distanced from the present.<sup>4</sup>

In the research on historical memory it has been established that manipulation of reminiscences and memory became a most

powerful tool in managing of individual and social consciousness. Conflicts of historical memory in a society are always dangerous because they threaten with destabilization, disintegration. In particular, **Polish scholar J. Jedlicki distinguishes two variants when historical memory can lead to the utmost tension and confrontation in a society:**

**1) by sacralization of certain historical events** which would turn them into influential symbols and myths;

**2) by reminding of mass injustices** on the part of another group or force.

The researcher proves that the collective memory can be ‘cold’ or ‘hot’. While the ‘cold’ one preserves or conserves the facts, the ‘hot’ memory produces a politically valid version of the past and the further development of events depends from the emotional tension in the society.<sup>5</sup>

According to P. Nora’s theory, collective memory is concentrated and represented in the so-called places of memory, which are both the geographical sites and crossroads where the society’s memory is shaped and commemorated. Creation and understanding by individuals of ‘places of memory’ is a chief factor to form group identity; and by studying the change of such places we can explore the change of historical consciousness and collective identity of a certain social group.<sup>6</sup>

Historical Museum is such a place of memory where an education and exhibition facility is dedicated to using the history lessons to inspire understanding and compassion of people.

In the opinion of the researcher Hans-Martin Hinz, the President of International Council of Museums ICOM, in a globalized world it is necessary to reinterpret the perception of museum pieces and exhibitions and ask oneself, how one can explain to people the world from many points of view, so that they could understand their own past and culture, but also understand others. And what is more: reinterpretation of museum exhibitions always requires reflection on the role of museums in serving the society. Not the museum pieces explain themselves, but human perception provides these objects with their value, both cognitive and emotional.<sup>7</sup>

In the basis of modern understanding of a historical museum, researchers formulate

a new vision of museum communication aiming at overcoming cultural and historical distance, establishing connections between the past, present and future, which leads to the revision of the museum work’s traditional structure. The museum can not be limited solely to passing scientific knowledge to its visitors. It is also necessary to consider motives and emotional requirements of the audience. By selecting the exhibits, extracting them from their cultural-historical environment, preserving and systematizing them, a museum becomes a specific channel of cultural-historical communication, a carrier of historical memory. Social value of a museum exhibit is determined by its historical-cultural context which shapes attitudes to the subject, as well as to a specific phenomenon or process associated with it.

An important role in the development of historical memory discourse belongs to the historical context where it evolves. That is why in modern times of social and political changes an important task for historical museums is to reflect on the themes of historical memory, social values and tasks.

The most controversial problems of collective memory of the Ukrainian people and their neighbours relate to history of the XX century, especially the World War II and its manipulations causes a deeper social conflict, destabilizes social situation. The biggest problem of the controversial historical memory in Ukraine regarding the events of WWII is the role of the Ukrainian Nationalist Organization (OUN) and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA). On the other hand, in the commemoration of the World War II in the contemporary Ukraine, we can distinguish two coexisting approaches – views on the victory in the ‘Great Patriotic War’ of 1941–1945 as one of the most important national holidays. Another vision of the liberation from the Nazi occupation by the Red Army considers it the day when one totalitarian regime was replaced by another.<sup>8</sup>

According to Hans-Martin Hinz, one of the newest trends in museum discussions is how museums can become acceptable partners in political debate pertaining to controversial and complicated themes not only from the past, but also from present.<sup>9</sup> For instance, he notices that especially in the recent decades, museums have increasingly changed to the places of reconciliation. On the concept

<sup>2</sup> SNYDER, T. *Memory of Sovereignty and Sovereignty Over Memory: Twentieth-Century Poland, Ukraine, and Lithuania*. Edited by Jan-Werner Moller. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. P. 40.

<sup>3</sup> YAKOVENKO, N. *Introduction to History*. Kyiv: Krytyka, 2007. P. 576.

<sup>4</sup> KHALBVAKS, M. Collective and historical memory. *Nepriskosvenyi zapas: Debates on politics an culture, 2005*, no. 2–3(40–41), pp. 12–35.

<sup>5</sup> PETROVSKYI, V. *Ukrainian and Russian relations in the contemporary Western scholarly research (1991–2001)*. Kharkiv: Maydan, 2003. Pp. 94–95.

<sup>6</sup> NORA, Pierre. General Introduction: Between memory and history. In: *Realm of memory: The construction of the French past*. Ed. by Pierre Nora. Vol. 1. New York, 2013. Pp. 94–94.

<sup>7</sup> HINZ, Hans-Martin. *Challenges and Possibilities: Museums in Globalized World*. Available from: <http://www.museums.org.ua/lections/posts/31>

<sup>8</sup> HRYNEVYCH, Vladyslav. *World War II in official policy, memory and political debates of modern Ukraine*. Available from: [http://www2-historicalmemory.org.ua/abstrakt\\_e/02.html](http://www2-historicalmemory.org.ua/abstrakt_e/02.html)

<sup>9</sup> HINZ, Hans-Martin. *Challenges and Possibilities: Museums in Globalized World*. Available from: <http://www.museums.org.ua/lections/posts/31>

of reconciliation on the example of the ideological confrontation between supporters and opponents of the UPA (Ukrainian Insurgent Army): when it comes to the tragic period of the past – he thinks the most important for people is to learn about the views and positions of the various parties of the conflict. The exhibition should not have the propaganda character: to show only one view of history. The reconciliation regarding these conflicts means mutual understanding, not condemnation. He also states that the mission of the museum is giving possibility to know and understand the political and historical background of those events, what was the context – and enable visitors of museums to understand what was happening.

Hans-Martin Hinz also states that museums in Germany worked with such topics as Nazist Germany, Holocaust, Nazism and the World War II. They organized wonderful educational work in order to help society, especially the younger generation with the purpose of avoiding the same things happen in the future. On the other hand, he mentions that the presentation of historical, cultural and social phenomena in terms of the so-called winners or losers in history, from a regional or national point of view remains dominant<sup>10</sup>.

To unite different versions of historical memory which exist in different regions of Ukraine and to reach consensus is a daunting task of society and museum as a social and cultural institution. In this context Yaroslav Hrytsak advocates that “when pursuing the Ukrainian historical policy we should not try to bring together different historical memories, but rather try to reconcile them. This is what happened in the contemporary Europe. Ukrainian experience is structurally similar to the European. The possibility of one great victory myth is also impossible here. It was more than a victory, it was a great sacrifice. And in most cases not just a heroic self-sacrifice but a cold-blood cynical murder – one huge hecatomb which included not just the militant parties, but also civil authorities and civil population”.<sup>11</sup>

According to O. Zaytsev, such a historical narrative “should be created which would provoke moral solidarity not with ‘tyrants’ even if they are ‘ours’ but with victims and with those who saved them. With such an image

of national history every honest human being would like to identify himself”.<sup>12</sup>

M. Mudryi proposes to look for a unifying ground without appealing to historical memory but through giving the possibilities to understand human ways of thinking and decision-taking, explaining the motives and mechanisms of behaviour of different groups of Ukrainian society in different historical situations, keeping the link between the past and the present through demonstrating to students ways to interact of an individual and society under complicated historical circumstances.<sup>13</sup>

Forming collective historical memory, creating in the young generation’s perception of an integral image of the historical past of a national community, with which it identifies itself, is an important function of a museum as a social and cultural institution. The important task for an education and exhibition facility is to produce a critical-thinking individuals who can assess the past and the present, to understand and to respect the differences of another person, be ready for a constructive dialogue with the Other and different, capable of making a conscious choice. Such an approach not only gives opportunity to research the past, but also promotes general human values making basis for the choice of life guidelines. The development of tolerance, skills of constructive dialogue should be the object of museum activities for the young generation in the multicultural and diverse society.

The analysis of the controversial and sensitive issues in the process of familiarization with museum exhibition provides the personality with the necessary skills for constructive interaction in society. The repetition of human tragedies in past and present, examples of genocide and violence in the present world emphasize on the importance of research of such issues, involving people to think about the motives of such human actions in the past. Such an analysis enables to establish links between historical events, which are distant in time and modern human actions. In the light of critical and creative thinking the major vital abilities of the individual for successful interaction in today’s society are skills and knowledge worked out by means of problem-based

approach to working with sensitive issues of the past.

Accordingly, in modern socio-cultural conditions the application of multi-perspective approach is important in the process of shaping the historical exhibition content. The important condition is the usage of multi-perspectivity in a context of a historical exhibit, which foresees the consideration of certain historical problem from different points of view. Historical process should be perceived as a multi-dimensional phenomenon. Thus, the generally accepted approach in modern museum discourse is a departure from the traditional one-sided interpretation of historical objects, sources, which contain the evaluation of historic events and processes. Evaluation of a historical fact always has different interpretations.

While analyzing the documents and historical objects which may present different positions and points of view, it is expedient to compare different descriptions, looking for differences and similarities in the facts and also judgments, which express certain views or thoughts. Figuring out the differences in the interpretation of the same historical fact or event and the reason of such evaluation (incomplete information, subjectivity, different experience, certain religious or political affiliation, etc.) promotes to shaping of analytical abilities and critical thinking, enables to formulate the objective, balanced and independent judgments regarding the evaluation of historical phenomena.

In such conditions a historical exhibition can help with providing opportunities for the youth to explore the ways of how the past has helped to shape various identities, common cultures, values and to form individual tolerance to diversity. Young people should not only gain knowledge about historical events, but also should be ready for a constructive dialogue with the representatives of various cultures and carriers of various historical memory, to develop tolerance toward them and to respect their opinions and preferences. High emotional culture and positive motivation of a personality in the process of entering into the dialogue of cultures makes it possible to form his/her value attitude to culture and traditions of various ethnic and confessional communities, readiness for transferring values to other members of society, for overcoming possible negative consequences of social interaction.

It worth be mentioned that the vision of the museum as a social and cultural institution in modern conditions is complemented

<sup>10</sup> HINZ, Hans-Martin. *Challenges and Possibilities: Museums in Globalized World*. Available from: <http://www.museums.org.ua/lectures/posts/31>

<sup>11</sup> HRYTSAK, Y. *World War II in Ukraine unites victims not heroes*. Available from: <http://www.istpravda.com.ua/columns/2011/05/17/37986/>.

<sup>12</sup> ZAYTSEV, O. How many histories does Clio have? *Krytyka*, 2009, no. 3–4(137–138), p. 137.

<sup>13</sup> MUDRYI, M. The topic of ‘colonial status’ of Ukraine in history textbooks. In: *Materialy robochoyi narady z monitoringu shkilnykh pidruchnykiv istoriyi Ukrainy*. Comp. an ed. N. Yakovenko. Kyiv: Olena Teliha Publishing House, 2008. Pp. 86–103.

by understanding of its active role in social and cultural development of community. Exhibitions and other museum activities can become a tool for better understanding of today's world and meet the needs of people at present. The museum exhibition, which is a figurative embodiment of museum information, the main place of a visitor's contact with cultural-historical heritage is also an important feedback channel which reacts flexibly to social changes and challenges.

Contemporary dimension of museum communication is characterized by the interaction of the museum audience, of specialists in various fields, as well as the publicity in the process of assimilating the cultural and historical environment.

Experts from various fields take part in the process of forming, studying and interpreting of museum collections. Thus, inter-professional communication has transformed a museum into the place of cooperation of representatives of various professions and community groups, which contributes to expanding of the museum activity content, strengthening ties of museum with society.

Summing up, the forming of historical memory in Ukrainian society is accompanied with a set of problems, among which the most important is the problem of determining a person's own identity in a diverse and contradictory world; positive acceptance and respect for the choices of others, integration and consolidation of community, based on human values.

This caused the definition of a new function of the museum, which lies in familiarization of historic past, reconstruction of cultural and historical environment, the usage of the potential of the past in contemporary cultural processes. Museum has the potential opportunities of organizing of reconciliation processes in community. Developing understanding in the young people of themselves and others, and the work with controversial and sensitive issues should play a key role in museum activities, provides young people with necessary skills for interaction in the society. ■

#### Keywords:

historical museum, conflict of historical memory, youth generation, reconciliation, tolerance

#### Klíčová slova:

muzeum historie, konflikt historické paměti, mladá generace, sladění, tolerance

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