



UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI



<https://helda.helsinki.fi>

Helda

From the Trauma of Stalinism to the Triumph of Stalingrad : The Toponymic Dispute Over Volgograd

Kangaspuro, Markku Veli

2017-12

Kangaspuro, M V & Lassila, J P 2017, From the Trauma of Stalinism to the Triumph of Stalingrad : The Toponymic Dispute Over Volgograd. in War and Memory in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 141-170. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-66523-8_5

<http://hdl.handle.net/10138/231950>

[10.1007/978-3-319-66523-8_5](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-66523-8_5)

publishedVersion

Downloaded from Helda, University of Helsinki institutional repository.

This is an electronic reprint of the original article.

This reprint may differ from the original in pagination and typographic detail.

Please cite the original version.

From the Trauma of Stalinism to the Triumph of Stalingrad: The Toponymic Dispute Over Volgograd

Markku Kangaspuro and Jussi Lassila

On 31 January 2013, two days before the 70th anniversary of the end of the Battle of Stalingrad, Volgograd City Duma reached a landmark decision in the history of post-Soviet-Russian memory politics. The Duma resolved that henceforth, on six key commemorative dates annually, the city of Volgograd would revert to its former name of Stalingrad—on the anniversary of the Soviet victory in the Battle of Stalingrad (2 February); Victory Day (9 May); the Day of Remembrance and Mourning, marking the German invasion of the USSR and the beginning of the Great

M. Kangaspuro (✉)

Finnish Centre for Russian and East European Studies, University of
Helsinki-Aleksanteri Institute, Unioninkatu 33, PO Box 42, FI-00014
Helsinki, Finland
e-mail: markku.kangaspuro@helsinki.fi

J. Lassila

Finnish Institute of International Affairs, Kruunuvuorenkatu 4, 00160
Helsinki, Finland
e-mail: jussi.lassila@fiia.fi

© The Author(s) 2017

J. Fedor et al. (eds.), *War and Memory in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus*,
DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-66523-8_5

Patriotic War (22 June); the Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Nazi Bombing in Stalingrad (23 August); the anniversary of the end of World War II (2 September); and the anniversary of a key turning point in the Battle of Stalingrad, marking the beginning of the defeat of the Nazi forces there (19 November) (“Naimenovanie ‘gorod-geroi Stalingrad’” 2013). The case of Volgograd/Stalingrad stands out in sharp relief against the backdrop of the general toponymic landscape in today’s Russia. The vast majority of Russian towns, squares, and streets retain their Soviet-era designations, which remain in place as relatively inconspicuous everyday relics of the Soviet past, but the case of the city of Volgograd and the dispute over its name is a different story. This dispute has posed a real challenge to the Putin regime’s stance on the Soviet past. The city lies at the heart of Russian identity politics, as the site of the Battle of Stalingrad, the historic turning point that enabled the creation of the major symbolic resource at the state’s disposal, and a key component of Putin’s “non-political” politics: the cult of the Soviet Victory in the Great Patriotic War (Gudkov et al. 2012: 76; Gudkov 2012). Thus, for instance, it was Volgograd that Putin chose as the setting for his announcement, in May 2011, a few days before Victory Day, that a special Russia-wide People’s Front was to be established around the United Russia party for those citizens and organizations not belonging to political parties. He had decided to make this declaration in Volgograd, “because how we could have won without Stalingrad?” (quoted in Savinykh 2011) Since then the country has undergone a series of dramatic domestic political developments, from the Kremlin’s popularity crisis in 2011–2012 to its recovery following the annexation of Crimea in 2014, but through these changes, Stalingrad continues to represent the core symbol of national triumph.¹ At the same time, Stalingrad also always inescapably refers to the most acute trauma of the state’s past: the Stalin era. When viewed in this context, the ceremonial renaming looks less like a successful political compromise; rather, the Volgograd City Duma’s decision offers a vivid illustration of Thomas Wolfe’s encapsulation of Russia’s overall difficult relationship to its own past, in which “crimes and acts of heroism are embedded in the same historical moment, the same historical process” (2006: 279).

The case of the symbolic politics around “Stalingrad” offers rich material for studying the dynamics of triumph and trauma in Russia. The roots of this issue extend back to the death of the city’s namesake in March 1953. The Putin-era debate on Stalingrad enables us to view the Putin regime’s identity politics in microcosm. A key point of contention

here—the history and the nature of the Soviet Union as a milestone in Russia’s history toward a modern industrial state—reverberates strongly throughout this debate. To put it bluntly, all the past state achievements that present-day Russia aims to project as part of its aspirations for the future are related to the Soviet era. Stalingrad as a symbolic codification of this projection encapsulates Russia’s overall difficulty in handling the relationship between the past’s triumphalist and traumatic dimensions.

In this chapter we examine the Putin-era discussion on the name of Stalingrad. We argue that the renaming process encapsulates the key trajectories of Russia’s post-Soviet identity politics. We aim to demonstrate that this process represents a twofold, and somewhat paradoxical, dynamic between the state’s bid for hegemony, on the one hand, and the inexorable pluralization of commemorations of the national past in today’s Russia, on the other. In other words, the hybrid nature of the state’s memory politics, neither purely authoritarian nor purely democratic, has resulted in a tension that is illustrated by the Stalingrad case. On the one hand, the debate on Stalingrad represents a state-driven attempt to consolidate a non-ideological state-centrism as the backbone of the official national history. On the other hand, however, owing to society’s irreversible and ongoing fragmentation, the state’s ability to carry this process in hegemonic terms is severely limited, and this results in open conflict and a lack of consensus between various interest groups. In order to identify these groups and their different positions concerning the state’s role and commemorative pluralization on the theme of Stalingrad, we plot them here along the “axes” of triumph and trauma. We start by sketching out the backdrop of Russia’s attitudinal climate and introduce our data on the basis of media statistics on the topic. Next, we set out the historical background of the commemorative institutionalization of the memory of the Battle of Stalingrad, before providing a detailed analysis of selected media examples. The chapter concludes with a graphic illustration and discussion of our findings.

FROM TRIUMPH AND TRAUMA TO DATA

Bernhard Giesen has noted that triumph and trauma mark the limits of all collective-national identities (2004). Giesen’s concept of the dynamic relationship between triumph and trauma provides a useful vantage point for approaching the debate over the symbolic politics of Stalingrad in Russia. Here triumph and trauma are entangled in complex

ways. The Putin regime strives to sustain the Soviet triumphalist narrative, but in post-Soviet conditions it is not possible to simply exclude the growing role of the other parties, which are now unavoidably present. Global expectations due to the internationalization of the media have everywhere brought the traumatic sides of triumph to the fore (Giesen 2004: 152). In the case of the post-Soviet symbolic politics surrounding Stalingrad, this process provides the major dynamic at work here by counter-mobilizing various groups, most of them acting either for recognition of past traumas, on the one hand, or against “spoiling” the collective sense of triumph, on the other. In our analysis of the Russian debates over the symbolic memory politics surrounding Stalin, we highlight an additional dimension to this dynamic. We argue that at issue here is not only the trauma of Stalinism, but also the trauma experienced by some parts of society in connection with the state’s perceived neglect of the triumphalism associated with Stalin as a historical figure. In this light, the state has figured as a central actor in acknowledging the trauma of Stalinism by maintaining the city’s de-Stalinized name (Volgograd). With the ceremonial partial revival of the name “Stalingrad,” however, the state has also now seemingly entered into “dialogue” with those societal and political groups which seek a complete revival of the city’s triumphalist name.

In this study, we approach the notion of cultural trauma not as an individual psychoanalytic concept but as a social process. Jeffrey C. Alexander offers a useful distinction here. He defines cultural trauma “not [as] a result of a group experiencing pain,” but as “the result of this acute discomfort entering into the core of the collectivity’s sense of its own identity” (2004: 10). Hence, “[c]ollective actors ‘decide’ to represent social pain as a fundamental threat to their sense of who they are, where they come from, and where they want to go” (ibid.). The debate on Stalingrad’s name illustrates and complicates the connections between trauma and identity. In this case, while some see the renewed emphasis on Stalingrad as marking a denial of the traumas of Stalinism, others perceive the emphasis on Stalin’s crimes within the discussion on Stalingrad’s name as a continuation of an ongoing traumatic collapse of national meaningfulness, that is, a manifestation of the group’s traumatic loss of a “great past” capable of holding together a strong sense of identity.

As our examples will demonstrate, even though the politics around the post-Soviet status of Stalingrad’s name often imply a kind of zero-sum

game between triumph and trauma, in fact, citizens' views on the topic are quite far from reflecting clear-cut positions. Rather, as shown by the results of a Levada Center poll conducted in 2013, two weeks after the symbolic revival of the name of Stalingrad, we are dealing with a situation in which traumatic Stalinism and triumphalist Stalingrad are deeply intertwined (Levada Center 2013). The poll's results, compared with the results from previous years, are provided in Table 5.1 (margin of error is 3.4%).

As the percentages in Table 5.1 reveal, perceptions of Stalin are not only divided into positive and negative associations; more importantly, these associations are intertwined in many respects. Thus, for example, while 55% of Russians had a positive view of Stalin in February 2013, the number of those who see Stalin as having played a relatively positive role has been growing since 2003. At the same time, the number of those who see Stalin's role as absolutely positive diminished from 2003 (18%) to 2013 (9%). However, since the crisis between Ukraine/the West and Russia in 2014, the number of the indifferent respondents has decreased while the number of those who respect Stalin has increased (30% in March 2015 in comparison with 22% in October 2008) (Levada Center 2015).² As previous polls have documented, the major argument for Stalin's positive image is based on his role as commander-in-chief during the war (Carnegie Center 2013).³ Nonetheless, the largest proportion of respondents (43%) in 2013 viewed the restoration of the name of Stalingrad negatively—either because they viewed this as an attempt by the regime to camouflage its problems, or because they objected to the lack of attention paid to Stalin's crimes, regardless of the fact that the most popular option was Stalingrad's linkage to the heroic battle, not to Stalin. Seemingly for these reasons, the majority of Russians (55%) were against the revival of the name of Stalingrad, while 23% supported it.

The poll results prompt us to examine more closely the public discussion on Stalingrad over the course of Vladimir Putin's rule. Using the Integrum databases⁴ to track this discussion, we observed that the number of Russian printed and online articles mentioning Stalingrad grew steadily from 2000 through to the end of June 2013 (when we finalized the data collection).⁵ Since our aim was to trace the overall trend in Putin-era symbolic politics with regard to Stalingrad, this period was optimal. The first peak in frequency appeared in 2003, seemingly related to the 60th anniversary of the victory of the Battle of Stalingrad (5747 articles). The next peak was the result of the 60th Victory Day anniversary in 2005 (8373 articles). In 2010, in connection to the 65th

Table 5.1 Results of 2013 Levada Center poll on attitudes towards the renaming of Volgograd

<i>Which of the following do you link with the death of Stalin?</i>	<i>March 2010 (in %)</i>	<i>February 2013 (in %)</i>
The end of terror and mass repressions, liberation of millions of innocent people from jails	47	55
The loss of the great leader and teacher	19	18
Other	6	4
Hard to say	29	23

<i>In your view, why are the country's leaders increasingly talking about Stalin as a prominent state figure?</i>	<i>March 2010 (in %)</i>	<i>February 2013 (in %)</i>
State power is trying to use the cult of Stalin in order to defend its own policy and the abuse of power	16	19
State power is trying to use the cult of Stalin in order to strengthen its own authority as the inheritor of the honor of the war's victory	23	21
State power is trying to use the cult of Stalin for the gradual revival of the Soviet system	8	6
State power is trying to use the cult of Stalin as a solution to hopelessness, as a substitute for the nonexistent "national idea" since there is nothing "sacred" in the country	20	19
Hard to say	33	36

<i>In your opinion, what kind of role did Stalin play in our country?</i>	<i>March 2003 (in %)</i>	<i>February 2008 (in %)</i>	<i>October 2008 (in %)</i>	<i>December 2009 (in %)</i>	<i>December 2010 (in %)</i>	<i>February 2013 (in %)</i>
Absolutely positive	18	10	8	10	11	9
Relatively positive	35	29	33	39	40	40
Relatively negative	21	25	27	23	21	22
Absolutely negative	12	13	10	9	9	10

(continued)

Table 5.1 (continued)

<i>In your opinion, what kind of role did Stalin play in our country?</i>	<i>March 2003 (in %)</i>	<i>February 2008 (in %)</i>	<i>October 2008 (in %)</i>	<i>December 2009 (in %)</i>	<i>December 2010 (in %)</i>	<i>February 2013 (in %)</i>
Hard to say	14	22	21	19	19	19
<i>In your opinion, what motivates the local and federal authorities who stand behind the initiative to return the name of Stalingrad to Volgograd?</i>						<i>February 2013 (in %)</i>
Attempt to immortalize the memory of participants of the Battle of Stalingrad						31
Attempt to return the name of Stalin as the victor of the war and muffle the memory of repressions and crimes of Stalin's regime						18
Attempt to direct public attention away from corruption scandals, decrease of trust in the regime and the growth in energy of the opposition						25
Other						4
Hard to say						22
<i>With which of the following do you agree the most?</i>						<i>February 2013 (in %)</i>
Volgograd should keep its current name						55
Volgograd's historical name Stalingrad should be reinstated						23
Volgograd's historical name Tsaritsyn should be reinstated						6
Hard to say						16

anniversary of Victory, the number was 14,993. While the reasons for the frequency of Stalingrad within the latter peak are obvious (reflecting the fact that Stalingrad functions as a central symbol for Victory Day), we chose to focus on the peak which was related to the 65th anniversary of the end of the battle (2008, consisting of 12,193 articles). From 2008 to 2013 the number of articles mentioning Stalingrad remained at a level of more than 10,000 annually. Interestingly, the sudden recovery of Putin's popularity over the course of the year 2014 in relation to the annexation of Crimea and the state of war with Ukraine was not reflected in a growth in the number of articles on Stalingrad. Thus, while in 2013

the number of articles mentioning “Stalingrad” was 17,855,⁶ by 15 October 2014 the number of such articles in that year was 10,390. In all probability, then, the depth of Russia’s patriotic wave notwithstanding, the year 2014 does not appear to have marked any dramatic change in the development of the official stance on and symbolic politics surrounding Stalingrad which can be seen as compared to the preceding decade.

Having identified the basic quantitative trends between 2003 and 2008, we then analyzed the longest articles from the newspapers *Komsomol’skaia pravda* and *Izvestiia* which related to the anniversaries of the battle. Both newspapers can be considered to be important representatives of the Russian print media generally linked to the Putin-era patriotic moods; *Komsomol’skaia pravda* as Russia’s biggest daily tabloid, and *Izvestiia* as a more conformist and decorous newspaper with regard to the Kremlin’s policies. In addition, we chose two articles from the government’s official newspaper *Rossiiskaia gazeta* published in 2012 to illustrate the official voice with regard to the Stalingrad topic. Finally, given that 2 February 2013 marked the 70th anniversary of the victory in Stalingrad and the culmination of the processes under study, we also decided to examine a few examples of media coverage on this particular date. Here we chose items from one of the main television channels, an article from *Kommersant*⁷—a small but important newspaper known for its critical stance towards the Kremlin—as well as a few online media sources. Below we provide a brief historical introduction to the topic and to the commemorative institutionalization of the Battle of Stalingrad, before then going on to examine these examples in detail.

DE-STALINIZATION AND COMMEMORATIVE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF THE BATTLE OF STALINGRAD IN THE SOVIET PERIOD

The first written records mentioning the city of Tsaritsyn date to the late sixteenth century. Even then, the city occupied an important strategic location on the Volga River, but it was during the 1920s that the city underwent major growth. As part of the large-scale urbanization and industrialization of the Soviet Union in the 1920s and 1930s, the city’s emerging nature was crucially tied to the political development of the young Soviet state. Just as Lenin was the symbol of the October Revolution and the founding father of the Soviet Union, Stalin with his

emerging personality cult as Lenin's successor became the second creator of the Soviet state, the man who stood next to Lenin in "the building of socialism in one country," Stalin's doctrine for the country's modernization. Motivated by these ideological circumstances and by the fact that Stalin was a leading Soviet commissar of the Southern front during the Civil War and participated in the victorious battles against the Whites over Tsaritsyn in particular, the city was renamed in his honor in 1925. Along with this symbolic gesture, the city's growing role as an important center of heavy industry made Stalingrad an important emblem of Soviet modernization.

Against this background it is unsurprising that Stalingrad became an obsession for both Stalin and Hitler over the course of the German invasion of the Soviet Union, especially after the dramatic defeat of Hitler's attempt to capture Moscow in December 1941. In addition to Stalingrad's industrial importance and the city's strategic location, particularly as the gateway for transportation routes via the Volga River and as Hitler's stepping stone to the Caucasian oil fields, the city's very name conveyed significant psychological expectations for both dictators; victory or defeat of the city would also be a massive moral and symbolic victory or defeat in the battle between the two ideologies and their major representatives (Beevor 1999; Kershaw 2008). By the end of October 1942, four-fifths of Stalingrad was in German hands and it seemed that it would be only a matter of time before Hitler gained the final victory. However, as we know, the Red Army's fierce resistance and the German lack of reserves, ammunition, equipment, petrol, food and medicine halted the progress, and ultimately created an insurmountable defeat for Hitler that changed the course of the war and of global history.

Whereas for Nazi Germany Stalingrad also represented the quintessence of the Soviet contempt for human life, explaining why the Red Army did not surrender like British or French troops despite hopeless conditions, for the Soviet Union, and today's Russia, it is precisely this extreme and improbable persistence in the face of hopelessness that lends the word "Stalingrad" its mythical substance. The battle became an essential element in the narration of the Great Patriotic War, discursively constructed as representing the salvation of the Soviet nation from the dark Armageddon of Hitler's potential victory. In this respect the name Stalingrad became associated not only with Stalin but also with the core of the Soviet narrative of the Great Patriotic War.

Stalin's death in 1953 was followed by a succession struggle in which the previous boundaries between groups and hierarchies were reordered, and the new leadership made a partially public attack on the old regime. At the 20th Party Congress in 1956, the new party leader Nikita Khrushchev delivered a "secret speech" denouncing Stalin's personal cult. The speech, which would later be disseminated widely, represented a symbolic part of the concrete power struggle within the Communist Party. On the one hand, naming places in honor of Stalin over the course of his reign entailed symbolic power for his regime, and removing persons from public life by changing place names and doctoring photographs likewise played an essential role in symbolizing power relations, on the other. After Stalin's death, a similar logic of removal and rehabilitation played a vital role in the public life of names related to Stalinist purges. In general this logic is bound up with a political system which cannot absorb any existing dissonances. The impossibility of ideational dissonances results not only in a strong necessity to reframe the new present, but also an obligation to rewrite the past. At the same time, a system which does not allow civic reflection on symbolic, or any publicly shared, matters, is vulnerable to the tensions that its own aims of ideological non-dissonance create over time.

Stalin's symbolic power as a substantial constituent of the Soviet system was so crucial that after his death the new ruling elite deemed a public denunciation of him to be impossible. Therefore, it was seven years before the new leadership dropped Stalin from his position next to Lenin in the Soviet pantheon. However, once this did take place, Stalin's banishment became total relatively quickly. A decision by the 22th Congress of the Communist Party in October 1961 marked a fundamental defeat for the Party's Stalinist group and figured as a signpost to the future Soviet society without Stalin: Stalin's body was removed from Lenin's mausoleum to an inconspicuous place in the Kremlin wall, and Stalingrad was renamed Volgograd. Later, in line with Brezhnev's cautious but ultimately unfeasible moves towards Stalin's rehabilitation, Stalin's bust was erected beneath the walls of the Kremlin in 1970 (Adler 2005: 1096).

The Battle of Stalingrad did not receive its memorial during Stalin's lifetime. The Soviet Victory cult is, of course, a late-Soviet phenomenon whose trappings were mostly put in place by Brezhnev. Stalin himself had in fact actively suppressed the memory of the war. After the war, he prohibited the publication of war memoirs and Victory Day was canceled as an official holiday in 1946. One explanation for this move has been that Stalin wanted to downplay the actual war leaders and heroes as potential rivals for his

power. Another explanation has been that he wanted to turn people's attention away from the past war to the new foes—the former Allies—once the Cold War began. In addition, the “continuation” of the war several years after 1945 in the form of overwhelming devastation and infrastructural chaos should not be underestimated as an explanation for what seem to have been attempts by Stalin to turn the public's gaze away from the recent victory and the destruction it had wrought (Tumarkin 1994: 95–105).

Subsequently, however, the importance of the Battle of Stalingrad in enabling the final victory in 1945 was reflected in the single most recognizable symbol of the Soviet Victory cult: the massive statue of a woman brandishing a sword, *The Motherland Calls* (1967), towering above the city on Mamaev Kurgan. This was to become the most colossal and emblematic war monument associated with the triumphalist narrative of the Great Patriotic War (Palmer 2009). Yet at the same time, the process of the battle's monumentalization crystallized the challenges associated with projecting the value of the war within the de-Stalinized framework.

During the interregnum between Stalin's death and the launch of full-scale de-Stalinization in late 1961, the first plans for the Stalingrad memorial reflected the prevailing party line on Stalin. The planned memorial was initially named the State Museum of the Defense of Tsaritsyn–Stalingrad dedicated to preserving the memory of “the Soviet people's heroic deeds during the struggle with foreign interventionists and counterrevolutionaries between 1918 and 1920 and against the forces of fascism during the Great Patriotic War” (Palmer 2009: 381). In other words, Stalin's role as a revolutionary hero in the battle for Tsaritsyn during the Civil War was conflated with the triumphalist commemoration of the Battle of Stalingrad.

The memorial construction project faced serious challenges, mostly linked to shortages in engineering expertise and materials under the Soviet planned economy (Palmer 2009). In addition, the construction process was affected by the changing ideological emphases over this period. By the time the decision was finally taken to unveil the monument, the process had gone through the post-Stalin interregnum, Khrushchev's Thaw, and the beginnings of the emerging cult of the Great Patriotic War under Brezhnev. Both of these sets of challenges, material and ideological, resulted in repeated delays. The memorial was originally planned to be ready for the 20th anniversary of the victory in Stalingrad (2 February 1963), but this was later postponed to the 20th anniversary of the Soviet victory in the war (9 May 1965), and the memorial was finally unveiled for the 50th anniversary of the October Revolution, on 15 October 1967 (ibid.).

In his speech marking the memorial's unveiling Brezhnev emphasized the sacrifices of the Soviet nations which had made the Great Victory possible, according to the narrative in which the October Revolution and the Great Patriotic War represented the Soviet Union's foundational myths, marking the country's defeat of its external foes (the interventionists and their lackeys). Despite the fact that Brezhnev downplayed Khrushchev's policy of de-Stalinization, he did not change the basic undertone of the de-Stalinized role of the Communist Party in which the collective leadership of the Party and the government, not Stalin, was the reason for the Soviet victory. The monument's enormous size, much bigger than had originally been planned—seemingly a result of Khrushchev's megalomaniac visions—was also intended, in line with Brezhnev's merging together of the October Revolution and the Great Patriotic War, to stand as evidence of Soviet socialism's superiority over capitalism and its historical ramification, fascism (Brezhnev 1967; Palmer 2009: 407).

The basic ambivalence at the heart of the commemoration of the Battle of Stalingrad is a legacy bequeathed from late-Soviet to post-Soviet Russia. At the same time, the whole symbolic fabric related to the name of Stalingrad seems to lack the semantic flexibility to handle the unavoidable presence of the various political dissonances related to it. The contrast with the case of the Treptow Soviet monument in Berlin can help to illustrate this point. The Treptow monument was the first major memorial complex dedicated to the Soviet war triumph. Unveiled on Victory Day in 1949, it was the major paragon for the monument at Volgograd (Palmer 2009). Yet the Treptow monument has proved much more semantically flexible than its Volgograd counterpart. According to Paul Stangl, the Treptow monument has sustained its role as a shrine to fallen Soviet soldiers, a role that, in some respects, “transcends political change from its Stalinist origins into the present post-communist era” (2003: 216). Unlike the Treptow monument with its numerous Stalinist emblems, the museum complex of the Battle of Stalingrad omitted even the name of its major historical locus, obviously because of its ideological inappropriateness: between the years 1962 and 1982 the museum was called the Volgograd State Museum of Defense. In 1982 a panorama entitled *Stalingradskaiia bitva* (the Battle of Stalingrad) was unveiled in the museum and, interestingly, it was not before the advent of perestroika in 1985 that the whole museum was renamed after the panorama (“Iz istorii muzei-zapovednika” 2013).

POST-SOVIET STALINGRAD AND COMMEMORATIVE PLURALIZATION

Whereas the memory of Stalingrad has certainly retained its vitality in post-Soviet Russia, the rupture of the Soviet commemorative hegemony was a major condition shaping Stalingrad's post-Soviet role. In general, the post-Soviet context for the Stalingrad debate can be framed by conceiving a division in rough institutionalist terms between general state strategies for approaching the past. On the one hand, we can conceive a *democratic strategy* which, in ideal terms, can be seen as a more or less consensual outcome of power struggles between those representatives of society which have various interests (political, emotional, financial, etc.) in the state's past. In this situation the state has lost its monopolistic right to control the past and the discussion on this issue has been institutionalized in the course of debates between various interest groups, often competing with each other. The symbolic outcome of this situation is the articulated coexistence of various, politically competing, monuments and views on the past. Within this situation the task of the state is (or should be) to guarantee fairness of competition between the various "memory groups" wishing to contribute to the state's "poetics of history," that is, the ways in which history should be narrated (Fogu and Kansteiner 2006). In order to do so, of course, the state needs to accept the resulting commemorative and historical plurality of this competition.

On the other hand, we may also conceive an opposing, *authoritarian strategy*. Again, if we depict this as a Weberian ideal type, then within this situation the state coercively imposes its monopolistic view on the past while other views are either suppressed, or have to be reconciled with the state. Moreover, the lack or the weakness of institutionalized interest groups in the field of memory politics and history, in contrast to a democratic situation, facilitates the state's authoritarian role by filling the vacuum created by the lack of institutionalized interest groups and their respective memories.

At first sight, post-Soviet Russia seems to fall into the authoritarian category when it comes to commemorative practices. This is especially the case regarding the emphatic commemoration of the Great Patriotic War, though the state's authoritarian role here has not surpassed the role of various interest groups with a stake in the war's memory, as our study shows. Furthermore, as illustrated by the Kremlin's reluctance to take a stand on numerous forgotten Soviet-era symbols (most often

related to Lenin), Russian state activities in the sphere of memory politics do not fully qualify as authoritarian. The state has not systematically removed and replaced the old (i.e. communist) symbols. The other side of the coin is that, over the course of Putin's rule in particular, the state has not only passively ignored or forgotten many of the old symbols but has also actively taken up, absorbed and reinterpreted several Soviet symbols in an attempt to consolidate the nation's symbolic toolkit. The most notable examples here are the Soviet-era national anthem, the army's red flag and various Soviet-era honorary decorations and medals, including the recent revival of the order of Hero of Labor, launched by Stalin in 1938 (for more on the background to this issue, see Schlögel 2012).

If the state's role in post-Soviet Russia's struggle over Stalingrad cannot be defined as strictly authoritarian, the picture is no less murky if one aims to frame it as democratic. Perhaps, it is the state's conscious as well as unconscious oblivion and uncertainty about the past which facilitates the move on the part of the most vocal interest groups—most notably the communists—to resort to reimagining an omnipotent state with a unipolar history.⁷ The debate on the name of Stalingrad brings to the fore the demand for a unipolar history, whose necessity seems to indicate keeping up appearances of the state in the present instead of accepting a historical period—no matter how incompatible with the present—in its historical realm with its symbols. The state's partial negligence and selective instrumentalization of the past inevitably leads to a non-consensual plurality when it comes to commemorative emblems and narratives. A highly illuminating case in point was the Kremlin's plan to create a single standard history textbook—with a strong patriotic emphasis—for secondary-school students, sparking lively criticism and public discussion (see, for example, Chernykh 2013). As this textbook debate implies, critics expect plurality instead of unilateral historical interpretations; in other words, they expect official (i.e. state-led) articulations acknowledging the plurality of the past as well as recognizing the past's incompatibility with the present (for example, recognizing that the present-day democratic goals of the constitution are incompatible with the values of the Soviet past). Let us now take a look at the development of the Stalingrad discussion in the Russian media from 2003 up to the ceremonial revival in 2013.

TOWARDS THE CEREMONIAL STALINGRAD

Paradoxically, in light of the Stalingrad debates, it seems that the Kremlin is the major agent in “accepting” and validating the current state of commemorative plurality. Nonetheless, the state has fallen into this position rather than purposefully adopting it. That is, the current situation is not the result of an articulated policy on the state’s difficult past, but, by contrast, came about as a result of the state’s systematic avoidance of discussions on this issue, such that the state has effectively abandoned the past to others. In light of the related coverage in the newspapers *Komsomol’skaia pravda* and *Izvestiia*, we can say that public representations of the 60th anniversary of the Battle of Stalingrad in 2003 exhibit, on the one hand, something of a partial continuation of the de-Sovietization of the national past. The designation of Stalingrad is largely associated with negatively valued aspects of the commemoration represented by the Communist Party of the Russian Federation. On the other hand, the issue of reviving the name of Stalingrad is generally dismissed as irrelevant or at least insignificant. This is exemplified by an article published in *Komsomol’skaia pravda* in the lead-up to the 60th anniversary of the battle, under the headline “Bitter Dregs of the Stalingrad Pot” (Yemel’ianov 2003). In keeping with the newspaper’s populist-patriotic reputation, the article creates a sarcastic image of the official festivities held in Volgograd in line with the headline’s tone, as the following excerpt reveals:

The celebration of the great⁸ victory of Russian arms—the defeat of Hitler’s forces in Stalingrad in winter 1942–43—attracted presidents, ambassadors, scions of the Romanov family. The Motherland Calls again.

The mosaic portrait of comrade Stalin has been cleaned up in the Volgograd planetarium. The profile of the generalissimo is on celebrity calendars and vodka bottles. There is a discussion on the “revival of the city’s historical name” in the media.

Furthermore, the actual substance of the article focuses on a civilian’s eyewitness story about surviving in the city during the battle, described in naturalistic detail that can hardly be combined with heroic sacrifice, but rather conveys only bitter suffering:

Ivan Bezuglov never forgets the thin arms and legs, like matchsticks, of his starving brother who survived the Germans in autumn '42 and winter '43. Their home was destroyed in the first bombing. The family lived in a dug-out, drank grass boiled by the grandma and ate grain from abandoned fields. —“Are you gonna stay for death...” a soldier said after leaving half a loaf of bread and three sugar cubes. The next day a bomb from our plane dropped onto the dug-out next to them.

The sarcasm expressed in the article with regard to the official Victory festivities is fueled by the perceived lack of the official recognition of this ordinary suffering. In this respect, the well-known casualties and horrific conditions in which civilians lived—as a traumatic dimension of the war’s triumph—play a central role in the article. Speculating about the program for Putin’s forthcoming visit to the city, the article contrasts the official commemorative symbolism against the memories of those whose voice has been neglected or forgotten:

Over the course of a visit of a few hours Putin will definitely see an overcoat of our officer torn by 160 (!) [original punctuation—MK and JL] bullets and shards. And the notebooks of Field Marshal Paulus, one of which contains a drawing of the “Barbarossa” attack on the USSR.

And on Mamaev Kurgan VVP [Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin] can compare the ferroconcrete figure of Mother Russia with a miniature of it, 500 times smaller, manufactured from silver and malachite for him and officially worth 17,000 rubles.

...My father survived the bombardment on 23 August. However, he did not live to see the 60th anniversary of the most important battle of the war. And maybe he wouldn’t have been allowed to anyhow. He was just one of thousands of lads [*patsanov*] whose childhood was taken away by the war but who raised a son, planted more than a single tree and built more than a single house. In our country this does not count for much.

A more conformist approach to the 60th anniversary of the battle is present in the *Izvestiia* coverage, which describes the official protocol of the president’s visit, his meetings with local veterans and particular details of the battle’s commemorative emblems, such as Mamaev Kurgan and the size of the painting “Defeat of the Nazi-German Forces

at Stalingrad” inside the museum (Sadchikov 2003). The inclusion of these details reveals the newspaper’s framing of Stalingrad in terms that are more local than a matter of assumed general knowledge; that is, it assumes a level of unfamiliarity with the city’s wartime history among the wider readership. A clear distinction between the episode’s past and the present commemoration becomes apparent in the article’s description of how the local veterans greeted the president: “On Mamaev Kurgan the president met with veterans from the 37th division. They introduced themselves in an original manner—they used the military designation which was used during the battle” (ibid.).

The author does not specify what this wartime designation was, apparently having deemed it unnecessary or inappropriate to do so. In *Izvestiia* Stalingrad’s official role as a history politics resource is reduced to a routine convention to celebrate an important episode of the war. Although the article’s conformist approach does include a mention of the celebration’s evident identity politics dimension—especially its patriotic value—this is relegated to the discussion of Putin’s diplomatic dialogue with veterans, and in particular, with the veterans’ viewpoints:

The issues that were discussed yesterday were mainly the same that the head of the state discussed with veterans two years ago: patriotic education, the everyday problems of elderly people, medicine prices. “I was delighted that there were so many youths and children at the meeting on Mamaev Kurgan, they came to pay homage to those who died as well as to rejoice in your feat of valor,” Putin said. Then he promised the veterans to raise pensions from one thousand (for those who worked in the rear) to one and a half thousand rubles (for those who were at the front). “However, this is not about money. It is more important for you that you are remembered.”

Representatives of the veterans, in turn, expressed gratitude to the president for having revived the words ‘Motherland,’ and ‘patriot for the country,’ and expressed their readiness ‘to help in the rebirth of Russia, to make it a great power [*derzhava*].’ (*Izvestiia*, ibid.)

Hence, whilst the patriotic mode familiar to the Putin-era official discourse on the war is present in *Izvestiia*, it is framed here not as the state’s integrated discourse but as a separate veterans’ discourse, underlined by the article’s use of quotation marks.

A clearly different approach is present in *Komsomol'skaia pravda's* coverage in the lead-up to the 65th anniversary in 2008, when the tabloid wrote about the visit of the incoming president, then first deputy prime minister Dmitrii Medvedev, to the site of the battle, headlining the story by mentioning Medvedev's emotional response to the site:

Dmitrii MEDVEDEV: "At Mamaev Kurgan I Felt Internal Turmoil..."

First Deputy Prime Minister Congratulates Veterans on 65th Victory in Battle of Stalingrad

On 2 February in Volgograd all day long people gathered at Mamaev Kurgan to pay their respects to their grandparents who perished 65 years ago in the battles around Stalingrad. At the previous jubilee, marking the 60th anniversary of the victory in the Battle of Stalingrad, President Vladimir Putin had come. This time the first deputy prime minister Dmitrii Medvedev was expected. (Podvintseva and Vorontseva 2008)

The newspaper's stance on the event is here emphatically descriptive, in line with official procedures of the visit; no critical comments or alternative interpretations are provided. By the same token, the name of Stalingrad has become a valid designation that need no longer be justified by couching it as a "discursive relic" used by veterans, as was the case five years before. Furthermore, the state's new, supposedly active role, in lifting Stalingrad out of the local domain and into the state's custody, is framed by a purely conformist mode, as the following excerpt reveals:

[A]t the jubilee concert the first deputy prime minister announced some good news.

"A few days ago the government signed a decree on the federal status of the statue on Mamaev Kurgan," Medvedev announced.

The audience responded with friendly applause. This news is especially topical in Volgograd since there are regular rumors about tycoons' [*firmachi*] plans to build now one thing and now another, ski tracks on Mamaev Kurgan, an entertainment center not far from it... But now nobody will dare to do anything of the sort. (ibid.)

The article also cites a local veteran on her impressions of her conversation with Medvedev. These impressions, which express the expected

attitude of the wartime generations towards the city's name, are compounded with Medvedev's sympathetic attitude towards the issue which frames the name with more or less positive expectations:

And Dmitrii Anatol'evich said that his grandfather told him about the war and that he'd heard from him that the most horrific battles were here and on the fields of Kursk. And then I plucked up my courage and asked him whether it might be possible, even if only on greeting cards, to write not Hero City Volgograd but Stalingrad. He promised to think about it. (ibid.)

The newly defined custodial role for the state with regard to Volgograd's local war monument and the Stalin-era name of the city, here filtered through into the patriotic media, mediates not only the Kremlin's growing emphasis on the emblems of the Great Patriotic War, but the regime's evident concerns in the sphere of domestic politics as well. While the major proponent of Stalingrad's revival has been and remains the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, it has also been the Kremlin's most powerful opponent since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The Putin-era shift towards patriotic themes in the state's policies has led the Kremlin into the playground which was mainly left to the communists during the Yeltsin era, at least until Yeltsin initiated some activities in this field in the mid-1990s.⁹ This concerns in particular the Soviet-era achievements, of which the Victory in Great Patriotic War is the greatest of the great. In symbolic politics this has meant a struggle over the control of the same symbolic resources between the Kremlin (i.e. United Russia) and the communists (Bondarenko et al. 2011). Since the communists have a strong role in several Russian regions, for example in Volgograd, the Stalingrad debate would appear to be an ideal case for examining this confrontation.

This conflict is played out for example in coverage in the government's official newspaper *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, which draws a contrast between the "history-conscious" state and "amoral" businessmen, in a mode of representation similar to that present in the *Komsomol'skaia pravda* article discussed above. Two articles in *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, published in 2012, discuss the fate of the historical epicenter of the Stalingrad victory: the old department store in the city center whose basement was the site of the surrender of Field Marshal Friedrich Paulus, the head of the German forces. As the following excerpt in the article

“Battle of Stalingrad in Dollars” reveals, the historical battle of the past was here transformed into a moral battle in the present:

And now, seventy years later, spears have crossed over this historical building once again. This time veterans, the public, and the district prosecutor are against the retailers. Historical memory and national pride are against money and the new masters of life. After seventy court hearings, the state, whose interests were represented by Rosimushchestvo [the agency responsible for managing state property—MK & JL], has won the war for this memorial. Nonetheless it still remains in the hands of entrepreneurs. (Borisov 2012a)

The same symbolic transformation of the battle’s historical value into present identity politics with clear leftist populist undertones continued in another article in the government’s major newspaper: “The Headquarters of Paulus Have Not Been Taken Yet” proclaimed that “it is a crime that our all-national [*obshchenatsional’nyi*] shrine, marking not only the end of the Battle of Stalingrad but the fundamental turning point of the whole Great Patriotic War, appears to be a private store [*lavochka*]” (Borisov 2012b). Here the government’s major media representative has appropriated the basic position of those circles (that is, for the most part, representatives of the Communist Party) for which the revival of the name of Stalingrad is not only about the revival of the battle’s glorious name. The revival is also about correcting the current way of life in which money-driven entrepreneurs have taken over the state. At the same time, within this longing for the lost Soviet state, Stalingrad-minded circles have, at least partially, adopted the symbolic framework of the present situation insofar as they regard Stalingrad as a “brand” capable of increasing investments to the city and its region, and transforming it into a “real mecca for tourism” (Uritskii 2010). According to this logic, given that the name of Stalingrad is better known abroad, renaming would lead to a new boom in investments and the new income thus obtained would cover all the administrative costs that the renaming would entail (*ibid.*). This line of argument clearly seeks to refute the government’s major argument for maintaining the current name: the obvious administrative costs associated with any renaming.

AFTER THE CEREMONIAL REVIVAL

The Volgograd City Duma’s 31 January 2013 decision to revive the name of Stalingrad for six days annually brought the major competing viewpoints on the new-old ceremonial name to the fore. An instructive

example here is the commentary on this issue on a popular talk-show on one of Russia's major television channels (*Rossiia*), *Sunday Evening with Vladimir Solov'ev*, which aired a program related to the topic immediately after the decision ("Voskresnyi vecher" 2013). Six participants of the discussion, loosely chaired by the host Solov'ev, expressed views which encompass the dynamics between triumph and trauma with regard to Stalingrad's name. The pro-Stalingrad camp included Aleksandr Prokhanov, a well-known proponent of Stalinism which he blends together with great-Russian nationalism and religious mysticism, and Nikolai Kharitonov, a Duma representative from the Communist Party. Both of them regard the victory in the Battle of Stalingrad as the incarnation of the greatness of Stalin, and believe that the city of the battle thus deserves to carry his name. Admittedly this viewpoint blurs together this particular battle's reputation and the role of Stalin as a Soviet leader in general, revered in this capacity as the greatest of the great for the Communist party over the previous two decades. By contrast, another representative of the pro-Stalingrad group, writer Mikhail Weller, recognized the negative legacy of Stalin, but aimed to decouple the reputation of the battle from this legacy. Weller argued that Stalingrad was an "independent semantic category" carrying only the glorious reputation of the battle, and that it had nothing to do with the crimes of Stalin. By contrast, Nikolai Svanidze, historian and representative of the program's anti-Stalingrad group, emphasized the heroism and importance of the battle as well, but said that for him the name Stalingrad symbolized nothing but the horrors of Stalin. For Svanidze, Stalin was the major culprit responsible for the horrifying losses in the war, including in Stalingrad, and should be given no credit for the Soviet Union's victory. Historian Yurii Pivovarov, another representative of the anti-Stalingrad group, also saw Stalin as the major criminal in Russia's history. In addition, he argued that for him the post-Stalinist name of Volgograd was somewhat empty and meaningless as well, and that Tsaritsyn was the only legitimate name for the city. Pivovarov also considered the ceremonial renaming of Stalingrad to be a wrong and dangerous signal when it came to symbolizing Russia's post-Soviet political trajectories.

The third representative of the program's anti-Stalingrad group, Aleksandr Arkhangel'skii, a literary scholar, shared Pivovarov's views in seeing the ceremonial renaming of Stalingrad as a catastrophic signal for today's Russia. However, he did not see any sense in wasting political energy on debating historical names in the situation of the acute societal

problems that Russia faced in the present. Arkhangel'skii also participated in another of Vladimir Solov'ev's television programs, *Duel*, a current affairs talk-show with a two-participant debating-style format—where he acted as opponent to the aforementioned Stalinist Aleksandr Prokhanov (“Poedinok” 2013).

On the same team as Arkhangel'skii as a representative of Russia's pro-democratic liberal views, Nataliia Osipova, a journalist for the newspaper *Kommersant*, commented on the ceremonial renaming that this case of a city which wished “to be Stalingrad and Tsaritsyn at the same time, shows where the manipulation of public opinion leads” (Osipova 2013). By the same token, adding an ironic twist to the decision, she continued:

On 5 March, the day of Stalin's death, Moscow could be called Stalinodar. On 4 November when Peter the Great received the title of emperor and on 15 March when Nicholas the Second abdicated, we can call Russia an empire. And on 8 December, the day of the Belavezha Accords, and on 30 December, the birthday of the USSR, we will call it the Soviet Union.

When there is no understanding of what kind of country we are building, all the state can do is change its signposts (ibid.).

In general it is not difficult to disagree with Osipova, since the government's compromise option of the partial renaming has not met its needs when it comes to identity politics. This was anything but a successful decision in terms of satisfying the competing interest groups regarding the national memory. Last but certainly not least, the government itself seems to be emphatically uncertain when it comes to this decision. As the news site *VL.ru* reported on 9 May 2013—Victory Day, and one of those six annual ceremonial days when Volgograd was supposed to become Stalingrad—the city authorities “forgot” the new-old name and continued to use the name of Volgograd (Timoshenko 2013). However, as distinct from interest groups' wishes to see a unipolar state history, either associated with triumph, on the one hand, or trauma, on the other, the Stalingrad debate illustrates that a single hegemonic past is no longer possible in Russia. It seems that the official attempt to seal commemorative pluralism in terms of Stalingrad's ceremonial existence with the legacy of a strong dependence on guided state identities (Oushakine 2009) will no longer satisfy anyone. Indeed, the renaming decision only

Dynamics of the discussion on renaming Volgograd to Stalingrad

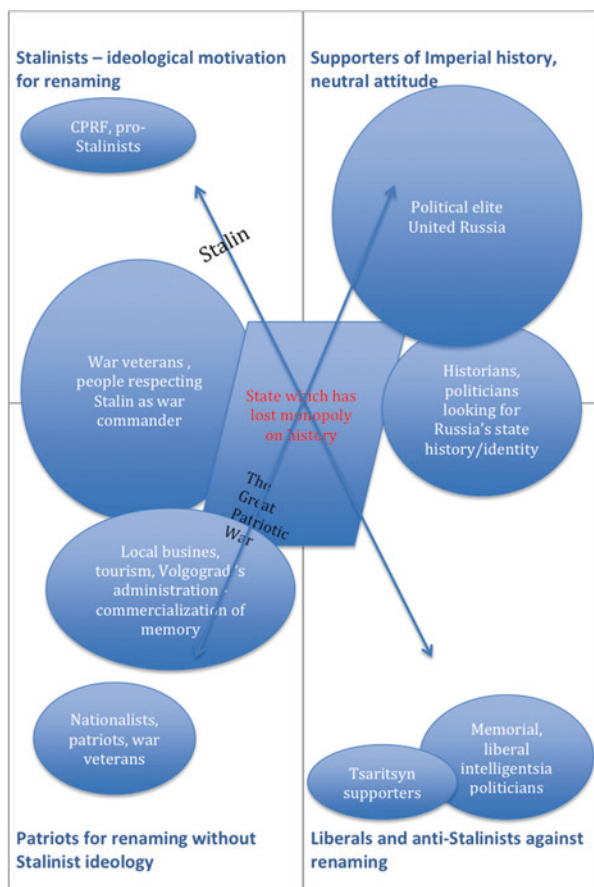


Fig. 5.1 Dynamics of the discussion on renaming Volgograd to Stalingrad

deepened Volgograd’s ambiguous status, somewhere between an uncertain testimony to the official trauma of Stalinism and a vacuum for post-Soviet nationalist dissatisfaction.

CONCLUSION

To illustrate Stalingrad's ceremonial revival in light of the name's historical roots and its identity-political significance as it has emerged over the last ten years, a four-field table can be drawn (Fig. 5.1).

The Stalingrad debate illustrates how a commemorative pluralization appears as a combination of authoritarian and democratic strategies regarding the state's identity politics. Formally the Russian state as a form of presidential power has adapted a more neutral, but simultaneously more vague, attitude towards the past in comparison with the Soviet era. It is this vagueness which demonstrates post-Soviet Russia's lost state hegemony over its past; a vacuum to be filled with more pluralistic discourses conditioned by the dynamics between triumph and trauma, finally resulting in a seemingly original, but ultimately deeply failed consensus to rename Volgograd as Stalingrad for six days annually. To follow the idea that triumph and trauma outline the limits of all collective-national identities, the basic dynamics of the discussion on Stalingrad has been created between those who have been the most vocal opponents of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the most ardent anti-Stalinists. For the pro-Soviet camp, Stalingrad represents the major triumph in both meanings of the word (Stalin and the Great Battle), as a remedy for the trauma of the post-Soviet present. A constitutive counterpart to this camp comprises those who see the growth in Stalingrad's symbolic value as an attempt to neglect their sense of trauma and to camouflage it with false triumphalism. It is the axis between these poles, articulated as the interpretation of Stalin, which runs through Russia's public sphere and its major regulator, the Kremlin. Nonetheless, despite the fact that a clear majority of Russians agree with the state's official position that the name of Volgograd should be retained, the Great Patriotic War as the Kremlin's identity-political backbone cannot be produced within a triumphalist, "non-ideological," axis alone. A crystallization of the Kremlin's lost monopoly on the state's past can be seen in the insurmountable crossing of the Stalingrad discourse with the axis of Stalin as a commander of the Great Patriotic War and the Soviet Union as a social system. Meanwhile, it is the silent majority, "supporters of Volgograd," whose general triumphalist stance towards the state's past has not found a way to cope with the surrounding process of trauma.

The discussion on renaming Volgograd as Stalingrad generates a heated controversy in three dimensions of history politics stretching far

beyond the issue formally under discussion. The first dimension concerns the essential features of the Soviet Union. It is about the essence of the October Revolution, the Bolshevik takeover after 1917 and the subsequent Civil War. As a result of the Civil War Tsaritsyn was renamed after Stalin, the commissar of the southern front. Today, this aspect of the city's history marks the negatively valued Soviet ideology and the symbolic starting point for the traumatic repressions that followed. On the other hand, Stalingrad marked a triumph for the rapid and extensive industrialization—a commonplace feature in Russia's current patriotically flavored modernization discourse with its strong emphasis on the notion of the state's historical progress (see for example Vázquez Liñán 2012).

The second dimension concerns the formation of interest groups around the issue. For the Communist Party of the Russian Federation Stalingrad's renaming as Volgograd due to Khrushchev's de-Stalinization policy in 1961 symbolizes a failed Soviet reform,¹⁰ sometimes seen as a parallel with Gorbachev's perestroika that was followed by the fall of the Soviet Union. For non-communist nationalists Stalingrad represents the glorious history and triumph of the Russian thousand-year empire in her patriotic wars against eternal enemies. In the nationalist frame Stalingrad represents not only collective but, in particular, individual suffering, a bleeding wound whose role in both these dimensions as a source of the great victory was overshadowed during the Soviet period. The role of suffering was reserved for the sacrifice of the Soviet nations, the Red Army and the Party. For proponents of the city's original name, Tsaritsyn, not only was the de-Stalinization process which started in 1961 incomplete, but the whole Soviet period and all its trappings represent Stalinist totalitarianism, including the Soviet "reformist" name Volgograd. Thus, in terms of cultural trauma as a social process, the emphasis on the war's individual suffering and less heroic sides—seen from the viewpoint of anti-Stalinist groups—are sensed as consolidated with the trauma of Stalinism.

Finally, as part of the Putin-era state patriotism, Stalingrad has begun to represent the triumphalist history of the "eternal" Russian state regardless of its political system, from the Middle Ages, to Borodino in 1812, and up to the Great Patriotic War. Hence, it is post-Soviet Russia's ideologically ambiguous nationalism from which the Kremlin draws the leitmotif of its identity politics. From this perspective Stalingrad is part of the nation's patriotic narrative, testimony to the nation's existence, and thus inseparably attached to the state, and more importantly, to its survival through glorious victories, as well as the nation's unavoidable

collective sacrifices. In this discourse Stalin as a Soviet dictator has been detached from the name of Stalingrad which itself represents an epoch-making achievement of the Soviet army and an essential identity marker of Russia's thousand-year history. Given this state-centered and supposedly non-ideological history, the emerging official narrative aims to constitute the Battle of Stalingrad and Stalin as ahistorical phenomena representing the state's glorious history.

This leads us to ask why it is that the state, with all of its resources, is failing to achieve hegemony when it comes to the discussion on Stalingrad. There seems to be a twofold difficulty here. First, there is the obvious impossibility of separating the name of the city and the leader of the glorified Great Patriotic War from Stalin the leader more broadly and from all the connotations linked to his rule. This in turn leads to the discourse of national and individual suffering, the Soviet ideology and its relation to Stalinism. Second, there is the fact that the transnational discourse on World War II challenges the Soviet-Russian triumphalist interpretation of the war and Stalin's role in it.¹¹ This aspect irrevocably sustains the public discussion on the crimes of the Stalin regime and victims of Stalin's purges as well as the multiple sufferings of the Soviet nations.

However, this leads us back to the question of why the state-led triumphalist narration dominates so strongly, regardless of the general familiarity with the calamitous sides of the Stalinist past in Russia? We can approach an answer by looking once more at Table 5.1, which illustrates that the dominant feature of all of these three different dimensions of the Stalingrad discussion is the patriotic frame, which conjoins both suffering (trauma) and triumph. This is to a certain extent a universal feature for all nations: they look for common triumphs and traumas for the foundations of their identity politics in the nationalistic vein. As long as the Great Patriotic War appears to be the founding element in the Russian state identity, representations of Stalin as the commander-in-chief in that war will be unavoidably intertwined with triumphalism, leaving the sufferings of individuals and nations under his shadow as an inevitable precondition of the triumph.

In this respect the nation's basic need to establish a common glorious narration of the past easily leaves alternative narrations in the margins. Western-minded liberals who justify their position on the Stalingrad issue by referring to transnational narratives of World War II and of Stalin as a dictator have substantially narrower resonance in public discourse than those who advocate different, patriotically flavored interpretations.

NOTES

1. It should be noted in this connection that with the annexation of the Crimea and related events since early 2014 the symbolic importance of Sevastopol in the cavalcade of hero cities of the Victory cult has increased.
2. This overwhelming anti-Western trend notwithstanding, 27% of Russians respected Stalin in 2001 (Levada Center 2015).
3. According to this poll, 60% of Russians agreed with the claim that “Stalin’s mistakes and faults do not outweigh the most important thing: Under Stalin’s rule our people survived as a victor in the Great Patriotic War.” However, the number of supporters of this claim was clearly higher in Azerbaijan (72%), Armenia (70%) and Georgia (78%) (Carnegie Centre 2013). See also Levada 2005.
4. Integrum is the largest collection of the Russian language databases in Russia and in the CIS countries and covers a wide range of topics. In March 2010 Integrum contained approximately 400 million documents related to Russia. The scope of more than 5000 databases covers all national and regional newspapers and magazines, statistics, official publications, archives of the leading national and international information agencies, full texts of more than 500 literary works, dictionaries, and more.
5. We selected four corpuses of mass media available for this purpose in Integrum (Central press, Central news agencies, Regional newspapers and Regional news agencies) consisting of 2128 databases (publications and sources) for each year between 2000 and 2012, and for the period from 1 January to 25 June 2013.
6. In addition to the 70th anniversary of the Battle and the renaming dispute, an obvious reason for this new record in the number of mentions is the premiere of Fedor Bondarchuk’s 3D blockbuster movie *Stalingrad* in autumn 2013.
7. For more about the meaning of “the lost state” for various nationalist groups in Russia, see Oushakine (2009).
8. Instead of the capital letters commonly used on this occasion, great (*velikaia*) is written here without a capital letter.
9. See Chap. 2. Yeltsin made a conscious move towards veterans during his campaign for the presidency, for instance, by visiting Volgograd on Victory Day in 1996. In line with the media climate of the period, *Izvestiia* registered this visit in highly sarcastic terms (Vyzhutovich 1996).
10. On 23 February 2013 the Communist Party of the Russian Federation decided to apply to the Constitutional Court on the legality of the CPSU Politburo’s decision to rename Stalingrad as Volgograd in 1961 (*RIA Novosti* 2013).
11. In this regard it is no wonder that one of the six military ceremonial days when Volgograd is to become Stalingrad is 2 September, the date

of Japan's official surrender date to the Allies in 1945 which marked the end of World War II. Despite the fact that the Soviet Union played a role in the final stages of Japan's defeat (the conquest of the Kurile Islands), this episode has been bracketed out of the official narrative of the Great Patriotic War, which has focused exclusively on the European front. Since the very usage of the terms the "Great Patriotic War" and "World War II" in the Russian public discussion reflects the tension between the heroic Great Patriotic War and not-so-heroic episodes of Stalin's Soviet Union on the fringes of World War II (at the very beginning and the very end of the war), these types of extensions from national landmarks (Stalingrad) to transnational frameworks (the end of the whole war) aim to manage this tension. For more on this topic, see Kangaspuro and Lassila 2012.

REFERENCES

- Adler, N. 2005. "The Future of the Soviet Past Remains Unpredictable: The Resurrection of Stalinist Symbols Amidst the Exhumation of Mass Graves." *Europe-Asia Studies* 57 (8) (Dec): 1093–1119.
- Alexander, J.C. 2004. "Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma." In *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, ed. J.C. Alexander. Berkeley, CA & London: University of California Press.
- Beevor, A. 1999. *Stalingrad: The Fateful Siege 1942–1943*. London: Viking Penguin.
- Bondarenko, S., I. Shcherbakova, and Yu. Chernikova. 2011. "Rossiiskaia istoricheskaia politika: Osobennosti ispol'zovaniia istoricheskogo resursa v deiatel'nosti 'Yedinoi Rossii' i KPRF." *Memorial Tochka Zreniia*. Retrieved 4 Sept 2013 from <http://www.memo.ru/d/2856.html>.
- Borisov, T. 2012a. "Stalingradskaia bitva—v dollarakh." *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 11 April. Retrieved 22 May 2013 from <http://www.rg.ru/2012/04/11/paulus.html>.
- Borisov, T. 2012b. "Shtab Pauliusa poka ne vziali." *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 1 Aug. Retrieved 22 May 2013 from <http://www.rg.ru/2012/08/01/mesto-poln.html>.
- Brezhnev, L. 1967. "Rech'." *Pravda*, 16 October.
- Carnegie Center. 2013. "Otnoshenie k Stalinu v Rossii i Zakavkazia." Moscow: Carnegie Center. Retrieved 27 June 2013 from <http://www.levada.ru/sites/default/files/stalin.pdf>.
- Chernykh, A. 2013. "Vladimir Medinskii postavil tochku v istorii." *Kommersant*, 18 June. Retrieved 4 Sept 2013 from <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2213690>.
- Fogu, C., and W. Kansteiner. 2006. "The Politics of Memory and Poetics of History." In *The Politics of Memory in Postwar Europe*, ed. R.N. Lebow, C. Fogu, and W. Kansteiner, 284–310. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Giesen, B. 2004. "The Trauma of Perpetrators: The Holocaust as the Traumatic Reference of German National Identity." In *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, ed. J.C. Alexander, 112–154. Berkeley, CA & London: University of California Press.

- Gudkov, L. 2012. "Drugikh pobed u nas net." *Chastnyi Korrespondent*, 22 June. Retrieved 26 April 2013 from http://www.chaskor.ru/article/lev_gudkov_drugih_pobed_u_nas_net_7698.
- Gudkov, L., B. Dubin, and E. Pain. 2012. "Does the 'Special Path' Ideology Contain the Potential for Modernization? A Conversation." *Russian Politics and Law* 50(6) (Nov–Dec): 72–92.
- "Iz istorii muzeia-zapovednika." 2013. Retrieved on 22 May 2013 from the 'Iz istorii muzeia-zapovednika Stalingradskaiia bitva' museum's website at http://www.stalingrad-battle.ru/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&cid=14&Itemid=8.
- Kangaspuro, M. and J. Lassila. 2012. "Naming the War and Framing the Nation in Russian Public Discussion." *Canadian Slavonic Papers/Revue canadienne des slavistes* LIV (3–4) (Sept–Dec): 377–400.
- Kershaw, I. 2008. *Hitler: A Biography*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co.
- Levada Center. 2005. "Rossiiane o roli Stalina v istorii nashei strany." 21 Dec. Retrieved June 27, 2013 from <http://www.levada.ru/21-12-2005/rossiyane-o-rol-i-stalina-v-istorii-nashei-strany>.
- . 2013. "Rossiiane o roli Stalina v istorii; initsiativa vozvrashcheniia Volgogradu nazvaniia Stalingrad." 4 March. Retrieved 20 Sept 2013 from <http://www.levada.ru/04-03-2013/rossiyane-o-rol-i-stalina-v-istorii-initsiativa-vozvrashcheniya-volgogradu-nazvaniya-stali>.
- . 2015. "Vse bol'she rossiian polozhitel'no otnosiatsia k Stalinu." 31 March. Retrieved 18 May 2015 from <http://www.levada.ru/31-03-2015/vse-bolshe-rossiian-polozhitelno-otnosyatsya-k-stalinu>.
- "Naimenovanie 'gorod-geroi Stalingrad' stanet simbolom Volgograda pri provedenii meropriiatii sviazannykh s geroicheskoi istoriei nashego goroda." 2013. *Volgogradskaiia gorodskaiia дума*, 31 Jan. Retrieved 20 Sept 2013 from <http://www.volgsovet.ru/PressOffice/PressRelease.aspx?id=11255>.
- Osipova, N. 2013. "Kogda net ponimaniia, kakuiu stranu my stroim, vlasti ostaetsia tol'ko meniat' vyveski." *Kommersant*, 4 Feb. Retrieved 19 Sep 2013 from <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc-rss/2119857>.
- Oushakine, S.A. 2009. *Patriotism of Despair: Nation, War and Loss in Russia*. Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press.
- Palmer, S.W. 2009. "How Memory was Made: The Construction of the Memorial to the Heroes of the Battle of Stalingrad." *The Russian Review* 68 (July): 373–407.
- Podvintseva, Ye., and O. Vorontseva. 2008. "Dmitrii Medvedev: Na Mamaevom kurgane ya ispytal vnutrennee zamiranie ..." *Komsomol'skaiia pravda*, 4 Feb.
- "Poedinok, A. Prokhanov vs. A. Arkhangel'skii." 2013. *Rossiiia*, 7 Feb. Retrieved 19 Sept 2013 from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KR0D0uWCXuM>.
- RIA Novosti. 2013. "Volgograd ili Stalingrad: Diskussiiia o pereimenovanii goroda." 19 May. Retrieved 20 Sept 2013 from <http://ria.ru/society/20130206/921596118.html>.

- Sadchikov, A. 2003. "Voskhozhdenie na Kurgan." *Izvestiia*, 4 Feb, no. 19.
- Savinykh, A. 2011. "Putin otkryl 'narodnyi front' pod Stalingradom." *Izvestiia*, 6 May. Retrieved 20 Sept 2013 from <http://izvestia.ru/news/374638>.
- Schlögel, K. 2012 [2008]. *Moscow 1937*. Polity Press.
- Stangl, P. 2003. "The Soviet War Memorial in Treptow, Berlin." *The Geographical Review* 93(2): 213–236.
- Timoshenko, S. 2013. "V Den' Pobedy Volgograd zabyli pereimenovat' v Stalingrad." *VI.ru*, 9 May. Retrieved 19 Sept 2013 from <http://v1.ru/text/newsline/652323.html>.
- Tumarkin, N. 1994. *The Living and The Dead: The Rise and Fall of the Cult of World War II in Russia*. New York: Basic Books.
- Uritskii, A. 2010. "Volgograd stanet Stalingradom dlia sobstvennogo protsvetaniia." *VI.ru*, 20 Aug. Retrieved 4 Sept 2013 from <http://v1.ru/text/news/312604.html>.
- Vázquez Liñán, M. 2012. "Modernization and Historical Memory in Russia: Two Sides of the Same Coin." *Problems of Post-Communism* 59(6) (Nov–Dec): 15–26.
- "Voskresnyi vecher s Vladimirom Solov'evym." 2013. *Rossiiia*, 3 Feb. Retrieved 19 Sept 2013 from <http://rutv.ru/brand/show/episode/237459/viewtype/picture>.
- Vyzhutovich, V. 1996. "Den' pobedy: Boris Yel'tsin na puti ot 9 maia k 16 iunniia." *Izvestiia*, 12 May, no. 85 (24692).
- Wolfe, T.S. 2006. "Past as Present, Myth, or History?: Discourses of Time and The Great Patriotic War." In *The Politics of Memory in Postwar Europe*, ed. R.N. Lebow, C. Fogu, and W. Kansteiner, 249–282. Durham (N.C.): Duke University Press
- Yemel'ianov, I. 2003. "Gor'kii osadok stalingradskogo kotla." *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, 31 Jan, no. 18.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

