

DECOMMUNIZATION IN DNIPROPetroVSK/DNIPRO IN 2014–2019

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One of the reforms, launched after the Ukrainian Revolution of Dignity, was eradication of totalitarian symbols from the public space and rethinking of the Soviet past. This reform was named decommunization. In spite of independence and constitutional norms evidencing the country's sovereignty, democratic governance and the rule of law, a framework of human, social, economic, political and other rights, in the central, southern and eastern parts of Ukraine a lot of the Soviet toponyms and memorials still remained. They testified about direct connection with the Soviet authoritarian state, which included Ukraine as a colony for 70 years. One of the cities in the south-eastern part of Ukraine, where hundreds of such objects were kept, was Dnipropetrovsk, a large industrial center with about one million inhabitants. The process of decommunization in this city from 2014 to 2019 is analyzed in the present article.

ПРОЦЕС ДЕКОМУНІЗАЦІЇ В ДНІПРОПЕТРОВСЬКУ/ДНІПРІ У 2014–2019 РОКАХ

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Однією з реформ, яка почалася в Україні після Революції Гідності, стоявася викорінення тоталітарних символів з публічного простору і переосмислення советського минулого. Ця реформа отримала назву Декомунізація. Незважаючи на незалежність країни та конституційні норми, які прямо вказували на суверенітет країни, демократичний уряд і верховенство права, особисті, економічні, політичні та інші права, в центральній та східні частини України, все ще залишалося багато советських топонімів. Вони свідчили про прямий зв'язок із Радянською тоталітарною державою, яка утримувала Україну у своєму складі як колонію майже 70 років. Одним з міст південно-східної України, де збереглися сотні таких об'єктів був Дніпропетровськ – великий промисловий центр з майже мільйонним населенням. В даній статті проаналізовано процес декомунізації в цьому місті протягом 2014–2019 років.

The start of the process, that later was named decommunization, began on April 9, 2015, when the Ukrainian parliament approved four laws: 1) On access to Archives of Repressive Agencies of Totalitarian Communist Regime of 1917–1991; 2) On the condemnation of the communist and National Socialist (Nazi) totalitarian regimes, and prohibition of propaganda of their symbols; 3) On the Legal Status and Honoring the Memory of Fighters for

Ukraine's Independence in the Twentieth Century; 4) On Perpetuation of the Victory over Nazism in World War II of 1939–1945.¹

From among the adopted laws, the key was «On condemnation of the communist and National Socialist regimes», which soon became known as the decommunization law. Though the law was also

¹ Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance, <https://old.uinp.gov.ua/page/dekomunizatsiya-0>

about condemnation of the Nazi regime, the focus was on eradicating the communist heritage of the Soviet Union. The importance of such a step was explained by the need to remove colonial era ideologies, because keeping them would question the country's existence.²

Despite declaring Independence in 1991, Ukraine had a considerable footprint of the soviet past not only in its citizens mind but also in the memorial space. Quite often, monuments to communist leaders, particularly those of Vladimir I. Lenin (Ulyanov), were used by pro-Russian forces to incite various provocations. They became one of the factors destabilizing the social and political situation within the country before and after beginning of Russian aggression in 2014.

During the Euromaidan Revolution of Dignity, participants fought not only against usurpation of authority by President Viktor Yanukovych but also again symbols of authoritarianism in the form of monuments to Soviet figures and urban toponyms. In the wake of the Euromaidan Revolution, participants of the Dnipropetrovsk Maidan appealed to the authorities to remove the monument of "the proletariat leader" from the Lenin's square in Dnipropetrovsk. However, the central authorities were disorganized and reluctant to undertake any actions. Therefore, participants of the Dnipropetrovsk Maidan and civic activists did not wait for Kyiv's permission and on February 22, 2014 dismantled the monument, adding to *Leninopad* (Lenin'sfall) spreading through central Ukrainian cities. Only a small number of people opposed the demolition of the Lenin monument. On the same day, deputies of the Dnipropetrovsk City Council renamed Lenin's Square into Heroes of Maidan Square, because a tent camp had been located there during the Revolution of Dignity.³ For a long time, the remnants of the Lenin's monument were used as an improvised memorial to the fallen heroes of the Dnipropetrovsk Maidan, and later participants in the anti-terrorist operation (ATO), which began on April 13, 2014.

Those events could be considered as the beginning of changes, which later became known as decommunization. The next steps in this direction took place in 2015.

²Beley Lubomyr. "Dekomunizaciya toponimii: ukrainski problemi ta evropeiskii dosvid", Ukrayinski Tyzhden, nos. 16-17, April 23, 2015, p. 12.

³ „U Dnipropetrovsku ploschu Lenina pereymenuvali na ploschu Heroiv Maidanu,” <http://www.istpravda.com.ua/short/530bb6fc91894/>

Why in 2015 and Not Earlier?

In the context of the above some questions arise. Why did decommunization not take place after Ukraine's declaration of independence in 1991? Why did decommunization not begin after the 2004 Orange Revolution? Why was decommunization only possible in 2015?

Ukraine's 1991 declaration of independence was to a certain extent painless for society without a radical change of elites, reform of public consciousness and absence of a critical mass of active population. Former communist party and "nomenklatura cadres", who only hid their essence, remained in power for the most part. Although the population no longer accepted Marxist-Leninist ideological guidelines, first of all, it expected from the independent status of Ukraine the improvement of their social and economic conditions. Communist idols were removed mainly from the streets and squares of western Ukrainian cities and Kyiv. Dismantling of monuments did not affect Dnipropetrovsk oblast at all, or other Russian speaking cities in eastern and southern Ukraine.

The Orange revolution created certain preconditions for the beginning of decommunization with the launching on May 31, 2006 of the Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance. Its main task was to form and implement state policy in the field of the revival and preservation of the national memory of the Ukrainian people.⁴ A criminal case was opened in 2009 against the organizers of the 1932–1933 Holodomor, which ended with their conviction. However, the lack of consensus of political forces in parliament, the unwillingness of local elites to dismantle the memorial legacy of the communist past and, finally, return to power of pro-Russian forces led by the Party of Regions became an obstacle to decommunization.

Ukrainian Patriotism versus the "Russian Spring" in Dnipropetrovsk

In 2014, the population of Ukraine continued to live in the grip of historical myths and distorted consciousness, which could be described as social schizophrenia. People knew or had free access to information about the crimes of the leaders of the Soviet state but continued to live peacefully on streets named after them and walk near monuments erected in their honor.

The past did not seem to leave the public consciousness; moreover, it distorted and disfigured

⁴ Pro stvorennya Ukrainskoho institutu natsionalnoyi pamyati, <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/764-2006-%D0%BF>

the present and the future. The communist impasse of the past did not allow Ukrainian society to move forward. Memorial space, toponyms of towns and villages of Dnipropetrovsk *oblast* were the embodiment of the totalitarian past which continued to ignore the reality of the USSR. Ukraine's citizens couldn't understand that the totalitarian past and democratic present could not coexist.

From this impasse there were only two exits. The first one was to remove the remnants of the totalitarian legacy and opt for a civilized choice where there would be respect for human dignity, rule of law, fair trial and so on; in other words, the integration of European values into Ukraine. The second would be resuscitation of the Soviet historical past through the "Russian World" with the prevalence of the state over human rights, lack of the rule of law, absence of basic freedoms, and authoritarianism.

After the Revolution of Dignity and especially after the Russian invasion, patriotism grew exponentially in Ukrainian society. This was reflected in the widespread hanging of national flags on houses, balconies, and cars and using other forms of Ukrainian symbolism, including in the form of drawings. One of the noticeable was the drawing of the image of the Ukrainian national emblem by FK "Dnipro" ultras in May 2014 on the Parus Hotel, an uncompleted Soviet era building on the right bank of the Dnipro River. This symbol of Ukrainian statehood confirmed the Ukrainian identity of the city of Dnipro.

Pro-Russian forces in the spring and summer of 2014 were not very visible in Dnipropetrovsk, except for a few episodes when the Russian tricolor was raised near the City Council. The balance of power in Dnipropetrovsk and the region changed. In January 2014, you could have been beaten for flying the Ukrainian flag and in April for flying the Russian one. Participants of the Dnipropetrovsk Maidan did not represent a critical mass of the population but nevertheless became the basis for civil society. They took an active pro-Ukrainian stance, which intensified after the appointment in March 2014 of the head of the Dnipropetrovsk state regional administration of oligarch Ihor Kolomoyskyy. Pro-Russian forces and those with nostalgia for the Soviet Union either hid themselves, barely showing themselves in street actions, or left the territory of Dnipropetrovsk *oblast*. A significant part of the city of Dnipropetrovsk's inhabitants adopted a wait-and-see approach.

One of the manifestations of an active stance was the dismantling of Soviet monuments by which the

Soviet empire had defined its public space. The downfall of Lenin monuments was one way that patriotic Ukrainians proved their resolve in the face of Russian aggression.

Leninopad by activists in the city of Dnipropetrovsk and the Dnipropetrovsk region took place throughout February-December 2014. Sometimes, the authorities dismantled monuments themselves in order not to have an escalation of the situation. The last Lenin monuments to Lenin to be dismantled were in Novomoskovsk and Synelnykove because of interference by local inhabitants, but they were eventually removed.⁵

Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance Takes Control of Decommunization

From August 2014 the Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance (UINP), resumed its activities as a government body and became the leader and generator of the decommunization process. The staff of the UINP began to prepare a package of decommunization laws.

There was a public debate on whether to dismantle Soviet monuments and rename toponyms. Opponents of this process presented a traditional set of arguments. Primarily, they appealed to the need to first deal with material and economic issues, first you need to improve the economy, and then you can engage in renaming.⁶ Those arguments had been heard for quite a long time since 1991 and if taken into consideration, the renaming process would never happen.

The second traditional argument was that Soviet monuments and the names of the Soviet era were "our past and we should not fight it, no matter what they are". For some proponents of that argument, the Soviet past was indeed part of their identity which continued to impact their vision of the world and they perceived the renaming as an insult to the historical memory of the city.⁷ Despite the existence of an independent Ukraine, they continued to behave as if they were citizens of a country that no longer existed and were more impressed by Russia as the successor state to the USSR. Soviet toponymy and monuments resembled the visual im-

⁵ Chronologiya leninodudu (2013–2014). [https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%A5%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%BD%D0%BE%D0%BB%D0%BE%D0%B3%D1%96%D1%8F_%D0%9B%D0%B5%D0%BD%D1%96%D0%BD%D0%BE%D0%BF%D0%BD%D0%BD%D1%83_\(2013%E2%80%942014\)](https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%A5%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%BD%D0%BE%D0%BB%D0%BE%D0%B3%D1%96%D1%8F_%D0%9B%D0%B5%D0%BD%D1%96%D0%BD%D0%BE%D0%BF%D0%BD%D0%BD%D1%83_(2013%E2%80%942014))

⁶ Kokoshko Juliya. "Yest li zhizn na Marks?" Dniepr vecherniy, July 7, 2015, no. 56, p. 2.

⁷ A. Belyi, "Chto v imeni tvoem", Dniepr vecherniy, no. 58, July 10, 2015, p. 6.

age of the landscape of a territory which they used to inhabit.

A very small group of Dnipropetrovsk inhabitants viewed Soviet works of art in the monuments as a cultural heritage. This was despite the fact the majority of those objects were created as shoddy fakes with no significant artistic value.

All of the above arguments did not stand up to scrutiny. Monuments and street names are not part of history but in fact knowledge events and people in whose honor they were are created and named. Monuments and toponyms are part of the memorial space which have a significant impact on the formation of moral and ethical norms. Soviet leaders who committed crimes against millions of victims cannot serve as an example to follow from a moral and ethical point of view.

Why then did some inhabitants of Dnipropetrovsk oppose toponymic changes and the removal of Soviet-era monuments?

Firstly, change is not always acceptable to many people. Changes can be unpredictable, do not necessarily have positive consequences, and often do not achieve the desired effect. Changes are undertaken through the mobilization of political will and resources.

Secondly, fear of the unknown future paralyzes political will and the desire for change. The Soviet totalitarian past is ingrained in the minds of some Ukrainian citizens who were born and raised in the USSR. They associate changes with famine, repression, and war and other manifestations of traumatic experiences.

Thirdly, people were convinced that the changes would not last for a long period of time. Toponyms in Ukraine have changed many times during the twentieth century, depending on who was in power: Tsarist Russian empire, Bolsheviks, Nazis, or nationalists after 1991. Why change any thing that will be changed again?

Fourthly, Soviet monuments and toponyms testified to the longevity of the communism in Ukraine and demonstrated Ukraine, despite being an independent state since 1991, continued to belong to the post-Soviet space. An inhabitant of the city of Dnipropetrovsk who lived on Lenin Street near Lenin Square with its Lenin's monument when visiting Russian cities felt at home with the same monuments and street names.

Among the opponents of toponymic changes were moderates who believed that renaming should be to neutral names, such as Floral Street, Lilac Street, or Rainbow Street. They were characterized

by an absence of any ideological beliefs, whether communist, pro-Russian, pro-Ukrainian or nationalist. In their opinion, neutral names would help to avoid possible misunderstandings between different political camps and prevent another "war of monuments and toponyms" in the future.

In 2015 most inhabitants of Dnipropetrovsk opposed the dismantling of monuments and changing toponyms. This though, gradually changed over time. Importantly, few inhabitants of Dnipropetrovsk actively stood up to defend the monuments (as they may have done prior to 2014) and their opposition was therefore passive.

Toponym Changes in Dnipropetrovsk

The first renaming in the city of Dnipropetrovsk took place before the adoption of decommunization laws. Thus, the first toponym changes in Dnipropetrovsk took place under public pressure and were not systemic. The systemic process only appeared after the adoption of the decommunization laws and the formation of the City Commission for naming (renaming) streets, alleys, avenues, squares, parks, squares, bridges and other objects located in Dnipropetrovsk which began working in Summer 2015. It was headed by the acting chairman of the City Council HalynaI. Bulavka with the co-chairman the executive committee manager of the City Council Vadym A. Shebanov and the Secretary SvitlanaV. Gladka.⁸

The Commission included historians, architects, museum staff, historians with a specialty in local history, public and political figures. The workgroup of the Commission, the first organizational meeting of which took place on June 10, 2015, was headed by the Dean of the History Department, Oles Honchar Dnipropetrovsk National University SerhiyI. Svitlenko. This group prepared the main proposals for renaming the city's toponyms. Between June-November 2015, members of the working group met and suggested proposals for renaming city toponyms which were submitted to the meeting of the City Commission. The concept of toponymic reforms at national, regional and local levels, was presented in June 17, 2015. The workgroup of the Commission proposed a whole range of names which reflected the entire Ukrainian historical narrative. Dnipropetrovsk/Dnipro's urban space now included historical figures which were tied to other

⁸ Sergiy I. Svitlenko, "Toponimichna reforma v misti Dnipropetrovsk 2015–2016: dosvid provedennya ta rezul'tati" in *Prydniprovs'ya: Istoriko-Kraeznavchi doclidzhennya* (Dnipro: Lira, 2016, no. 14), p. 100.

parts of the Ukraine. Inhabitants of Dnipropetrovsk/Dnipro inhabitants are no longer dis-connected from school textbooks and the names of the streets and squares. In particular, because the biographies of many of the above-mentioned prominent figures in Ukrainian history are connected in some way with the city of Dnipro.

Some new toponyms re-affirm the Pridniprovya region's close connections with neighboring Cherkasy, Kirovohrad, and Poltava which thereby re-orientate Dnipropetrovsk from Ukraine's 'East' to its 'Center'. Other new street names re-affirm historical ties to Zaporizhzhya and Kharkiv. Lubenska Street (Lubnyi is a district in the center of Poltava oblast) represents a trade route between Dnipropetrovsk/Dnipro and Poltava. Slobozhanskyy Avenue pertains to a trade route between Dnipropetrovsk/Dnipro and Kharkiv.

Re-Connecting to Ukrainian History

The new toponyms re-confirm the connections of the Dnipropetrovsk region to different periods of Ukrainian history. The Prydniprovya region, the center of which is the city of Dnipro, lies on both sides of the Dnipro river and the origins of the region's name is 'Land Beyond the Rapids'. Nomadic Iranian and Turkic-speaking and agricultural Slavic communities settled in the region from ancient and during the medieval era. The new names of Sarmatska, Derevlyanska and Tiverska streets appeared in memory of the history of these peoples in the Pridniprovya region. Sarmatians were an Iranian-speaking ethnic group which occupied all southern Ukraine between the third century B.C. to the third century A.D. Derevlyany and Tiversky were Slavic tribes who lived in the Pridniprovya region in Kyiv Rus. These included the royal dynasty of Rurik in Kyiv Rus during the tenth to thirteenth centuries: Princess Olha, Svyatoslav the Brave, Volodymyr the Great, Yaroslav the Wise, Volodymyr Monomakh, Roman Mstislavovich, and Danylo Halytsky. These historical figures from Kyiv Rus were connected to the lands which later became the Dnipropetrovsk region.

An important historical period for the Dnipropetrovsk region was the Cossack era. Streets were re-named after Prince Constantine of Ostroh, Prince and Cossack Hetman Dmytro Baida-Vyshnevetsky, Hetmans Petro Doroshenko, Ivan Mazepa, Pavlo Polubotok, Danylo Apostle and many others. Historical ties to Zaporizhzhya are represented by Melitopolska streets (Melitopol was a district in the center of the Zaporizhzhya region) and Khotytska (Khotytsya Island within the city of Zaporizhzhya was

a major Cossack encampment destroyed by Russian Tsarina Catherine in the late eighteenth century). The Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhya regions were the major centers of Ukrainian Cossacks from the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries. Five of the eight Zaporizhzhyan Cossack fortresses were in what is now Dnipropetrovsk oblast.

The Cossack past of the Dnipropetrovsk region was reflected in a dozen new street names. *Starokozatska* (Old Cossack) Street glorifies Ukrainian Cossacks as well as restoring historical justice as in the nineteenth century it was called *Kozatskaya* after Cossack units in the Tsarist Russian army. *Haydamatska* and *Ivana Honta* streets relate to the uprising of Ukrainian peasants and Cossacks (*Haydamaky*) and one of its important leaders Ivan Honta. The eighteenth century *Haydamaky* uprising against the Polish nobility took place in what are now the Cherkasy and Kirovohrad regions.

The embankment on the right side of Dnipro river was named *Sicheslavskaya* which pays tribute to the Zaporizhzhyan Sich Cossack state tradition; since 1918 the Ukrainian intelligentsia have often used *Sicheslav* to describe the name of the city. *Sich Lane* is a new toponym referring to the historical existence of Zaporizhzhyan Cossacks in the Dnipropetrovsk region.

Kryshtof Kosynskyy, *Ivan Sulyma*, *Pavlo But* and *Yakov Ostryany* Streets were re-named after Cossack hetmans and leaders of anti-Polish uprisings during the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries. Other new street names were named after Cossack Hetman Pylyp Orlyk (one of the authors of the first Ukrainian constitution of 1710), *Kostya Hordiyenko* (the last hetman of the Chortomlyk Sich), *Dmytro Horlenko* (Colonel of Pryluky), an ally of Hetman Ivan Mazepa in the anti-Moscow uprising of 1708–1709, and Cossack chroniclers *Hryhoriy Hrabynka* and *Samiylo Velychko*.

The re-naming fulfilled three purposes. Firstly, it replaced the Soviet name *Komsomolskaya* Street. Secondly, the new name confirmed the existence of Ukrainian Cossacks in the Pridniprovya region during the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries long before the appearance of Russian Cossack units. The Cossack fortresses of old and new Kodaky was first built in 1635 on what is now Dnipro over a hundred years before the founding of Yekaterinoslav in 1776. Two streets were re-named after Semen Bardadim, a Hetman of New Kodaky and Petro Kalnyshevsky, the last Hetman of the *Pidpilna Sich*. Fortress Street refers to the Cossack fortress of Novyy Kodaky (the name of the city of Dnipro during the Cossack pre-Tsarist era).

Thirdly, Cossack pre-Tsarist toponyms undermined Russian President Vladimir Putin's so-called *Novorossiysk* (New Russia) project who revived this historical term to lay territorial claims against eastern and southern Ukraine. New Russia project which was the name given to the region of eastern and southern Ukraine after it was conquered by the Tsarist Russian empire. The name (New Russia) was in the manner of New France (Quebec), Nova Scotia (New Scotland) and New England which failed to take into account that there were already inhabitants in those four regions before the arrival of French, British and Russian colonists.⁹ Russian, like the French and British, propagandists, claimed there was no 'civilization' before the arrival of their empires. The Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhyan regions had been inhabited and developed by Ukrainian Cossacks for centuries before the Tsarist Russian empire. A street was re-named after Opanas Kovpak who belonged to the Cossack officer's family Mahdenko, was a colonel of the Orli-ska Palanka of the PidpilnaSich and participated in Ukrainian colonization of the Prydniprova. Another street was re-named after Cossack Maxim Diy who is one of the founders of the village Diyvka which is now included within the city of Dnipro.

In addition to Kyiv Rus and the Cossack era, the imperial era is represented by Governor Andriy Fabr, founder of the Theosophical Society Olena Blavatska, religious intellectual Theodosius (Makarevskyy), philanthropist Nadiya Alekseenko, naturalist Ivan Akiniev, engineer Volodymyr Khrinnykov, educator Kateryna Messarosh, Mayor Ivan Ezau, film director Danylo Sakhnenko, and historians Vasyl Bidnov and Antin Synyavsky. Mykola Sadovsky Street commemorates one of the luminaries of the Ukrainian theater whose life and activity were intimately connected with the city of Kropyvnytskyy (the center of the Kirovohrad region). Other new street names pay tribute to Ukraine's national and cultural revival in the nineteenth century, such as the writer Oleksandr Konytsky, historian Volodymyr Antonovych, historian and philosopher Mykhaylo Drahomanov, and the youth organization of Ukrainian patriots "Tarasivtsi Brotherhood". Vasyl Karazin Street commemorates the founder of Kharkiv University in 1804 and Dmytro Bahaliy Street is named after a well-known Kharkiv historian.

The next period of history with new toponyms relate to the Ukrainian national revolution of

1917–1921, such as historian and chairman of the Ukrainian Central Council Mykhaylo Hrushevskyy, chairmen of the Directory Volodymyr Vynnychenko and Symon Petlyura, and founder of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences Volodymyr Vernadskyy. Ukrainian cadets who died in 1919 fighting the Bolsheviks near Kyiv were immortalized with *Heroyv Krut* (Heroes of Kruty) Street. Other streets named after historical leaders from this era include partisan Hetman Tryphon Hladchenko, educator Fedir Storubel, engineer and educator Ivan Truba, and the anarchist leader of the Revolutionary Insurgent Army of Ukraine Nestor Makhno. Kholodnoyarska Street immortalizes the Ukrainian anti-Bolshevik insurgents of the 'Kholodnoyarsk Republic' in 1919–1922 in the Cherkasy region.

The Ukrainian nationalist movement of the 1930s and 1940s which had fought Polish, Nazi and Soviet occupations proved to be not a controversial issue in Dnipropetrovsk. Streets were re-named after Petlyura, the head of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) Yevhen Konovalets, commander of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army and head of OUN Roman Shukhevych and OUN leader Vasyl Kuk who had run the OUN underground in Dnipropetrovsk in 1942–1943 in World II. Streets were named after Ukrainian nationalist ideologues Mykola Mikhnovskyy and Dmytro Dontsov who was born in Melitopol, Zaporizhzhya *oblast*.

New street names have appeared from the Soviet era of intellectuals and the humanities. These include Volodymyr Mossakovsky Street (Dean of Dnipropetrovsk State University), Volodymyr Samodryha, Oleksandr Krasnoselskyy and Pavel Nirinberh Streets (three city architects), Vasyl Chaplenko (writer), Andriy Shtoharenko (composer), Volodymyr Lyubarskyy (artist), and Menachem Schneerson (a Jewish religious figure, the last Lubavitcher rabbi). FC Dnipro player Petro Loiko is immortalized in the name of the stadium, which is located in the left bank of the city.

A large group of new toponyms were named after important members of the dissident and cultural movement of the 1960s to 1980s. These included dissident poets Vasyl Symonenko and Vasyl Stus, dissident Vasyl Makukh (who was buried in Dnipropetrovsk), Soviet general and leader of the Ukrainian Helsinki Group Petro Hryhorenko, poet and composer Volodymyr Ivasyuk, sculptor Vadym Sidur (who was born in Katerynoslav), Ivan Sokulskyy (dissident) and historian and poet Borys M. Mozolevskiy.

The modern period of the history of the Dnipropetrovsk region honors the Heavenly Hundred who

⁹ Fedir G. Turchenko and Halyna F. Turchenko, "Proekt «Novorossiya»: 1764–2014. (Zaporizhzhia: Zaporizhzhya National University, 2015), p. 18.

were killed during the Euromaidan Revolution. Dnipropetrovsk City Council renamed Kalinin Avenue on January 28, 2015 in honor of one of the heroes of the Revolution of Dignity – Sergiy Nigoyan, an Armenian refugee living in Dnipropetrovsk *oblast* who was killed by an unknown sniper in January 2014 (probably a vigilante working for the Ministry of Internal Affairs).¹⁰ The renaming took place on the second attempt (the first on December 29, 2014 was unsuccessful) with infringement of the procedure. This was used to appeal the decision in the Dnipropetrovsk Court of Appeal which ruled in Summer 2017 to overturn the decision of the City Council. A public hearing was held where the majority of the participants (together with the city authorities led by Mayor Boris Filatov) voted in favor of leaving it as Serhiy Nigoyan Avenue. Nigoyan was one of the first of the Heavenly Hundred to be murdered during the Euromaidan. He is an iconic figure for the modern Ukrainian state as he is the personification of the desire for a free and democratic country; therefore, the desire of some city residents to reverse the renaming was not perceived as an attempt to follow legal procedure but an attempt to undermine the memory of the Revolution of Dignity.

Dnipropetrovsk *oblast* has the largest number of security forces killed in the Russian-Ukrainian war. A number of patriots killed during this war are honored by streets named after Alexander Chernikov (journalist) and Oleksandr Serebryakov (railway man) in the Checheliv and Samara districts of Dnipro. Near the Dnipro Regional State Administration appeared Alley of Heroes, that immortalize the fallen heroes of the Russian-Ukrainian war that is still going on.

The Goals of the City Commission

Opponents of toponymic reform in Dnipropetrovsk claimed the City Commission intended to remove all Soviet names in order to erase this period of history from memory. In reality, the new toponyms do not show this to have been true and hundreds of Soviet-era names remain. The majority of the new toponyms are associated with individuals from the creative professions, not politicians, party or military figures. Thus, the emphasis was on the re-naming as a means to revive spiritual and material values, rather than destruction and confrontation; the only exception to this rule are leaders who fought for Ukrainian statehood.

¹⁰ Decree of Dnipropetrovsk City Council, no. 22/80, January 28, 2015, <https://dniprorada.gov.ua/uk/Widgets/GetWidgetContent?url=/WebSolution2/wsGetTextPublicDocument?pID=37129&name=22/60>

Special attention among new city toponyms is given to avenues named after Oleksandr Pole and Dmytro Yavornytskyy who had a decisive influence on the formation of the socio-economic and socio-cultural image of the city. The commission had a dilemma about what name to choose for Karl Marx Avenue which ran through the center of the city and following discussions, it was named after Dmytro Yavornytskyy, a historian, archaeologist, academician, and longtime director of the Dnipropetrovsk National Historical Museum, who contributed to the development of historical scholarship in Ekaterinoslav. The city's museum which is named after him became a powerful center of culture in a city where there had not been a university (Dnipropetrovsk university only opened only in 1918). During the Tsarist era, the avenue was called Ekaterinoslavskiy in honor of the Russian Empress Catherine II which emphasized the city belonging to the Russian World. Since 1923, during the Soviet era the avenue was named after Karl Marx to demonstrate that the city was part of a communist state.

The former Sergei Kirov Avenue, named after a communist functionary who had nothing to do with the city of Dnipro, was re-named Oleksandr Pole who was directly involved in the transformation of a provincial, small agricultural town into a powerful industrial and economic center in the nineteenth century. The Dnipropetrovsk Regional State Administration and Dnipropetrovsk *Oblast* Council are on Oleksandr Pole Avenue.

Pole attracts foreign, principally European, investments into the region's economy. Since 2014, the European integration of Dnipropetrovsk/Dnipro has been a strategic goal and this is reflected in new toponymy with streets named after Giuseppe Garibaldi (Italian national hero), Jan Hus (medieval Czech thinker) and the 1968 Prague Spring, as well as more general street names such as European, Krakow, Belgian, Bratislava, and Croatian. Until 2015, the latter (now Horvatska Street) was named after Oleko Dundich, a Croat who fought for the Bolsheviks in 1918–1920, but his participation in the Bolshevik war against the Ukrainian People's Republic should not negatively influence Croatian-Ukrainian relations.

History and Controversy

Another important feature of decommunization is the return of historical toponyms. Modern Dnipropetrovsk/Dnipro grew out of a number of smaller settlements which existed in the seventeenth to eighteenth centuries. Novyy Kodak, Polovytsya,

and Samara (Bohoroditska fortress) influenced the formation of the city's infrastructure while Diyivka, Sukhachivka, Taromske, Mandrykivka, Lotsmanska Kamyanka, Kamyanka Livoberezhna, Lomivka, Amur, Manuylivka, Nizhnedniprovska, and Samarivka were absorbed into the regional center at different periods of history. Therefore, the urban history of the Dnipro is characterized by polycentrism.

However, the city's development over history was poorly reflected in its toponymy, especially on the right bank of the city. In the twentieth century, when the city grew rapidly and in the older settlements new micro-districts appeared, architects (usually sent from Moscow) did not take into account local names when planning the city's development and they imposed communist names which had nothing to do with local history. Thus, Dnipropetrovsk was depersonalized, and it resembled other ordinary regional centers in the Soviet Union.

Five districts on the right-bank of Dnipro were renamed. All of them had standard names associated with iconic figures from the Soviet Communist Party "pantheon" or landmark events and organizations. These included: Leninsky; Babushkinsky (Bolshevik revolutionary Ivan Babushkin who died long before the creation of the Soviet Union); Kirovsky (member of the Politburo Kirov); Zhovtnevyi (October Bolshevik revolution); and Chervonogvardiysky (Red Guards). As a result of the renaming, Zhovtnevyi became Sobornyy as the dominant location of the district is Soborna Square where the former Orthodox Church cathedral is located. Babushkinsky became Shevchenkivskyy because it is the location of the Taras Shevchenko theater. Kirovsky became Central because the district occupies the central part of the city with the city council and post office. Chervonogvardiysky became Chechelivsky because this was the oldest residential area in the nineteenth-twentieth centuries. Leninsky became Novokodatsky because part of the district consists of the former settlement of New Kodaky, the Cossack forerunner of today's city of Dnipro.

On the left bank of the city, the residential area Frunzensky 1, named after one of the military leaders of the Bolshevik Party Mikhail Frunze, was renamed to Lomivskyi named a former settlement of that name where the well-known Soviet Ukrainian writer Oles Honchar was born. Frunzensky 2 was renamed Kamyanskyy because part of the district covers the former Kamyanka Livoberezhna. Vorontsov Avenue (Vorontsov was a Soviet party functionary) became Manuylivskyy Avenue after a former a village of the

same name. Maurice Thorez Street (named after a French Communist) was renamed Berezanivska named after a former district of the same name.

These newtoponyms reflected the multifaceted history of Dnipropetrovsk/Dnipro and the Prydniprovska region in figures and historical periods of time which had contributed to the formation of Dnipro as a Ukrainian city. Figures who at different points in time had worked for the Tsarist Russian or Soviet empires were removed.

As a result of many months of work by the working group, the City Commission proposed changing 317 toponyms. Many of these names were fiercely discussed and debated. Most members of the Commission, who complied with the law, advocated renaming which took into account the history and culture of the region, as well as the current processes. A small number of Commission members attempted to use the decommunization process for situational political interests and without a knowledge of local history offered unreasonable and controversial names. Members of the Commission disagreed on naming one of the streets after OUN leader Stepan Bandera which provoked vivid discussions and blocked discussion of other issues and proposals. Finally, the City Commission agreed on two alternative names for Lenin Street – Voskresenska (its historical name) and Stepan Bandera. The alternatives were handed over to the city council which chose the first.¹¹

The meticulous public attention to Bandera allowed the Commission to make several decisions which did not directly fall under the decommunization law. Moskovskaya Street was renamed Volodymyr Monomakh (a ruler of Kyiv Rus) Street. One of the oldest streets in the city had never before changed its name but the Commission argued to rename it because Moscow is the capital of the state undertaking military aggression against Ukraine. Another street which was renamed without any provocations and conflicts was Dmytro Donskoy who was one of the heroes of the Russian nationalist pantheon. Although it also did not fall under the decommunization law the City Commission proposed to change the ending of the name of the street and it therefore became Dmytro Dontsov. Unlike Bandera, opponents of decommunization had not heard of the nationalist ideologue Dontsov.

On November 24, 2015, the City Council of Dnipropetrovsk agreed to change 57 toponyms.¹² On

¹¹ Decree of the Mayor "Pro pereymenuvannya toponymіv Dnipro city," no. 71, February 19, 2016, <https://dniprorada.gov.ua/upload/editor/71-%D1%80.pdf>

¹² Decree of the Mayor "Pro pereymenuvannya toponymіv

November 26, 2015, another 259 toponyms were added to the list, giving a total of 316.¹³

Removing Monuments

Work was carried out as to which monuments were to be removed. After the demolition of the Lenin monument in February 2014 in the central square, activists tore off a memorial plaque from the building of the Dnipropetrovsk Regional Council, which immortalized the head of the Soviet secret police Cheka Felix Dzerzhinsky. Before the adoption of the decommunization laws, activists managed to dismantle several objects. Another monument to Lenin, which stood near the Ilyich Palace in the Chervonohvardiysky *rayon*, was dismantled on February 26, 2014. On June 27, 2014, the National Defense Headquarters dismantled the bust of Lenin near the Dnipropetrovsk Regional State Administration. However, the stone plinth on which the bust stood with the inscription "Victory of Communism is Inevitable" was dismantled only on June 10, 2016. In August 2014, activists removed a plaque in honor of one of the organizers of the Holodomor, Stanislaw Kosior on the street named after him. In April 2015, two Lenin's monuments in the Prydniprovsk and Pivnichnyy *rayons* were demolished.

The next steps to implement the law "On Condemnation of the Communist and National Socialist Regimes" were taken by the newly elected city authorities. In November 2015, Filatov was elected mayor of Dnipropetrovsk. In November 2015, the City Commission prepared a list of eighteen monuments, twenty-three plaques, two stella's and one obelisk which were to be dismantled. A proposal was put forward to create a "Park of the totalitarian period" which would house these dismantled monuments;¹⁴ however, the authorities were in no hurry to go ahead with this.

On January 29, 2016, without waiting for a response from the authorities, public activists in Dnipropetrovsk dismantled the monument to Grigory I. Petrovsky on Station Square.¹⁵ The monument had personified an entire era when Dnipropetrovsk was a closed city in the Soviet Union and Petrovsky closely connected Dnipro with the Soviet past and Soviet identity.

Dnipro,"no. 882, November 24, 2015, «<https://dniprorada.gov.ua/upload/editor/882-%D1%80.pdf>

¹³ Decree of the Mayor 26.11.2015 № 897-r «Pro pereymenuvannya toponyma Dnipro city», <https://dniprorada.gov.ua/upload/editor/897-%D1%80.pdf>

¹⁴ Shrub Kostyantyn, "Pamyatniki gotovyatsya k demontazhu," Dniepr vecherniy, no. 100, November 24, 2015, p. 5.

¹⁵ M. Skidanova, "Petrovskogo bez nog – na sklad KP," Vesti, no. 16, February 1, 2016,p. 6.

In February 2016, new members of the City Council headed by Mayor Filatov prepared issued another decree proposing to dismantle 46 objects which fell under the decommunization law which speeded up the dismantling of monuments and memorials throughout.¹⁶ On February 16, 2016, a plaque dedicated to the leader of the Communist Party of Ukraine Volodymyr Shcherbytsky, known for his ruthless repression of dissidents and Russification policies, was removed from the building of the Dnipropetrovsk Oblast Council. On November 11, 2016, memorial plaques to Leonid Brezhnev and Shcherbytsky were removed from the Maxim Gorky Theatre.

On March 3, 2016, the bust of the Bolshevik Artem (Sergeev) was removed from the territory of the *Dniprovazhpapirmash* plant. On March 9, 2016, the bust of Bolshevik Mikhail Kalinin was dismantled in the Square of Memory and Reconciliation (the new name of the square after it had been renamed from Mikhail Kalinin). On March 16, 2016 on Oleksander Pole Avenue a bust of Bolshevik Kirov was removed. On May 5, 2016, images of Bolsheviks Sergo Ordzhonikidze, Kalinin and Kliment Voroshilov were removed from the Gorky Theater.

Renaming the City and *Oblast*

The City Council also had to deal with the question of renaming city and *oblast* which combined the name of the river and Bolshevik and co-founder of the Cheka Hryhoriy Petrovsky. Discussions on renaming the city had been taking place since 1991. Pro-Russian groups, such as the Russian Orthodox Church, and the Party of Regions supported the return of the Tsarist Russian name of Ekaterinoslav. Empress Catherine II did not have a positive record in Ukrainian history as she had destroyed the autonomous Ukrainian Hetmanate. Therefore, these pro-Russian supporters of Ekaterinoslav resorted to manipulation by saying the city will be re-named after St. Catherine. After 2014, the implementation of this idea became impossible.

Another attempted manipulation took place in 2014–2016 when the Opposition Bloc (consisting of former members of the Party of Regions) supported re-naming Dnipropetrovsk after St. Peter.¹⁷ These different manipulations by opponents

¹⁶ Dnipro city council. <https://dniprorada.gov.ua/uk/articles/item/11232/u-dnipropetrovskij-merii-pidgotovleno-rishennja-schodo-demontazhu-pamjatnikiv-radjanskogo-rezhimu-oleksandr-sanzhara>

¹⁷ Belyi "A. Vilkul predлагає установити в Дніпропетровськ пам'ятник апостолу Петру: місто може називатися в честь святого," Dniepr vecherniy, no. 59, July 14, 2015, p. 2 and A.

of the renaming of the city and oblast were aimed at keeping the city under the influence of the Russian World.

The growth of Ukrainian patriotism after 2014 increased supporters of the idea of renaming the city to Sicheslav. This name had been first proposed by Yavornitsky in 1918 at the congress of the Ekaterinoslav Ukrainian Teacher's Association and supported by Eugene Vyrovy, chairman of the Ukrainian Teacher's Association society. Supporters of this name change included representatives of the intelligentsia of Ekaterinoslav, such as writers Vasyl Chaplenko, Valerian Polishchuk, Vasyl Sokil and others.

The change to Sicheslav continued to be supported in the Ukrainian diaspora; for example, by the diaspora writer Yar Slavutych.¹⁸ After 1991, Sicheslav's work was popularized in Ukraine in the reprinting of his work in the *Sicheslav* newspaper, the regional Writer's Union magazine, the almanac of the Dnipropetrovsk regional organization of the National Union of Local Lore of Ukraine "Sicheslavshchyna", "Sicheslav Almanac" and other publications. Sicheslav lived among the national-patriotic intelligentsia. It was especially popular among supporters of the Revolution of Dignity and veterans and volunteers from the Russian-Ukrainian war.

The City Commission considered Sicheslav as the name for the city of Dnipropetrovsk and even submitted it to the City Council. Among other proposals, the name Dniproslav enjoyed support among some members of the commission as it combined parts of the names of Dnipropetrovsk and Ekaterinoslav.¹⁹ Other proposals included Dniprovsk, Dnipropol, and Novyy Kodak. In July 2015, nine names (Dniproslav, Dnipro, Sicheslav, Dnipropetrovsk, Dnipropol, Kodak, Novyy Kodak, Svyatoslav) were submitted with the public able to vote for one of them the website of the city council.²⁰

Dnipro was chosen. The city stands on the Dnipro River, which divides and unites it at the same time. The Dnipro River is famous for many Ukrainian writers and poets and is a sacred natural object which

Belyi, "Apostoly v pomosch," *Dniepr vecherniy*, no. 65, August 4, 2015, p. 3.

¹⁸ Ivan I. Rovenchak, "Sicheslav" mae zaminiti nazvu "Dnipropetrovsk," *Visnyk geodezii ta kartografi*, no. 4(97), 2015, pp. 21, 22, 23.

¹⁹ Serhiy I. Svitlenko, "Toponimichna reforma v misti Dnipropetrovsk 2015–2016: dosvid provedennyaterezultati," in *Prydniprova: istoriko-kraeznavchi doslidzhennya: zb. nauk. pr.* (Dnipro: Lira, 2016, no. 14), p. 102.

²⁰ Kokoshko Juliya. "Ulichnyie boi: Bandera protiv Lenina," *Dniepr vecherniy*, no. 64, July 31, 2015, p. 13.

is perceived positively by all inhabitants. Besides for many decades, city residents have been accustomed to using the abbreviated name of the city, often calling it Dnipro, not Dnipropetrovsk.

The Committee on State Building, Regional Policy and Local Self-Government of the Ukrainian parliament supported the renaming of Dnipropetrovsk to Dnipro on February 5, 2016 and this was adopted on May 19, 2016.²¹

On the same day, the head of the Dnipropetrovsk Regional State Administration Valentyn Reznichenko signed the order "About the renaming of toponyms in settlements in the region". Besides changing the name of the city, also changed the names of another 35 objects of toponymy. The City Council officially renamed the city Dnipro on September 7, 2016 and on the same day another vote abolished the city's brotherhood with Russian cities.

From spring of 2016, the power to rename within decommunization passed to the Dnipropetrovsk Regional State Administration. On March 2, 2016, a Working Group of historians, archival and museum staff, expert of monuments, and government officials was established to control the implementation of the law of "On condemnation the communist and National Socialist (Nazi) totalitarian regimes" on the territory of Dnipropetrovsk oblast.²² A group of experts focused on toponymic reform throughout the region; however, many toponyms remained in the regional center, which also fell under the law and needed to be renamed.

Decommunization Slows Down

The creation of a Park of the Totalitarian Period was discussed on November 29, 2016 during a round table which took place in the Dnipro City Council. Where specialists talked about the future name, functions, content and the main idea of the park.²³ On March 31, 2017, the conference "Park of Totalitarian Periods as a Tool for Decommunization of the Dnipro" took place in the City Council. Scholars from Dnipro, Kyiv, Zaporizhzhya, Lviv, and Kryvyy Rih discussed the scholarly and practical

²¹ Postanova Verhovnoi Rady Ukrayiny pro pereymenuvannya mista Dnipropetrovsk I Dnipropetrovskoy oblasti," <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1375-VIII>

²² Rozporyadzhennya holovy Dnipropetrovskoyi oblasnyi derzhavnoyi administrautsii," no. R-91/0/3-16, March 2, 2016, <https://adm.dp.gov.ua/npas/pro-vnesennya-zmin-do-rozporyadzhennya-golovi-oblderzadministratsii-vid-22-lyutogo-2016-roku-r-6903-16-60e07119bcb40f78c2257f6c003e7d5a>

²³ Istorya maye nas taki navchit," <http://ddr.dp.ua/2016/11/30/stvorennya-u-dnipro-istoriko-muzejnogo-kompleksu-park-totalitarnogo-periodu/>

aspects of the idea of creating a park.²⁴ At the beginning of 2018, a location for the future park has been determined and project documentation had been developed.²⁵ However, because of subjective and objective circumstances, the realization of the idea of creating a park slowed down.

A similar situation emerged with renaming Dnipropetrovsk *oblast*. On January 2018, Dnipro activists submitted a petition with a proposal to rename Dnipropetrovsk to Sicheslavsky *oblast*.²⁶ The explanatory note to the petition stated that the proposed name is specific to the historical and geographical area, corresponds to world and domestic practices of toponymic nomination and would positively affect the image, economic and socio-political situation in the city and region.

In 2018, public hearings were held, and proposals were submitted to parliament which supported the renaming of Dnipropetrovsk *oblast* to Sicheslavsk (*bill № 9310-1* supported by 240 deputies) on February 7, 2019. After that, the bill went to the Constitutional Court of Ukraine which voted on April 2, 2019 in favor of renaming the region. The next step was to hold a vote in parliament to change the Con-

²⁴ U Dniprovs'kiy miskiy radi tryvae vseukrainska konferentsiya "Park totalitarnyh periodiv yak instrument Dekommunizatsiyi Dnipro," <https://dniprorada.gov.ua/uk/articles/item/13133/2017-03-31-10-58-03>

²⁵ U Dnipro vyznachyly misce roztaшування Parku totalitarnogo periodu," <https://dnipro.depo.ua/ukr/dnipro/u-dnipro-vyznachili-de-bude-rozmischeniy-totalitarniy-park-20180209724106>

²⁶ Dnipryany podaly petytsiyu pro pereymenuvannya Dnipropetrovskoyi oblasti," <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2018/01/26/7169584/>

stitution, but this was prevented by elections and the situation remains unresolved.

Conclusions

By 2020, the decommunization process in Dnipro was largely complete. Several monuments remained standing to *Komsomol* members in Ivan Starov Square and to revolutionaries on Vasyl Karuna Streets. Some plaques to the I (Red) Cavalry Army on Hrushevskyy street and Bolshevik revolutionaries at the Main Post Office remain in place. Some stars, sickles and hammers on city houses also remain in place.

Toponymic reforms in 2015–2016 and decommunization in 2014–2019, led to changes in many names of settlements with more than 300 toponyms in the city of Dnipro were renamed. Dozens of monuments and memorials were dismantled. The urban toponymic landscape was fundamentally changed to names related to local history and Ukrainian symbolism. New toponyms reflect the complex and multifaceted history of the city which arose in Cossack times and were formed by representatives of different ethnic groups, mainly of course by Ukrainians.

Monuments linking the city and region to Tsarist Russian and Soviet empires have been removed to the greatest extent of any city and region in eastern and southern Ukraine. Changing the consciousness of the city and region's inhabitants is a more longer-term process which would require decommunization to be replaced by decolonization.

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