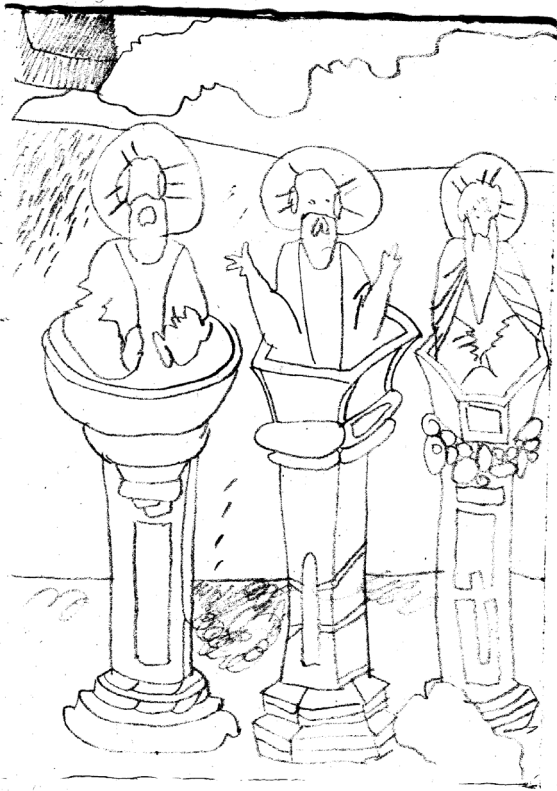


CASE №5 MONUMENTS COMING TO LIFE.  
PUSHKIN'S THE BRONZE HORSEMAN



Pushkin wrote The Bronze Horseman in 1833. It is one of his deepest, bravest, and best works. With unbelievable strength and courage, the author demonstrates the contradictions of public life laid bare, without attempting to artificially reconcile them in places where they are irreconcilable in reality. In The Bronze Horseman, the opposing forces are generalized with the images of of Peter the Great (who is then represented as the monument of The Bronze Horseman come to life), who stands for the government, against the everyman with his personal, private interests and troubles, who dies, crushed by state power.

CASE №6 A STYLITE



A stylite (from Greek στυλῖτης, stylitēs, «pillar dweller», derived from στῦλος, stylos, «pillar», ‘astónáyé) or pillar-saint is a type of Christian ascetic in the early days of the Byzantine Empire who lived on pillars, preaching, fasting and praying. Stylites believed that the mortification of their bodies would help ensure the salvation of their souls. The first stylite was probably Simeon Stylites the Elder who climbed on a pillar in Syria in 423 and remained there until his death 37 years later.

# Mischa Gabowitsch

## How should we write the history of war memorials?

In a well-known essay on World War I memorials, historian Jay Winter counts among these the British tradition of observing a two-minute silence on November 11<sup>th</sup>, the social bonds between veterans with disfigured faces, and new communities of people who have lost friends and relatives to war. As Winter reminds us, anything can act as a memorial: a vacant lot, a hospital, a photograph; a political party, a legislative text, a set of everyday practices. Viewed from this angle, a memorial is defined by the author’s intention and its acceptance by an audience, in other words, by the emergence of a commemorative community. A space, an object, a practice become a memorial, a *lieu de mémoire*, through the intention that inspired it and through the acceptance of that intention by those who pass by the space, use the object, or engage in the practice. No object is a memorial-in-itself; its commemorative quality is always in the eye of the observer. Hence the observer can also deprive a monument of its commemorative function, turn a memorial into a former memorial, or a site of memory from a common place into an empty space—to be salvaged neither by physical size nor by edifying or menacing inscriptions (“My name is Ozymandias, king of kings: Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!”). In any case it is very difficult to give a precise definition of what makes a memorial a memorial, and to separate its physical features from its immaterial qualities. The meaning of a memorial is shaped by what happens to it and around it.

Such transformations suggest a novel approach to writing the history of memorials in the narrower and more habitual sense: the structures of stone and bronze— statues, plaques, tombstones, and cenotaphs—that we commonly designate by that term. This approach could be called biographical. Beyond being interested in what a memorial says about past events or about contemporary perspectives on those events, a memorial’s biographer also studies all the twists and turns in a memorial’s life, from creation to decay or retirement and, often enough, to its withering and death. Despite their monumentality and claim to eternity, monuments are most often manifestations of a generational project. This goes all the more for war memorials, often built on the initiative of survivors. With the passing of that generation, with changes in the political context, interest in its monumental legacy may be eclipsed or at the very least transformed. The most grandiose monuments, those erected decades after the event they commemorate, tend to fade the fastest. One of the world’s largest war memorials, the Monument to the Battle of the Nations in Leipzig, built for that battle’s 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1913, turned into an historical curiosity soon after completion.

## Monuments to the Soviet Participants of World War II

Contemplating Soviet war memorials, what outside observers often remark upon first and foremost is a kind of stern Socialist Realist monotony, especially obvious in contrast with the aesthetic diversity that characterizes North American and West European memorial mania (in Erika Doss’s expression), or even with the sculptural production of the 1920s Soviet avant-garde. Many even assume that the Soviet monuments were created according to a single plan issued by Moscow for all the territories that were under its control by the end of the war, and reinstated when the cult of the Great Patriotic War started in earnest under Brezhnev in the mid-1960s.

In reality, the apparent monumental uniformity of the bronze and stone soldiers always concealed complex local dynamics, the personal and artistic ambitions of their creators, and a multitude of objectives addressed by the memorials. There was no single post-war monumental propaganda plan, and there is no evidence that the Kremlin directed their construction. The main actors in this process (and in the conflicts it sparked) were the military leadership, sculptors, and architects, later joined by the leaders of the satellite states and Soviet republics, local Party officials, and even heads of factories, from large sculpture studios to chemical plants.

memorial, Welz claimed, was the actual model for the Russian memorial and he therefore also thought of himself as the actual creator of the Russian memorial. Mikhail Intizaryan didn’t contribute anything else of significance to Soviet art history. The mere fact that the memorial on Schwarzenbergplatz – as the first Soviet World War II memorial to be built and as one sanctioned by high command – possessed a certain model character for all future memorials of its kind, lent its sculptor himself a degree of respect even in the eyes of the great masters of Socialist Realism, for example Lev Kerbel (who sculpted the Marx memorials outside the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow and in Chemnitz as well as the last Soviet Lenin statue on October Square in Moscow), or Vladimir Tsigal (who sculpted the monument of Karbyshev, the Soviet General who was murdered at Mauthausen concentration camp).

Though the rest of Intizaryan’s career as a sculptor, which mainly focused on the Russian-Armenian friendship, was unspectacular, the inscription he added in the 1970s was, for the history and interpretation of the memorial at Schwarzenbergplatz, all the more enlightening. It stands directly in front of the monument and offers a translation of the memorial’s main inscription, which is written in Cyrillic and thus normally incomprehensible to Austrian viewers: “Eternal glory to the soldiers of the Soviet Army who fell in the battle against the German fascist occupiers for the freedom and independence of the people of Europe”. The tilted cube that in a manner of speaking strives for “modernism” fundamentally transforms the memorial with its new and less menacing tone: “Memorial to honor the Soldiers of the Soviet Army who gave their lives to liberate Austria from fascism.” The memorial is historicized to some extent and becomes an object of contemporary history in an outdoor museum in urban space. But, as the sculptor’s widow Mila Intizaryan says, her husband had not only been warned before he left for Vienna, but even while working at the construction site he was accompanied by embassy employees who pointed out the “perils” of his task: In Austria there were still plenty of fascists who might at any moment launch an attack on the Liberation Memorial, a warning that Mila Intizaryan assures us her husband chose not to take seriously; he considered it just an excuse to keep an eye on his every move. But at least Intizaryan spent a few nice days in Vienna before his much too early death, she adds. Burglars stole the original plans for the statue in Vienna and the small sculptures he completed later, which had been kept for years in his dacha on the outskirts of Moscow; the original bread models for the Liberation Memorial in Vienna were eaten by the birds.

(Translation: Kimi Lum)

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# Soviet war memorials: a few biographical remarks

The first Soviet war memorials were erected outside of the USSR, in the wake of the advancing and exhausted Red Army. These projects were most often initiated by generals, who saw the monuments as solving two problems at once: the practical concern of burying the remains of tens of thousands of soldiers and the task of symbolically securing the presence of the Red Army in the territories it had captured. As early as 1945, many such monuments appeared in the central squares of German towns from Königsberg to Berlin, in Vienna, and in a number of Polish cities.

Soviet war memorials and cemeteries became perhaps the only ones in the world that not only served commemorative and legitimizing functions, but also geopolitical ones. Unlike, for instance, the cemeteries and memorials created under the jurisdiction of the American Battle Monuments Commission or the Imperial (later Commonwealth) War Graves Commission, many Soviet monuments were addressed less to the families of the fallen (very few of whom had the opportunity to visit the graves of their relatives abroad) than to the local population. This is one of the reasons behind their monumentality, and it is also why they were erected in town centers, replacing or supplementing existing monuments. Thus they effectively reminded residents of the continuing presence of live Soviet soldiers, stationed invisibly in barracks on the outskirts. These monuments, especially if they included armored vehicles, were inevitably seen not only as a reminder of Soviet sacrifices, but also as tools of intimidation.

When, in 1947, a collection of standard designs for tombstones and funerary monuments appeared, they represented a codification of existing practices rather than mandatory instructions. Of course, there were unspoken rules from the very beginning, and in many cases fundamental decisions were evidently approved by Moscow. Thus the inscriptions on monuments were more or less standardized. Usually, they were some variation on “Eternal glory to the heroes who fell in the battle for the freedom and independence of the socialist motherland.” Since captivity was considered shameful, dead Soviet prisoners of war were not singled out for commemoration, even if the monuments were erected over sites where only such prisoners were buried. And yet there were exceptions to every rule: thus a small monument in the back part of the grand Schönholz memorial complex in northern Berlin does mention “Red Army soldiers captured and tortured to death in Fascist concentration camps.”

During that first stage of monument construction, their creators, too, were a very diverse group. While the larger and more symbolically charged memorials were by and large designed by young sculptors and architects from the Russian-speaking parts of the USSR, who were lavishly provided materials and manpower by the military leadership, many other monuments were commissioned by the Soviet authorities (later increasingly supplanted by local communist parties) but built by local sculptors or architects. Examples of this include the monument erected in the Buch district of Berlin, designed by Johann Tenne, and the Liberation Monument in Budapest, both built in 1947.

Regional variations aside, the immediate post-war years did see the emergence of rather narrow aesthetic standards for Soviet war memorials. There were several reasons for this. First of all, even on the periphery of the USSR, there were often sculptors and architects who had been trained and had developed their preferences at the big Stalinist sites of the 1930s, such as the Palace of the Soviets. Secondly, by this time, the production of monuments had evolved from an artisanal task into a large industry. In the USSR, it was increasingly common for monuments to be assembled from readymade parts, planned and manufactured by a relatively small handful of organizations. These included foundries, stone works, and, most importantly, the Grekov Studio of Military Artists, founded in 1934.

In the mid-1960s, as war memorials were becoming ubiquitous across Russia, the geopolitical function of the first wave of monuments was no longer evident to ordinary Soviet citizens, although its effects were never lost on Estonians, Hungarians, Austrians, Germans, Czechs, and Poles. After the Soviet forces had suppressed the uprisings in East Germany in 1953, in Hungary in 1956, and the Prague Spring of 1968, and after martial law was introduced in Poland in 1981, the tanks and bronze soldiers

reminded the majority of locals not of the liberation of their countries by Soviet troops, but of the ever-present threat that these troops posed to them. After 1989, there were many initiatives to take down, relocate, or re-dedicate Soviet monuments. Conversely, some of them became gathering sites for the supporters of the old regimes, but also for those who sincerely feared the rise of revanchism and neo-Nazism. Thus, in January 1990, hundreds of thousands of anti-fascist demonstrators gathered in Treptower Park in response to the appearance of anti-Soviet graffiti at the site.

## The Post-Soviet Era

The post-Soviet fate of Red Army monuments in Eastern Europe was not always determined by confrontations between pro- and anti-Soviet forces. Decisions to demolish, relocate, or preserve monuments were often made on the local level and based on practical considerations: insufficient funds for moving monuments (or re-burying remains) or for replacing the old monuments with new ones, the significance of monuments as city landmarks or tourist attractions, and so on. Many monuments were moved to open air museums, such as Budapest’s Memento Park or the Grutas Park sculpture garden in Lithuania, or to cemeteries, especially if they had stood over the remains of Soviet soldiers. Monuments weren’t always relocated in their entirety: in Budapest, the removal of a bronze soldier and a red star transformed the Monument to Liberation into the Liberty Statue. Often, the initiative to refashion a monument aims to draw a distinction between fallen Soviet soldiers and communist ideology. Thus, in 2007, Rene Pelan, deputy mayor of the Czech city of Brno, took it upon himself to remove a Red Army hammer and sickle from a monument to the soldiers who died during the liberation of the city, arguing that this was a symbol of communism and not of the army, to whom the city remains grateful.

Yet it would be inaccurate to say that the post-Soviet period has seen an all-round “retreat” of memorials to Red Army soldiers. On the contrary, in a number of countries, there has been a wave of construction of new monuments and memorial cemeteries (or reconstruction of old ones), especially since the 2000s. At the same time, many of the monuments that remain from Soviet times have become focal points for new rituals and political and artistic practices which endow them with entirely new meanings.

In Russia, the reasons for the construction of new monuments are reminiscent of the Brezhnev era. The cult of The Great Patriotic War has become the foundation of the sole widely accepted state ideology. People’s attitudes toward the symbols and rituals of that cult follow the standard pattern in such situations, ranging from enthusiasm to the ironic over-identification known as *stioib*, and often enough including both. In any case, there has been much demand for new monuments. Many of these could be qualified as corporatist, dedicated as they are to fallen soldiers who were representatives of a specific profession, workers from a specific factory, graduates of a particular school, and so on. The construction of these monuments is increasingly sponsored by businessmen. Building monuments in time for important historical anniversaries has become a profitable business for manufacturers and patrons alike. The new title of City of Military Glory, introduced in 2006, has had an impact on the memorial construction industry comparable to the Hero City designation from the 1960s.

Yet new memorials and practices are appearing outside of Russia as well. This is primarily due to the fall of the USSR, which led to mass emigration and the transformation of Russian communities in destination countries and former Soviet republics into ethnic and cultural minorities. War monuments and the concomitant Victory Day rituals have increasingly come to be seen as symbols of Soviet identity and nostalgia as well as markers of Russianness, which can mean very different things and is rarely limited to a narrow ethnic interpretation. This totemic relationship to war monuments is characteristic of a significant portion of the Russian-speaking population in former Soviet republics. Thus, while May 9<sup>th</sup> celebrations around Soviet monuments are often central emotional events in the lives of Russian-





CASE №7 A GRAMSCI MONUMENT  
BY THOMAS HIRSCHHORN



Gramsci Monument is the fourth and last in Hirschhorn's series of "monuments" dedicated to major writers and thinkers, which he initiated in 1999 with Spinoza Monument (Amsterdam, the Netherlands), followed by Deleuze Monument (Avignon, France, 2000) and Bataille Monument (Kassel, Germany, 2002). This fourth monument pays tribute to the Italian political theorist Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937), famous for his volume of Prison Notebooks(1926–1937). Gramsci Monument is based on Hirschhorn's will "to establish a definition of monument, to provoke encounters, to create an event, and to think Gramsci today."

Constructed by residents of Forest Houses, the artwork takes the form of an outdoor structure comprised of numerous pavilions. The pavilions include an exhibition space with historical photographs from the Fondazione Istituto Gramsci in Rome, personal objects that belonged to the philosopher from Casa Museo di Antonio Gramsci in Ghilarza, Italy, and an adjoining library holding 500 books by (and about) Gramsci loaned by the John D. Calandra Italian American Institute in New York. Other pavilions include a stage platform, a workshop area, an Internet corner, a lounge, and the Gramsci Bar—all of which are overseen by local residents.

CASE №8 PEOPLE'S MONUMENTS.  
EUROMAIDAN, 2014



The national temporary monument, «Glory to the Heros of Maidan,» which was erected in the location where protesters fought and were killed by government forces.

speaking communities in these countries, they may be virtually meaningless to ethnic majorities and entirely ignored by local non-Russian media.

This significance of the monuments was most obviously illustrated in the conflict around the relocation of the Bronze Soldier from downtown Tallinn to a military cemetery. Interestingly enough, both the Bronze Soldier and the Glory Monument in Kutaisi, blown up on Mikhail Saakashvili's orders, had been the work of local sculptors, yet during both of these conflicts, both supporters of demolition or relocation and Russian officials made it clear that they perceive them as Russian.

Monuments to fallen Soviet soldiers have started to play a similar role in places with large émigré communities from the former USSR, most notably in Germany, where there are many such migrants as well as a large number of Soviet memorials. Moreover, immigration has led to the erection of new monuments in places where Red Army soldiers never even set foot. In 2005, a small monument to the Soviet veterans of World War II was unveiled in West Hollywood, which, after New York City, has the largest concentration of Russian-speaking immigrants in the US. In June 2012, a National Monument Commemorating the Victory of the Red Army over Nazi Germany was dedicated in Netanya, Israel. The monument had been built on the initiative of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, but it was designed by Russian sculptors and was in large part sponsored by wealthy Russian businessmen. Vladimir Putin presided over the dedication ceremony alongside Netanyahu. In both West Hollywood and Netanya, a central element in the composition is the motif of flying cranes, characteristic of Soviet memorial sculpture in the later 1970s and early 80s.

For residents of Germany, the US, and Israel socialized in the Soviet Union or in Soviet families, old and new monuments alike are material manifestations of the value of a Soviet and Russian heroic and quasi-religious discourse about the war. This can be especially comforting in settings when that discourse is never used and indeed unfamiliar and incomprehensible to most other residents. While in the Israeli case the "Soviet" style of the new monument was a result of Russian participation, in East Germany most war monuments and inscriptions were simply never changed. Contrary to West German custom, even Stalin quotes are not usually qualified by explanatory signs, as, in accordance with the Two Plus Four Agreement on the reunification of Germany, all burial sites of Soviet soldiers are protected by the federal government.

Both old and new monuments are becoming objects of discursive and symbolic wars. In May 2011, several days before Victory in Europe Day (May 8<sup>th</sup>), the memorial inscription on the monument in West Hollywood was altered by an anonymous hand: the dedication, which had read "to the Soviet veterans of the Second World War," was boarded over with a plaque that read, in Russian and ungrammatical English, "Eternal memory and glory to those who defeated the Nazism in the World War II."

Events like those in Brno and West Hollywood prompt an important question: what is the best way to honor the memory of the fallen and surviving Red Army soldiers? Does respect for the dead necessarily entail respect for the style in which they were later commemorated? The Russian authorities tend to react very touchily to any discussion or alteration of existing monuments. This position has the effect of preserving the late Stalinist poetics of memory, considered by many to be an anachronism.

Like all monuments, those dedicated to Soviet soldiers say much more about those who built them than about the historical era they refer to. The monuments in Eastern Europe bear the mark of the postwar geopolitical situation. The monuments in the former USSR inescapably became a manifestation of a generational commemorative project. Reexamination of such projects always leads to rancor. Monuments such as the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin were built with the objective of enshrining the 1960s West German generation's vision of how to "overcome the Nazi past" after members of this generation found themselves in power following German reunification. In Germany, any critique of this discourse—for instance, for reproducing categories of victims created by the Nazis—is met with anxiety. Similarly, in Russia, attitudes to war memorials are articulated in quasi-religious terms: the monuments are sacred and criticizing them is blasphemy. It's not surprising that religious (principally Russian Orthodox) symbolism has more or less openly influenced recent memorial sculpture and architecture. As if to underline the continuity of the post-war generational commemorative project, conservative sculptors dismiss stylistic innovations as inconsistent with veterans' aesthetic preferences. While that argument may be accurate, it begs the question of what should be done once the generation of veterans has passed, and, in the long term, after the demise of the generation that came of age during Brezhnev's cult of the Great Patriotic War.

Contemporary Russia's official policy on war memorials is clearly illustrated by the recently completed Federal Military Memorial Cemetery in the village of Sgonniki, near the Moscow suburb of Mytishchi. Several army generals proposed to establish such a cemetery in the early years of Boris Yeltsin's presidency; at the end of the 1990s, its creation was decided and a location chosen. The cemetery was conceived as the Russian equivalent of Arlington National Cemetery, i.e. as a burial ground for veterans of all military conflicts as well as government officials up to and including the president. For Russia, where there is still a strict hierarchy in the commemoration of wars, with the Great Patriotic War at its pinnacle, the idea itself was novel. However, the reality is sobering. The state-owned Moscow architectural firm Mosproject-4 had won the official competition, but in the event the design was determined by glass painter Sergey Goryaev (1958-2013), who joined the team later thanks to this connections at the Ministry of Defense. As a result, the cemetery was built in the neo-classical style. The entrance is framed by steles representing the different arms of the service. The central avenue is lined with 24 statues of warriors symbolizing various eras of military history, from Slavic knights to contemporary special forces. The cemetery features massive concrete blocks, granite, an eternal flame, the sculpture of a mother with her dead son, and so on. So far, those buried in the cemetery have by and large been participants of the Great Patriotic War: an unidentified soldier whose remains were discovered in the Smolensk Oblast', small arms designer Mikhail Kalashnikov, and Marshal Vasily Petrov, one of the initiators of the cemetery project. Unlike not only Arlington but also almost every other military cemetery in the world, Sgonniki is a secure site controlled by the Ministry of Defense, and only close relatives of those buried there and tour groups are allowed admittance.

In Sgonniki, the Russian authorities in fact voluntarily did that for which they so often criticize the governments of former socialist republics: they created something like a reservation for the memory of veterans and fallen soldiers that is cut off from society by a tall fence and a strict security regime.

The diametric opposite of this approach is found in the work of a number of contemporary artists. This seems to have been pioneered in 1991 by Prague artist David Černý, who painted a monument to Soviet tank crews in Prague (the monument was itself a tank) pink and drew a hand with a raised middle finger on it. His action drew protest from the governments of Russia and Czechoslovakia and led to his arrest. Yet it also sparked a debate about the role of Soviet soldiers in liberating the Czech Republic, and preserved the tank as a recognizable symbol; it was relocated to a military museum south of Prague, and in 2011, it was floated on the Vltava River on a barge in order to celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the departure of the Soviet troops. After Černý's action, brightly colored tanks began appearing in unexpected places: for instance, in front of the entrance to the National Museum of the Great Patriotic War in Kiev, at the pedestal of The Motherland Monument. The painted tanks were commissioned by the museum itself and have become a visitor attraction in their own right.

The Monument to the Soviet Army in Sofia has arguably had the most agitated post-retirement life of all. Opened in 1954 in the center of town, it had fallen into disrepair in the post-socialist era. Yet eventually this stylistically rather standard monument—or, more precisely, the high relief decorating it, depicting nine advancing soldiers in various poses—became a constantly changing canvas for political statements by anonymous artists. In 2011, the soldiers were transformed into American superheroes (in protest against consumerism), later, they were adorned with Guy Fawkes masks (in protest against the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement), then Pussy Riot balaclavas. It has been painted pink (in apology for Bulgaria's participation in Prague Spring) and in the colors of the Ukrainian flag.

Similar actions as well as other unorthodox behavior around war memorials have provoked the Russian authorities to issue rote accusations of blasphemy and hooliganism. However, none of these actions are intended to desecrate the memories of fallen soldiers. They may instead be seen as a way to reintroduce traces of a long-gone era into a contemporary context when, if not for such artistic interventions, these traces may otherwise become useless and disappear. Ultimately, the "not-as-directed" use of memorials, the conscious departure from the intentions of their creators, opens the door to a more appropriate, self-aware, living memory, a memory that is relevant to contemporary debates rather than shut off from them by walls and prohibitions, deadened by an excess of bronze, concrete, and monumentality.

Translated by Bela Shayevich

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