

Public Memory in Russia: How “Transnational” Is It?

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At a recent conference where I delivered a paper on the public memory of the Great Homeland War¹ in contemporary Russia, I was asked by a professor from international relations whether I could “possibly outline any impact of these public memories on Russia’s behaviour on the international level?” Indeed, this question has until now been sorely neglected or has been dealt with in only marginal statements. As Zbigniew Brzezinski (2000) writes in the German weekly *Die Zeit*:

Russia still has a great deal of trouble with the breakdown of the Soviet Union. Its political ambitions remain half-baked. Moscow, despite its backwardness that reminds one of the Third World, wants to act as a world power. It plays the anti-American card in the more susceptible European capitals and, together with China, condemns “US hegemony.” On the other side, Russia tries to win the Americans over to a crusade against the so-called Islamic danger in the South....Nothing could symbolize the confusion about the identity and the course of the country better than the recent reanimation of the Stalinist national anthem. [Brzezinski 2000:3]

The argument that a past characterized by state-performed macro-crimes confronts present political actors with a difficult heritage is commonsensical, if not downright banal. This heritage—symbolically manifested, for instance, in the “Stalinist anthem” reintroduced into Russia in January 2001—somehow fits with the wide-spread perception that Russia, as the successor state of the Soviet Union, refuses or fails to display a homogeneous image of itself, an image that would make the country more reliable in the eyes of the West. What remains untouched by such a statement, however, is the question of *how* representations of the past might influence the physics of international relations. This question highlights and specifies the more general problem of how collective memories of a given body politic stand in relation to those of other collectivities on a transnational level. In this paper, I suggest that the chasm that Russian, as well as non-Russian, observers perceive between Russia and the West runs on the plane of a transnational moral responsivity of memories of past macro-crimes. I will argue—although mainly on the basis of identifying tendencies—that by the end of the twentieth century the contours of a transnational moral narrative framework slowly become apparent, its structure being characterized by the common reference to certain central symbols of past crimes against mankind and gross human rights violations. The question of how this narrative structure emerged, of the structural and cultural preconditions and the central events of its emergence, will be

postponed since it is not necessary for my argument. Instead, it is my intention to show that the collective memory of the event most central to Russia—the Great Homeland War—obstructs rather than promotes the emergence of responsivity to this new transnational frame in Russia.

Public Memory on a Transnational Scale

The vague hints that point to the emergence of a transnational narrative structure do in no way anticipate the building up of an explicit, communitarian-like set of moral standards obliging to all nations. It is more appropriate to describe this structure as a *mutual moral responsivity* in view of past macro-crimes—in particular the Holocaust. Responsivity means that representations of such crimes—be it in public discourse, symbolic politics, or private memories—bear moral significance in and can be taken up by public narratives in many nations and by transnational institutions. Certain symbolic reference points of normative standards manifest in practices of remembering past atrocities are morally marked in most countries as well as in transnational organizations like the United Nations, and can be transnationally deciphered as belonging to a moral discourse, even if they are given different explicit moral meanings.

Let me turn to some evidence for the emergence of such a transnational reference structure before coming to the question of why Russia currently displays an incompatibility with this structure. At the beginning of the 21st century, mass atrocities and gross human rights violations are more than ever related and set into context to each other by politicians, artists, and human rights activists. Thus, the Russian NGO “Memorial,” which seeks to empower and support victims of Stalinism, sees its activities within the moral context of “Auschwitz, GULag, and Hiroshima” (Iofe 1998). At the same time, modern democracies seem to be developing a certain attentiveness to the collective crimes lying at the historical fundamentals of their political systems: the American president apologizes to the Native Americans, and the Australian and Japanese prime ministers are pressured to apologize for atrocities against native Australians and Chinese and Korean women. European countries are also coming to reflect on the dimension of their collaboration with the Nazi regime (Dubiel 2000:3). According to sociologist Bernhard Giesen (2000), there is evidence that political collectivities switch the mode of their public self-definition from affirmative to critical: public actors partly substitute narrations of a glorious past—the American or French Revolution, or liberation from colonial rule, for example—with narrative elements of a “traumatic,” if not macro-criminal, past. The story no longer says that “we have won” or “we have suffered,” but turns to emphasize that “we are correctly held responsible for crimes committed on our behalf.” The most recent and impressive example of such a shift is the public solidarity for Australian natives expressed by non-native Australians over the last few years. The discourse defining the nation is thus abstracted and in a way becomes “negativist” (Wingert 1998:37): the new narrations do not tell “who we are” but rather “what we do not

want to do to each other.” The main features of the contents of these narrations are basically identical: not to administer mass murder and ethnic cleansings or commit mass rapes, for example. Thus, the public stage is set in many countries for the emergence of a framework for deciding what is to be considered morally relevant. This is what might be called *structural moral responsivity* on a transnational scale.

An essential example of this is the Holocaust, because its representations have taken on a moral meaning in many places around the globe and are being perceived as moral cornerstones that ought to serve as guidelines for the international community. James Young (1992) writes that there is no way of speaking of the Holocaust other than through metaphors, since speech itself is metaphorical. Although this does not legitimate the abuses and instrumentalization of Holocaust remembrance, it points to the fact that the appropriateness of such remembrance cannot be absolutely defined and culturally formatted, nor can it be given a fixed meaning apart from specific political decisions (Young 1992:139-63). Indeed, the remembrance of the Holocaust is, first of all, controversial. This holds true for Jews and Israelis, as well as for others. None of the political discussions in which the Holocaust is referred to draws a single distinct moral message from it. In Israel, where the Holocaust has acquired a central and politically legitimate place in the country’s imagination, reference to the Holocaust is typically being made within political struggles to discredit political opponents, accusing them for not having done enough to prevent the Judaeocide (Zimmermann 1994). In Germany, neither in the Gulf War in 1991, nor during the NATO air strikes over Kosovo in 1999 did the reference to “Auschwitz” provide any clear-cut moral coordinates in the quarrel between supporters and opponents of a German engagement in the combat activities. In the United States, the Holocaust is officially regarded as “an event that speaks to the very essence of humanity....Even as it tells the hideous and unprecedented story of what Nazis did to Jews and others, it also tells a tale of caution about what human beings did, and can do, to other human beings” (Holocaust Memorial Museum 2000). Yet, there is hardly any place in the world where the debate over the legitimacy of the “appropriation” of the Holocaust by groups *presently* victimized in one way or another—“feminists, gays, and animal rights activists; opponents of abortion, big government, capital punishment, and gun control; ...promoters of Christian family values”—is so fierce, whereby these groups “did not arrive at these positions—did not first learn these lessons—from reflecting on the Holocaust” (Novick 1999:242). Voices demanding the interpretation of the Holocaust as an “event of universal relevance” become louder (Milton 1994:441),² however they do not remain unchallenged by representatives of the genuine victims.

Commemorating gross human rights violations and resistance to them has the potential to make people susceptible to the discovery of the “existence of an Internationale of decency and humanity” (Krippendorff 2000:96). “The Holocaust,” Jürgen Habermas (1999) writes, “urges the Germans to a spatial and temporal delimitation [*Entgrenzung*] of the moral responsibility of the democratic civil society, incompatible with conventional forms of national cults of the dead” (34-36). In short,

memory is understood as a “resource for the future” (Kocka 2000:72), but it is a resource that is fragile and ambivalent. Such fragility and ambivalence is highlighted by the danger of neglecting the victims of the atrocities precisely through the universalization, if not misappropriation, of their memories.

To summarize, one can borrow Dan Diner’s (1994) phrase that the national-socialist mass crimes have acquired a “transhistorically located, primarily symbolic relevance...for Western consciousness” (468). The Holocaust—and maybe gradually other gross atrocities like the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the GULag system, the genocide of the Armenians, and Cambodia’s “killing fields”—came to be represented as an icon of a “thin morale,” as an emblem of a “negativistic we” defined only through what we “do not want to do to each other” (Wingert 1998:40). It thus becomes an example of what might be termed *moral responsivity in terms of events*.

In order to avoid misunderstandings, I must point to the limits of the conception of a transnational moral responsivity I am outlining here. I do not claim that nation-bound moral signifiers are fully *replaced* by the transnational structure. Neither do I anticipate a homogenization of *actual* moral meanings of represented past macro-crimes. Up to now, “transnationality” is limited mainly to Western countries (though there are signs that, in Japan and some African countries, for example, it is also becoming morally significant).³ It is a highly problematic process that often offends the genuine victims of the remembered macro-crimes and can seem immoral to them. It is, like all practices of institutional collective memory (Langenohl 2000:49), principally instrumental and factually instrumentalized, and thus often provokes contradiction and “counter-memory.” It is a process that cannot be described in an evolutionary or deterministic way, but owes its existence to very particular and contingent circumstances, and may not be irreversible.⁴ The remembrance of crimes against humankind may serve as a metaphoric vehicle for the *indication* that a genuinely moral reflection is under way, but it cannot be given a *certain moral meaning* that is undoubtedly valid in each and every situation. The notion of transnational moral responsivity cannot be more than a provisional conception to heuristically assess the meaning of some morally relevant processes on a transnational level: it describes the historically contingent fact that representations of certain past atrocities are regarded as morally relevant in most places on this planet, and thus form a transnational *frame of signification*. It is my thesis that in Russia there are certain *cultural obstacles* to the linking-up to this transnational frame, particularly manifested in collective memories of the Great Homeland War. In the next section, I focus on the semantics of these memories.

Tendencies of Public Memory in Russia

In modern societies, representations of the collective past serve as an arena of competing interpretations of collective goals (the “good life”), typically mediated through the construction of symbolic tradition and debates over collective identity

(Eisenstadt 1979:364). This is true for established democracies as well as for newly democratizing countries, but in the latter ones the past as a semantic reservoir for public dispute has a specifically crucial meaning: the public reference to a past that, as a rule in such countries, had been the exclusive object of authoritarian social control and practices simulating democratic legitimacy is a genuinely political statement as such. Therefore, it is mostly memories of political macro-crimes and gross human rights violations that attract paramount public and scientific attention in young democracies (Arenhövel 2000).

In Russia, however, it is the memory of a glorious past that has been at least equally present on the public agenda since the heyday of *perestroika*. I refer to the public memory of the “Great Homeland War.” The dominance of this memory in post-Soviet Russia is a direct consequence of its instrumentalization by the Soviet party-state. War victories were given the meaning of the ultimate moral and political triumph of the communist system and its avant-garde, the Communist party, over the rotten capitalist states of the West (Tumarkin 1994:100-13). The official memory of the war served in a notorious way as an instrument of conflict camouflage. It simulated the existence of a societally shared set of values and held up the illusion of a unified people, symbolically manifest in the rites of the Communist Party (Langenohl 2000:158-63).

Already under Communism, these official memory practices stood in sharp contrast to unofficial memories. In the socio-cultural mode, highly divergent memory narratives were circulating among the population. The war had caused individual tragedies on a mass scale and exorbitant losses of population. In plain figures, the German assault on the Soviet Union in June 1941 had as its consequence more than 27 million deaths (Fersobin 1995). It would be absurd to assume that these enormous losses failed to leave a deep imprint on the memory of the surviving individuals, or that they were not included into memory narratives after the war had ended. It is the difference between these memory narratives circulating in the interactive mode—in families and among veterans—and the myths officially held up about the past that served as vehicles of political mobilization during the decline of the Soviet Union from the late 1980s on (Schröder 1991).

The official political commemoration in 1995, the 50th anniversary of Victory Day, was apparently a timid attempt to frame the remembrance of World War II as the beginning of a cooperation with the European Union and NATO. The message, primarily addressed to Western nations and their representatives attending the Victory Day festivities, seemed to be that Russia, still a super power, had won over fascism in Europe and thus smoothed the way for the new Europe and the Western military alliance. Apart from stereotypical honors addressed to the veterans and the war dead (Ul’ianov 1995), officials did not fuss much about the former magical number of “20 million dead” (which during *perestroika* had to be lifted to even 27 million). Obviously, the war was not seen as a paralyzing tragedy as it had been in previous

years (Tumarkin 1994:212-3). Rather, it was officially interpreted as the military point of departure of a post-military, sustainable connection to Western nations.

The transformation of the *political* commemoration of the Great Homeland War in no way resembles the *public debate* on these events. In the anniversary year 1995, the debate over the war and the assessment of its final outcome must still be interpreted as a result of the former Soviet instrumentalizations of the war memory (for a more detailed report, see Langenohl 2000:153-227). It is to this debate that I want to turn now, since it is the public discourse that is most referred to as the major force stimulating the postcommunist transformation process (von Steinsdorff 1994; Wendler 1995; Langenohl 2000:135-45) and, more generally, the place where narratives concerning moral issues of collective concern are articulated.

The Russian public debate on the Great Homeland War is divided into two camps. On the one hand, there are intellectuals, writers, and journalists who regard Stalinism not only as a series of state-administered macro-crimes, but in some sense as a metonymy for the Soviet Union as a whole. In their interpretations, there remains not much of the former glory of the war memory. It is argued that the Great Victory is in no way a merit of Stalin or the Soviet system: "They did not win thanks to Stalin, but despite of him," (almost identical in Shnaider 1995:112; Fersobin 1995:128; Nekhoroshev 1995:213). They claim that most of the military and administrative action taken by Stalin and his entourage before and during the war had negative rather than positive effects on the outcome of the war and its many victims. Thus, the Soviet myth of the Great Victory in the Great Homeland War is totally rejected, with Stalin serving as the ultimate personification of all the regime's atrocities and cynicism against the people and the soldiers. In denying the memory of the Great Homeland War, the potential to symbolically integrate the Russian people into their new post-Soviet state, liberal intellectuals, journalists, and scientists use the Great Homeland War as a symbol for the *eternal confrontation of state and people*.

This is highlighted by the metonymical figure of the "simple soldier" fighting for his motherland in the Great Homeland War and after that being neglected by the politicians. The "simple soldier" is being conceptualized as the paradigmatic biographical image of the war generation. Throughout many articles, the praise of the veterans, of the "people most devoted to the Fatherland" (Adamushkina 1995:2) is more or less directly connected with a critique of the politicians' role in the anniversary festivities devoted to the memory of the Great Homeland War. In that fashion, for instance, the baroque luxury of the official anniversary ceremonies in 1995 is criticized (celebrations had been more modest from 1990 to 1994).

Another typical reproach is that persons and events directly connected with the War, the Victory, and their historical framework, are simply neglected if their memory is regarded to be politically inopportune. Journalists and writers condemn the official festivities as a misappropriation and instrumentalization of the victory's

fame by the political class, a practice which already had its place in the Soviet Union and had been taken up by Russian politicians. Thus, a harsh opposition is constructed: on the one side the heroes of the Great Homeland War fight against a declared enemy; on the other side political leaders abuse the people's collective effort *and* their memory in order to strengthen their position (Kto vedet 1995; Kondrashev 1995).

In the same way Stalin made use of the victory in the war in order to foster the totalitarian system, the contemporary political leaders exploit its memory to demonstrate the strength of the new "empire-democratic" regime. Social remembrance of the Great Homeland War in Russia of the 1990s has the tendency to render a sharp moral distinction between the members of the political system and those who do not belong to it, the "people" (*Russian: "narod"*). This differentiation is modelled by a stated continuity of the ways the political system treats the people: first, it misappropriates the people's collective efforts under Stalin, and then exploits the memory of these efforts in the Soviet Union and contemporary Russia (Tesniuk 1995; Genatulin in K zhizni 1995; Kondrashev 1995; Udal'tsov 1995; Bonner 1995). Secondly, the political representatives are accused of not being willing to take responsibility for the pain and suffering they have caused: under Stalin, it was his poor planning of the war against Nazi Germany, to which thousands of people fell prey (Tesniuk 1995; Pochtarev 1995). Today, people fall prey to egoism and de-nationalization in the economy (Tarasov 1995). Both are expressions of the same scorn and disregard with which "the people" are treated by the representatives of the political system. Thus, in anti-Soviet writers' interpretations the Russian people—for whom the figure of the "simple soldier" serves as a metonymy—are confronted with an autocratic state power that can be traced back to Stalin.

It is this symbolic confrontation that the defenders of the Soviet quasi-civil religion of the victory reject in the public dispute on the Great Homeland War in Russia. First of all, they argue that since the war had obviously been won under Stalin, his "failures and miscalculations" (*Russian: "oshibki i proshchety"*) could not have been that great. The logical implication is that the Great Victory legitimates, outweighs or compensates for all state-administered macro-crimes coming under the term "Stalinism" (Gor'kov 1995:25; Bublik and Kalashnikov 1995:87; Gareev 1995:27, 33-4; Petrov 1995:4-9). Accordingly, the disastrous and criminal traits of Stalin's policies tend to be outshined by the character traits of the *generalissimus*: Stalin, as is admitted, had been a "tragical, dramatic" character, but this is true for every historically important person (Ganichev 1995:125).

Contrary to the anti-Soviet intellectuals, the "pro-Stalin" writers chose not the "simple soldier," but military leaders as identification figures. They hold that the Red Army achieved victory only under the command of its generals (Bogomolov 1995:95). The army, it is said, was always a natural limb of the people, and the officer always a good comrade to his soldiers (Gusev 1995:8; Ganichev 1995:122). Marshal Zhukov (who was an outstanding object of adoration in the Soviet Union)

had been a shining example: "simply a man from the countryside, flesh from the flesh, bone from the bone of the people!" (Panova 1995:181; Perezhogin 1995:22). Among these writers, the Soviet military elite still enjoys an excellent reputation. Reproaches made by more critical writers such as Georgii Vladimov (1994a) are thereby typically rejected through arguments resembling theories of conspiracy: they are regarded as strategies that serve foreign powers first of all, and are intended to "take away" the merits of the Great Victory from Russia, thus denying the country its world power status (Bogomolov 1995:100f.; Gusev 1995:7). In light of these arguments, criticism directed towards the military elite must appear as a betrayal of the Russian people since people and power are thought to form a natural unity epitomized by a military officer, the general.

The discussion, thus, focuses on the question of the role of Stalin and his entourage with regard to the course and results of the war. Interpretations are polarized around two positions. Self-proclaimed "national-patriots" argue that the Great Victory was and could only be achieved under Stalin within the framework of a strong, autocratic state, while radical anti-Soviet intellectuals hold that victory was won despite Stalin's terror and unprofessional warfare and, in the end, only served to strengthen Stalin's regime. Critics and apologists of Stalin and his role in the war mutually blame their opponent's moral and ideological prejudices: the former are said to be mistaken in an hysterical anti-Stalinism (Gusev 1995:16), while the latter are told to stop instrumentalizing the Great Victory as a protectorate for Stalinist sentiments and value orientations (Gareev 1995:36). On the level of rhetorical figures, this quarrel finds expression in the confrontation of two metonymies: the "simple soldier" eternally alienated from "politics" (like Stalin or Yeltsin), and the "General," who epitomizes the unquestionable unity of people and polity.

It is significant, when considering the structure of argumentation characterizing the debate, to note that the two camps react on their mutual arguments primarily with holistic denunciations. The sociologist Max Miller (1990) considers this an "ideological barrier to collective learning" (*ideologische Lernblockade*) (92-3). The debate is characterized by the conviction that an opponent *cannot* be right since he represents the particular interests of a group and uses his arguments in a way instrumental to these interests. In Russia, both anti-Soviets and national-patriots accuse their opponents of betraying the Russian people: the radical anti-Soviet intellectuals because they collaborate with the treacherous democratic regime of Yeltsin and its international supporters (Mialo 1995:190; Gusev 1995:15-6; Varennikov 1995:209; Ganichev 1995:125), the national-patriots because they comply or once complied with the Communist Party or the former Soviet terror regime (Vladimov 1994:186; Afanas'ev 1995:6; Kardin 1997:191).

The Public Linkage of Political and Moral Concerns

In this paper I have argued that there is a link between given countries, transnational moral responsivity, and a structural shift in terms of self-definition of modern political collectivities. In order to remember mass atrocities like the Holocaust, Hiroshima, or the GULag as signifiers in a transnational moral discourse, the affirmative type of self-definition has to be at least supplemented, if not substituted, by a critical mode of self-reflection manifested in the remembrance of macro-crimes committed on behalf of the focal collectivity. From my discussion of the memory debate, one may—with appropriate caution—draw some hints concerning the compatibility of the Russian collective memory of the Great Homeland War with this transnational moral framework of signification. The main result is that collective memories in the Russian public sphere have quite a different structure than those in the transnational framework. First memories of the Great Homeland War outweigh those of Stalinism, and not only in public debate. These memories stand in, or have to cope with, an affirmative tradition of interpretation inherited from the Soviet Union. This tradition is still visible in proceedings of anniversary festivities, in the unveiling of monuments, and in autobiographical sources. Second, the cleavage in public debate runs along the question of whether the Victory represents the unity of the Russian people and polity or, on the contrary, the moral separateness of people and polity.

While there are disputes around different interpretations of the past in other countries, in Russia both camps react to each other almost exclusively in an ideology-critical way: they each reproach the other for betraying the Russian people. “People” stand out as the ultimate moral authority to which each interpretation of the Victory must include a tribute. Such an argumentative structure is almost the opposite of the critical mode of self-reflection characterizing the transnational moral structure. Finally, public memories of the Great Homeland War tend to turn into a discourse of victimization. According to this discourse, the Russians fell prey either to German troops, then to the international community, or to the Soviet regime, then to present politicians. On the structural level, the ideology-critical reproach that either camp of the dispute betrays the Russian people consolidates the concept of the people as a collective of victims. This “victimness” serves as a genuine feature of the Russian people, which again proves their moral superiority.

The Chechnya issue—specifically, the international criticism and the Russian reaction that this was not a war but a “national concern”—highlights the relevance of such encodings for international relations. A coming-to-terms on the issue of the war in Chechnya is more unlikely than ever. In 1995, one still could find some critical public statements about the war against the “Chechnyan brother people,” with whom victory in the Great Homeland War had been achieved (Udal'tsov 1995; Kto vedet 1995). After the 1999 series of bombing assaults on apartment houses in Moscow, attributed to Chechnyan rebels, this position disappeared from the public agenda, as

these assaults “validated” the discourse on the perpetual victimization of the Russian people. This discourse has been prominent since the breakdown of the USSR. According to Gerard Holden (1994), it “contributes to making [the Russian] foreign policy fundamentally unpredictable,” precisely because this policy is publicly linked to the ups and downs of the debate over Russian identity which “are by their very nature, probably unsolvable” (180-181).

I do not want to fall back into a simplistic and anachronistic confrontation of East and West, of bad and good policies, or of un-fitting and fitting memories. What can be perceived, however, is a difference between Russia and Western countries concerning the public linkage of political and moral concerns. In the classical, liberal conception of the political community, the *tense* relationship between politics and moral considerations is taken as a cornerstone: politics always encompasses *both* the affairs of the political community (the “common good”) *as well as* the pursuit of particular interests. It is this double and ambivalent character of politics that makes the emergence of the mentioned “thin morale” possible. A “thin morale” is neither epitomized by an essential “moral” body politic (an essentialized political community), nor is it characterized by the complete lack of morality (as in purely pragmatic conceptions of politics). Instead, it draws on the recognition and anticipation of harms and sufferings we might do or might have done to others if we treat politics *exclusively* either as a moral or as a practical affair. The tension between the practical and moral aspect of politics cannot be set into an enduring balance. Hence, it is morally rooted only in minimal demands, namely in “what we do *not* want to do to each other.” The relative inability of political institutions to meet absolute moral standards thus need not be interpreted as an absolute failure, but as an expression of the ambivalent essence of politics as such.

In Russia, on the contrary, the tension between the moral and the practical aspects of politics, so central to the classical liberal conception, is refuted and split into the conception of an absolutely moral “people” opposed to a fundamentally immoral political sphere. Within this interpretation, the institutionalized polity cannot but *fail* to fulfil moral ambitions unless it is symbolically *identified* with “the people.” Sociologist Martina Ritter (1999) has argued that the attitude toward politicians in contemporary Russia is characterized by a vicious circle. People address politicians with moral expectations that they cannot fulfil out of fundamental reasons, considering their status as actors within a power network; what results from these broken promises based on personalized trust (a strategy that many Russian politicians adhere to)⁵ is a disappointment and the distinct feeling that “politics” is a dirty business. On the public level, this attitude is mirrored by memories of the Great Homeland War serving as an amplifier for the moral dividing line between people and politics: politics appears as an unambiguously immoral business that either fails to live up to the moral standards of “the people” for reasons of principal (as in the “simple soldier” trope), or else, has to be symbolically identified with the people to overcome its moral inferiority (as in the “General” metonymy).

The difficulties that plague the “international community”—still mainly Western countries—when trying to come to terms with Russia on difficult and transnationally relevant issues such as the Chechnya war or the NATO air strikes over Kosovo, are not so much the consequence of different “civilizations,” as Samuel Huntington (1996) would have it, or of different “cultural traditions,” as many philosophers and philologists would argue (Buldakov 1997; Gulyga 1995; Zalygin 1997). Neither is it exclusively the effect of “acting as a world power,” as Brzezinski (2000) puts it. I argue that these incompatibilities display a difference in *moral* stances, manifesting in a non-responsiveness between narrative frames generated and publicly maintained by structurally different collective memories of the recent past.

Unplanned Epilogue: After September 11, 2001

In October 2001, the international community seems to have settled, at least temporarily, on the war in Chechnya issue. After the unimaginable terrorist assaults in New York City and Washington, D.C., Russia has speedily been integrated into the “global coalition” of states fighting against terrorism. Against this background, the German chancellor Schröder has given out the seemingly representative guideline that the Chechnya issue must be “reflected upon in a new light.” The obvious reasons are that Russia’s official position—the war in Chechnya is a war against Islamic-fundamentalist tendencies—has been unpredictably strengthened by the assaults, and that Russia is considered to play a pivotal role in the international coalition against terrorism. Apart from these rather political statements, to date I do not dispose of any discursive data concerning the public perception of these events in Russia and their possible linkage to the Great Homeland War. What in any case seems to be clear, however, is that after September 11, 2001, the Western public discourse on the Chechnyan war is in danger of being redifferentiated much in the same way as the public discourse in Russia after the bombings in 1999.

Notes

¹In English-speaking countries, the usual translation is “Great Patriotic War,” which is misleading since the Russian adjective *otechestvennaia* does not mean “patriotic” but is derived from *otechestvo*: “fatherland” or “homeland.”

²Writes Arno Mayer: “The outside world’s halting reaction to the killing in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the starvation in Somalia...is only the latest reminder that ‘seclusion from the World...is a form of barbarism’ [Hannah Arendt], and the cause for the Jews remains, as always, inseparable from that of other endangered and potentially forsaken people” (Mayer 1994:456).

³In textbooks for secondary schools in Botswana, for instance, the Holocaust is referred to as the ultimate consequence of ethnic intolerance.

⁴It is maybe too early to reflect upon the circumstances that allowed for the emergence of moral responsivity. But, since it seems to be limited mainly to Western countries by now (including as well some African and Asian countries), one might assume that it has to do with the 40-year confrontation between East and West that forced Western countries to reflect upon internationally valid master frames of coordinating action.

⁵During the last presidential elections campaign, General Lebed said in a political spot on Russian TV: "Law and order. That's what I can do. That is what I must do." During the whole piece, the camera was directed toward his face, recording every move of his muscles. The complete absence of any political platform was overshadowed by his sheer physical appearance.

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