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Decommunisation of the Public Space in Post-Euromaidan Ukraine

Abstract: The problem of thorough and ultimate decommunisation in Ukraine got suddenly valid during Euromaidan on the turn of 2013/2014 and after its termination. It became a component of post-revolutionary reforms in the field of policy of memory. A year after Euromaidan Ukraine's parliament adopted four "decommunisation laws" on 9 April 2015. One of them concerns the condemnation of the Communist regime and prohibition the propaganda of his symbols. The author analysed contents of the law and focused on the results of decommunisation, which included the cleansing the public space from Soviet-era legacy. Full implementation of the law was planned for the year. During this time the goal was almost fully implemented regarding the renaming of many locations and districts. The communist names of thousands streets, squares, urban districts were changed, although this process was delayed. The process of renaming of many institutions, industrial plants and press titles was very slow.

Keywords: *Ukraine; Euromaidan; politics of memory; decommunisation*

Introduction

In a broader perspective decommunisation is the process of rejection of the Communist legacy through the restructuring of the state regime, and through changing mentality, behavior and value systems in individual and collective dimensions. Requirements of the deeper decommunisation consisted in its widening of the next field: personal (lustration), educational (uncompromising and critical historical policy of the state regarding the Communist era) and the symbolic (the elimination of figures and events associated with Communism as a patrons of localities, streets, squares, institutions and public places) (Dudek, 2016). It was phrased the proposals on legal

condemnation of the Communist system, ban negation of Communist crimes, open access to documents of the special services to persons who were a victim of Communist regime, conducting the scientific research on the topic of the Communist era, eliminate elements of Communist propaganda from the education system, training and media as well as delete the Communist symbols from the public space (*Politologia*, 2008). In different ways and with different success these postulates were proposed by the anti-Communist circles in post-Communist countries of Eastern and Central Europe (Courtois, 1997; Kuglarz, 2001; Śpiewak, 2005). The society of some countries strived for a legal ban of the ideology, symbols, organizations and parties that appealed to the Communist legacy.

What is going to follow in this paper will be mainly related to the external symbolic aspects of decommunisation, which could mainly be studied in short-term perspective. We will focus on decommunisation of the public space in post- Euromaidan Ukraine. It is, first and foremost, about the removal the statutes as well as the renaming of to cities, towns, streets, squares, urban district etc. with the Soviet names.

In case of Ukraine the policy of decommunisation of public space was conducted inconsistently and superficially. Before Euromaidan the process proceeded gradually. During the discussions of Ukrainian intellectuals and politicians there dominated two models of Ukrainian identity: the inclusive and the exclusive one. The former accepted the elements of different identities: the Ukrainian, the Russian and the Soviet one etc. Everybody was entitled to celebrate their own holidays and commemorate their respective national heroes. In the name of the social compromise and the freedom of opinions, the co-existence of the statutes of Taras Shevchenko and Stepan Bandera, Vladimir Lenin or Catherine II was agreed upon. Still, it was begging a question of the limits of tolerance, that is, whether, for example, Stalin can be considered a hero? Hence, a part of the environment allowed for preserving the already existent statues of Russian activists, simultaneously with the proviso of forbidding to erect the new ones possibly related to the Communist or imperialistic ideology (Riabczuk, 2013). The exclusive model, on the other hand, was based on the ethnic identity of Ukrainians, being shaped by Ukrainian history and collective memory.

Under the rule of the first Ukrainian president Leonid Kravchuk, it was premeditated to attempt to change the Soviet names of the cities, streets as well as to disassemble statues. However, they were implemented mainly in the west. The president Leonid Kuchma and Victor Yanukovych as technocrats were both the proponents of the inclusive model of the politics of memory, which was to be of conciliatory nature. The president Victor Jushchenko preferred the exclusive model of the politics of memory, for which he was oftentimes criticized. Still, he did much for the sake of recovering the memory of Great Famine (Holodomor) and for the

sake of perceiving it not only as an instance of genocide by the communist regime. The president obligated to disassemble the objects commemorating the persons who contributed to this famine and the political repressions in Ukraine, proved effective mainly in the central Ukraine.

Between the official policy on the part of the regime residing in Kyiv and the one implemented locally oftentimes there was a conspicuous discrepancy. Eventually, the decisions on how to name streets, squares in Ukrainian cities and villages were made by local governments. It was the so-called local politics of memory, tolerated by government. That is why, at this time (2007), it was possible to erect in Lviv the statue of Bandera and in Odessa – the one of Catherine II as a co-founder of the city (Осадчий, 2014, p. 317). Simultaneously, after 1991, there emerged more and more statues connected with the history and culture of Ukrainians. Taking decisions was sometimes marked by opportunism.

Unlike Poland or Czech Republic, there was not a wide public debate on the topic of Communism in Ukraine. Despite this, there were different views regarding the historical, moral, political and legal assessment of the Communist regime and about the need for lustration. For example, the historian Yury Shapoval detected for the need. He estimated definitely negative the general results of the Communist era for Ukraine (Шаповал, 2001, p. 12–13). Likewise literary critic and politician Mykola Zhulynsky admitted the condemnation of Communism and the "purification" of individual and collective memory from its effects as a necessary condition of democratisation of society (Шаповал, 2001, p. 5). But others expressed the opinion that it should be a place for all in the democracy – for Communists and anti-Communists. Dissident Semen Hluzman thought so. In his opinion, lustration was not possible without alternation of generations (*Ukraińskie*, 2005, p. 247–248). Similar thought was expressed by historian Stanislav Kulchytsky, who estimated the struggle between right and left political forces as a natural sign of democracy. This fight should contribute to appropriate tactics solving the major issues of market reforms and social protection (Кульчицький, 1996, p.7–8).

It was only Euromaidan that became the catalyst of rapid changes in identity. The multi-ethnical inhabitants of Ukraine had to take a stand: either they identify with their country or they want to be mentally stuck to the Soviet epoch or be adepts of the foreign ideology. The new wave of decommunisation might be said to have begun, symbolically speaking, 8 December 2013. On that very day, the statue of Lenin in the centre of Kyiv was disassembled. That even commenced the so-called *Leninopad* – the fervent process of disassembling statues and other Communist symbols all over the country. Within one year, 504 statues of Lenin were gotten rid of. What remained was 1700 ones out of 5500 which were in existence at the moment of USSR collapse.

As a result of Euromaidan, the statues of Lenin disappeared from almost all the local cities except for Zaporizhia, Simferopol, Donetsk and Luhansk. The greatest number of statues were disassembled in Vinnytsia and Khmelnytsky Oblast (За рік, 2015).

That was the first spontaneous and uncoordinated stage of the new decommunisation. It did not have sufficient legal foundations and gave rise to conflicts, especially in the east and south of the country. The state had to endow the bottom-up process with some formal-legal framework. The quick legislation of decommunisation in spring 2015 commenced the new stage. New Ukrainian authority, emergent after the Revolution of Dignity, made people aware of the need for the radical decommunisation of Ukrainian society. The president Petro Poroshenko understood the process in the following way: "it is not only statutes that must be abolished. Communism should be gotten rid of mainly from people's heads" (Щорічне, 2015).

Decommunisation is located by Ukrainian authorities as integral part of modern historical politics, that is actively promoting by president Poroshenko. That politics is treated as an element of the humanitarian dimension of national safety. The new model of politics of memory had to differ from old model that was realized during the Victor Yanukovych presidency. Then it was observed a return to pro-Russian and neo-Soviet conception of Ukrainian history (Горбулін & Власюк & Литвиненко, 2014, p. 50–51). New politics of memory had to favour to overcoming Soviet legacy in mentality, historical myths and stereotypes that inhibited the consolidation of Ukrainian society (Горбулін & Власюк 2015, p. 364). Elimination the communist legacy was considered the important stage of posts-socialistic transformation that passed Central and Eastern Europe countries earlier. Besides, decommunisation was perceived as a step to European integration (Литвиненко, 2016).

The Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance (UINR) is the central executive body subordinated to government in the field of historical politics. In practice the institution, and especially its Director Volodymyr Viatrovych, forms this politics. The emphasis are moved from the martyrdom of the Ukrainian people to the its heroic struggle for independence. OUN-UPA are also recognized as the equal participants in this struggle. The controversial facts and their interpretation aren't mention.

Legislation

9 April 2015 Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted four laws of the so-called "decommunisation package". It created the formal-legal grounds to establish the obligatory decommunisation of public space in Ukraine. 15 May 2015 president Petro Poroshenko signed the law and its came into force officially 21 May. Only after the adoption of laws a wider discussion about the decommunisation was initiated. However, it did

not occupy the central place in Ukrainian public debate, that the decentalisation or anticorruption reforms.

We will focus only on Law of Ukraine *On the condemnation of the Communist and National- Socialist (Nazi) regimes and prohibition of propaganda of their symbols* (Закон, 2015, May 20). It yield the most immediately spotted visible consequences in the public space. The law legally recognizes the both regimes as criminal, introduces the criminal responsibility for their propaganda and use of their symbols, establishes procedures and timeframes of the renaming of objects with communist names, as well as removing monuments and symbols that glorify the functionaries of Soviet totalitarian regime. The law also introduces a Day of Remembrance of Victims of communist and Nazi totalitarian regimes on 23 August, when the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact was signed in 1939. The prohibition of using Communist symbols includes production, dissemination and public use for example: souvenir goods, public performance of the anthems of the USSR, Ukrainian SSR, or other Soviet republics. However, the prohibition does not cover some cases of using the symbols of communism like: in documents issued by public authorities or local self-governments adopted or issued before 1991, as well as in documents issued by education and research institutions, enterprises, organizations before 1991. Besides the law doesn't ban to use it in museum displays, thematic exhibitions and in library stocks, also in works of art created before this law, in private collections and private archive collections, on memorial structures located within the burial sites; in books and other materials of research and education nature.

Decommunisation met with ambivalent feelings in Ukraine and abroad. In the environment of politicians, advocates of human rights, scientists, historians and a part of civil society in Ukraine and abroad, criticism was abundant. Some part of the criticism was related to procedural issues. The legislations were underdeveloped and "thrown together haphazardly, it passed quickly, without any public debate" (Eristavi, 2015). The law *On the condemnation of the Communist and National-Socialist (Nazi) regimes* was criticized for its incoherence with the international standards of human rights, including the restriction of freedom of speech, freedom of association and the rights to vote. It was connected with the ban on political parties of social organization due to their respective names, symbolism they resort to and the content of their statute. What was also critically evaluated was the introduction of too restrictive sanctions for the exploitation of communist symbols, including the penalty of 5-year imprisonment (Яворський, 2015). It was referred to as the attempt of "getting rid of the headache with the help of guillotine" (Хилюк, 2015). What counted as a disadvantage of the legislation was the imprecision of some of the terms and definitions hereto and the lack of the detailed enumeration of forbidden symbols or their clear interpretation

as well as the lack of the elements of the forbidden propaganda and the instances not embraced by the said ban.

The international organization stuck to this criticism. Shortly after legislating the acts, some qualifications were aired by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) . In the unanimous opinion by Office For Democratic Institutions and Human Rights OSCE and European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission, Council of Europe) from 18 December 2015 they stated the inconsistency of the said legislation with the European standards with respect to some of the human rights, civil liberty and democracy (Venice Commission, OSCE/ODIHR, 2015).

In reply to the above-mentioned suggestions in May 2016 Ukrainian parliament started to work under the improvement of decommunisation laws. Changes in the Law *On condemnation of the Communist and National-Socialist (Nazi) regimes,* except the definitions of terms, should relate to the replacement of criminal responsibility for administrative. There was clarified the punishment including media staffs (Проект, 2016).

Implementation of the Law

The implementation of the anti-communist legislation, as was predicted, aroused emotions. On the other hand, the process was difficult for a high number of objects covered by decommunisation. Main of it was located in central and eastern part of Ukraine.

The implementation assumed two fundamental stages. What was to take place first was the social discussion on the local level related to the choice of new names of the cities, squares, neighbourhoods, bridges and other place names connected with Communist legacy. On the basis of its results, the local government until 21 November 2015 were making decisions related to this issue as well as to the issue of disassembling Communist statues. In case councillors did not pass a proper resolution, who would have to do so would be the head of the self-government of community, city or region within 3 forthcoming months – until 21 February 2016. After this term, the relevant legislations would be taken up on the level of the local state administration until 21 May 2016. Quite alike, until 21 November 2015 the local governments were choosing the new names of the cities and were presenting them to the Ukrainian parliament.

The second stage of decommunisation was to last from 21 November to 21 February 2016. Then, Verkhovna Rada was to ratify the changes of the names of the cities. In case of the lack of proposals for the names, the parliament passes a legislation on

the basis of the opinion by UINR. The established procedure of decommunisation applied to the whole territory of Ukraine – including the occupied regions (Crimea and Donbass). Until summer 2016, the plan was to finish the process of changing the geographic and topographic names related to totalitarian regime.

In order to facilitate the task for local governments UINR published the list of more than 520 names of the Communist functionaries which would be subject to decommunisation. The topographic names, statues and other objects commemorating these names were to be changed or abolished until 21 November 2015. One also published the list of 941 dwelling places the names of which required some change, including: 32 cities, 56 urban-type settlement, 118 municipalities and 735 villages. The greatest number of such dwelling places were located in the east and the south of the country (Декомунізація, 2015).

To enable the disassembly of a series of statues that were considered historic, the Ministry of Culture introduced some changes to the order of the registration of the objects of cultural heritage. About 40 statues of Lenin were removed from the national register of objects of cultural heritage. In April 2016 the said list was extended by additional 794 Soviet statues.

Not everyone was ready to part with monuments which was used. For example, the prospect of removal the bust of Leonid Brezhnev, the leader of USSR, from the centre of Kamianske (former Dniprodzerzhynsk) disliked to the habitants and authorities of the town. He was their most famous dweller (Руденко, 2016). In the public discussions what often emerged was the issue of a possible preservation of some more valuable instances of socialist-realism art, like some mosaics on the wall or statue of Mykola Shchors in Kyiv. Some radical voices were not missing, the voices claiming that removing statues is an act of vandalism. There were also questions about the fate of removal monuments, raised whether to erect new statues in the place of the disassembled ones and, if so, then what type of statues to erect.

The statutory law of changing the terminology in the topography connected with the propaganda of totalitarian regimes did not make room for any exceptions. Sabotage would result in sanctions, including criminal responsibility. Subject to dispute could be the choice of new place names, the dispute could be joined by national heritage local history enthusiasts, local activists and any other broadly understood communities. UINR recommended either reinstating historical names or choosing brand-new names. UINR regarded the compromise involving only change of the etymology of the old name as unacceptable (*FAQ*, 2015). Such a problem appeared when a part of local governments attempted to diminish the political cost of decommunisation. For example, one suggested that Illichivsk, in Odessa Oblast, commemorating Lenin, derived its name from the prophet Elijah (ukr. Illia). Another example is Dnipro-

petrovsk, where in December 2015 councillors posited that the name of their city will now refer to Dnieper at which the very city is located. The second part of name will be derived from St. Peter instead of Grigory Petrovsky – the Communist activist, co-responsible for the Great Famine in Ukraine. It was the proponents of the name Sicheslav, which echoed Cossacks tradition.

At the first stage of decommunisation, at some places a lot of time and energy was consumed while discussing the validity of decommunisation itself. Furthermore, the resistance to changing old topographic names across the villages and cities was justified by the fact that their respective inhabitants are used to them and by the inconveniences and the lack of orientation that could arise as well as by the economic cost or the need to get new documents. One was also afraid of political cost in the light of the forthcoming elections to the local government 25 October, 2015. It was only after the elections when the process of decommunisation accelerated.

Before its first stage was over (21 November), out of 32 cities, the names of which required the change, the suggestion for new names were announced to the parliament only by 13 cities. It was only in 18 cities where the public consultations were conducted, the remaining cities were located in the territories under occupation. As far as the change of the name of the streets is concerned, it was only partial success. The names commemorating the surnames of the most famous Communist activist were changed. Still, in many places, there were numerous names of the streets left that were given in honour of less famous local activists, which partly resulted from sheer ignorance. In Kyiv and Kharkiv, only the names of half of the streets got changed (Декомунізація триває, 2015, November 23).

Resigning from public consultations and not passing the resolution as to the new names of their dwelling places, local authorities practically deprived the local communities of the possibility to decide on that issue. Rather, it was UINR that were to choose the names of such dwelling places. For that reason, within UINR, a special expert committee was created, the committee consisting of historians, cultural heritage experts and linguists. UINR decided to give local governments a month more (till 21 December 2015) to announce their respective suggestions. However, there were the critical opinions towards decisive role of UINR also it's director Volodymyr Viatrovych in setting of the new local names (Абліцов, 2016).

During the selection of new names for the dwelling places, one both reinstated the historic names and reached for the events and figures from Ukrainian history – from the earliest times until contemporary ones. Hence, there were such streets as, for example: Vladimir the Great, Cossacks, Pylyp Orlyk, Petro Mohyla, Mykhailo Hrushevsky, Stepan Bandera, Ukrainian Helsinki Group, Independence or bearing the names of Ukrainian heroes the Revolution of Dignity and the war at Donbass.

Among the commemorated new heroes there were the persons who grossly contributed to culture, science, sport and other important spheres of life of Ukrainians (Les Kurbas, Maria Prymachenko, Oles Honchar, Nikolai Amosov, Bohdan Stupka, Valery Lobanovsky). There were examples of only nominal renaming, changing etymology of street names.

The change of the names of the dwelling places, especially cities, aroused greater emotions. In spite of that, the process of decommunisation proceeded slowly but steadily also embracing the east of Ukraine. In Donetsk Oblast, what was changes were the names of Artemivsk and Dzerzhinsk. In September 2015 the town councillors made Artemivsk recovered the previous name Bahmut. That is the way the city was called before 1924, when its name was converted in honour of the Russian revolutionist, the head of Donetsk Governorate Committee Artem (Fedor Sergeev). Dzerhinsk in October 2015 became Toreck – derived from the name of the river nearby.

Legal misgivings as to the capitals of two oblasts were announced – Dnipropetrovsk and Kirovohrad. The names of these Oblasts are recorded in art. 133 of the Ukrainian Constitution pertaining to the administrative-territorial regime of the state. Kirovohrad from 1939 commemorated the Russian Soviet political activist Sergey Kirov. The councillors of Kirovohrad submitted to Verkhovna Rada as many as 7 proposals for the name of the city – all in accordance with the results of the survey conducted among the city dwellers (the survey not being entirely reliable). In the surveys, the greatest number of votes were given to the former name Elisavetgrad (1784–1924); yet, the councillors themselves did not reach any compromise on that issue. To reach agreement the local Orthodox eparchy (under the Moscow Patriarchate) suggested to restore this name, rededicating it to St. Elisabeth. A part of the city dwellers objected to reinstating this name, including UINR. They did so because the names made references to the Russian imperial legacy and recommended the name Ingulsk.

During the celebration of the day of Memory of victims of political repressions in Ukraine (15 May 2016) in Bykovnia President Poroshenko highlighted that decommunisation process is very important. It needs to be brought to an end even if it had led to a tightening of the deadline of decommunisation (Іванів, 2016).

The Results of Decommunisation

23 December 2015 the Committee of Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine for National Civic Engineering of Regional Policy and Territorial Self-Government processed the suggestions as to the change of the names of dwelling places, submitted by territorial self-governments and state administration. It ratified 108 of them and as for the remaining ones, it suggested that self-governments reinstated historic names of those

dwelling places or take into consideration the recommendations issued by UINR. The decisions of 19 municipalities which did not want to change their communist names were recognized by the committee as the violation of Ukrainian legislation. To encourage them to change their mind, the committee decided to submit the additional bit of explanation to the heads of self-governments (Комітет, 2015, December 24).

4 February 2016 the Ukrainian parliament ratified the change of 175 dwelling places, which constituted only 18% of the assumed target. The remaining 814 dwelling places were lying in wait for the transformation of their names, including 144 ones under occupation. Just as much was to be done with respect to change the toponymical names in local cities. Overall 1028 of the names got changed (47%). The greatest number of decisions were made in Dnipropetrovsk (316), Kharhiv (231), Vinnytsia (135), which amounted to about 90% of the target. Even more place names in the capitals of Oblasts were on their way to the change (1177). The least success in this respect fell on Poltava, Odessa, Sumy, Mykolaiv and Kherson (До завершення, 2016).

The full implementation of decommunisation legislation was hampered for obvious reasons in Crimea and on the separatists-controlled parts of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts. Despite difficulties, and due to the initiative taken by the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People and UINR, Verkhovna Rada reinstated the old Tatar names of 70 dwelling places on the Crimean peninsula. UINR announced that the issue will be seen to its completion in Donbass.

17 March 2016 the Ukrainian parliament ratified the change of the names of successive 152 dwelling places. The majority of them were located in Sumy, Dnipropetrovsk, Kharhiv and Kherson Oblasts (Постанова, 2016). 12 May 2016 it was confirmed renaming of next 361 localities and 14 districts. The new names were given to 688 administrative units yet, including the occupied territory of the Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts (74) and Crimea (75). There were still 299 units to rename (Декомунізація триває, 2016, May 12). It was 40 cases, causing debate about the new name of the localities (Olszański, 2016, p. 3).

Soon before the completion deadline changes in geographical and topographical names (21 May 2016) increased number of regulations, which were adopted at the level of local government, state administration and Ukrainian Parliament. Before 19 May Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted the names of 9 districts and 291 localities, including in Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts. Finally, the regional centre Dnipropetrovsk got the name Dnipro. The culmination of the process of change Communist names on the map of Ukraine was renamed Kirovohrad, 14 July 2016. In the wake, Kirovohrad got a new name Kropyvnycky, from the surname of a father of Ukrainian theatre Mark Kropyvnucky (Кіровоград, 2016). Majority of dwellers did not support

any renaming of city and its new name (Rating group, 2016). In a sum it was renamed 1012 unites (Замість, 2016). Later appeals from some decision on renaming localities including Dnipropetrovsk were rejected by Ukrainian higher court instance.

The accurate number of the names of the streets and other toponymical places, which should be renamed, is difficult to assess. This issue refers to the competence of local governments. Despite the recommendations of UINR, they have taken sometimes the decision only on the nominal decommunisation. In the beginning of May 2016 UINR announced about 2500 renaming within towns and villages in all (Olszański, 2016). Although in some cases the assignment of new names, in particular those closely related to OUN-UPA, has caused a sharp debate among the residents.

The process of removal the monuments and other symbols of Communist era from the public space is not yet completed. Although the removal of Soviet monuments is advancing consistently, it raises many reservations (Литвиненко, 2016). It still remained about 900 statues of Lenin, mainly on territories uncontrolled by Ukraine's government. The removal of Communist monuments was impossible in Crimea and part of Donbass. Therefore implementation of the law should be done with a caution in closed to front line regions. Despite this, there have done the attempts to blow up the statue of Lenin – unsuccessful in the centre of Donetsk and successful in city park in Sudak in Crimea. The problems with the deadlines had even Ukrainian capital. It was weakly evolved in the process of removing the names of Soviet-era figures from the official names of institutions and industrial plants (Olszański, 2016).

The situation with decommunisation of the media was much worse. It consisted often in a removal from their titles or logotypes the elements of communist propaganda. While about 105 press titles that were to be subject to decommunisation, only 15 were in the process of registering new names, to 30 of them – the registration was denied due to the fact that they virtually stopped being published and 21 of them were released in the territories under occupation. The remaining 39 titles were still in need for decommunisation (До завершення, 2016). At the end of May 2016 more press titles (137) were subject to decommunisation, than then earlier estimated UINR. Given that 56 from them ignored the problem, 4 were in the process of the repeated registration, 4 have already done it, 21 were not the subject of registration, 25 were localized on territory out of the Ukrainian control, and in case of 3 press titles it wasn't established the violation of the Ukrainian legislation. The most press titles requiring decommunisation were on territory of Donetsk Oblast (44), Luhansk Oblast (22), Kyiv (12), Crimea (10) (Держкомтелерадіо, 2016). Some newspapers performed only formal decommunisation. For example „Komsomolskaya Pravda in Ukraine" reduced title to „KP".

Implementation of decommunisation became an excuse to decolonization, actually to de-Russification. For example the Moscow boulevard in Kyiv was rededicated to Stepan Bandera (Кальницкий, 2016). However, such tendency did not arise directly from text of law, but from politics of president Poroshenko and UINR.

Decomunisation did not lead to deeper state instability, although did not cut support for separatism. There was a lack of enthusiasm for the decommunisation in the Ukrainian society. All-Ukrainian poll from August 2015 indicates that 89.5% of Ukrainians were biased towards the project, among them 35% did not tolerate it completely. Only 10.5% were moderately loyal to the decommunisation, mainly residents of the Western region of Ukraine. The majority of population, especially seniors, believed that the implementation of the decommunisation legalized the destruction of historical heritage and monuments of the Soviet period (44%). However, a minority of Ukrainians (20%) believed that the elimination of Communist symbols from the public space would block the development of the state (Lviv media forum, 2015).

At he same time, despite discusses in press and locality council meeting, the project was not met with open public resistance. There are at least a few causes of this phenomenon. Firstly, there was increase in pro-Ukrainian patriotic sentiments after Euromaidan. Then, the opposition had less ideological than financial reasons. The new political geography, as a result of the Russian annexation of Crimea and war in Donbass, reduced the number of the active opponents. The Communist Party of Ukraine and Opposition Bloc (former pro-government Party of Regions), as the main political forces that opposed to decommunisation, "never translated their rhetoric into action or gained from their opposition to the laws" (Shevel, 2016). The additional factor making the process less contentious was the legal prohibition of communist parties 16 December 2015. Eventually, the majority of Ukrainians perceives the decommunisation as the most urgent, because the restoring of peace and economic stability are the priorities.

Conclusion

Ukrainian Revolution of Dignity dynamited the identity changes in Ukrainian society. The new state authority made use of anti-Russian and anti-Soviet social moods just to radically accelerate the process of bidding farewell to totalitarian past. They localized decommunisation not only as an element of politics of identity and politics of memory, but also as a component of a wide concept of national safety. The effect of the law on the prohibition of the communist propaganda and its symbols was a renaming almost all localities, thousands of streets and squares with Soviet-era names, as well as removal the numerous Communist monuments and symbols from the public

places. On the other hand, the quick adopting the law, without any public debate caused a correct criticism. Therefore decommunisation law required an amendment. However, the fears that implementation of law may trigger the serious protests and conflicts turn out to be exaggerated. A forbidden the communist parties decreased an opposition to the project. Though the decommunisation did not meet with greater resistance there was a lack of the widespread enthusiasm and support within society, more for economic reason. As well as it did not reduce support for separatism. Therefore, the decommunisation of the public space in Ukraine had success only in part. It was the shedding of the Soviet symbolic legacy. The sheer monumental and toponymic decommunisation had less impact on the internal process of changing in mentality of Ukrainians, than then it assumed Ukrainian authority. It is still beyond the shadow of a doubt that the decommunisation will require more time as a deeper and long-term phenomenon.

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