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HOW AND WHY DO POLITICIANS USE HISTORY?

Review: Heorhiy Kasianov. Past Continuous: Historical Politics of the 1980-ies – 2000-ies: Ukraine and its Neighbours.

Kyiv: Laurus, Antropos-Logos-Film. 430 s.

ЯК І ДЛЯ ЧОГО ПОЛІТИКИ ВИКОРИСТОВУЮТЬ ІСТОРІЮ?

Рецензія: Касьянов Георгій. Past Continuous: Історична політика 1980-х – 2000-х: Україна та сусіди. Київ: Laurus, Антропос-Логос-Фільм. 430 с.

The space of the historical memory consolidates people in the stable societies, where value systems are already in place. Instead, in the polarized and especially in post-totalitarian societies, it is an area of risks which are not always easy to explain; after all, there is no unified vision of history even in the developed democratic societies. Therefore, it is better to have a sensible policy of the historical memory than an uncontrolled erasure of memory under the conditions of a liberal democracy and political pluralism. Even though professional historians can distance themselves from the current political developments, they cannot be completely detached from the society and academic discourses in which an analytic historiography functions. This conclusion is sustained (perhaps contrary to the author's intention) by Heorhiy Kasianov's new book «Past Continuous: Historical Politics of the 1980-ies – 2000-ies: Ukraine

and its Neighbours. The author is the head of the Department of Modern History and Politics of the Institute of History of Ukraine of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine.

H. Kasianov stipulates that a historical policy means the policy aiming at the purposeful design and practical application of the 'historical memory' and other forms of collective imagining of the past as well as its representations, in particular a professional historiography, in politics. Moreover, it is carried out on behalf of the political, cultural, ethnic and other social groups in their struggle for power, and as a means of keeping or redistributing it. At the same time, it can serve as a means of securing political, cultural and other forms of loyalty of large social groups, as well as for maintaining ideological and political control over them. The author deduces the strength of such influence and its appeal from the fact that the historical policy is about the appropriation or creation of a symbolic capital, which is closely linked to generating other forms of capital, such as social, political, and economic. Perhaps the most distinctive feature of the historical policy is the ideological and political instrumentalization of history, knowledge, ideas about the past and memory, as well as the utilitarian use of history and memory in domestic politics, legal and legislative practices, social conflicts, and a foreign policy. The author emphasizes accurately that the historical policy not only appeals to already existing cultural stereotypes, but also creates the new ones.

The author deals with various agents of the historical policy at length – the state structures, the civil society institutions, in particular the local communities, the mass media, the educational institutions, the virtual communities in the social networks. It is argued that in Ukraine, from the late 1980-ies to the early the 2000-ies, several models of the historical memory co-existed. The first one, called «exclusive», dominated in the two main narratives of memory associated with two different forms of a cultural and political identity: national / nationalistic (mostly in the west of Ukraine) and Soviet-nostalgic (observed primarily in Donbas region and in the Crimea). The second «inclusive» model proposed to integrate various versions of the collective / historical memory into a single memorial and a symbolic space. The third «mixed», or «ambivalent», model proposed a simultaneous coexistence of different, at times ideologically and politically incompatible, versions of a collective memory in parallel public spaces. It should be noted that presenting the national and nationalist narratives as one raises serious doubts since the first is wider, more accepting and less controversial in terms of the content and forms of expression, as well as its purpose compared to the latter.

The author provides an unexpected but well-reasoned conclusion that the Soviet-nostalgic narrative of history and memory usually borders and is combined with an imperial (imperial-nostalgic) narrative not only in Russia but also in Ukraine. However, after the Euromaidan of 2014, the Soviet-nostalgic and mixed narratives have been replaced by the national / nationalist ones. It is also argued that the national / nationalist narrative can be combined with the imperial, as evidenced by the cult of the Habsburg era in Galicia and in Bukovyna. This argument is based on the fact that in Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, Kolomyia, Chernivtsi and other cities of the western region there are many cafes with the nostalgic names («Tsarisar», i.e., Ukrainian version of the title «Kaiser», etc.) and several sculptures in honor of Franz Josef II have been inaugurated.

Further in the book H. Kasianov examines different approaches to the nature of history and memory relations, which can be seen as either incompatible, or identical or complementary phenomena. At the same time (following Allan Megill) he proposes to consider three types of historiography: affirmative, didactic and analytical. The first (uncritical) type subjects past events to the contemporary projects. It primarily works towards consolidation of a certain community, be it nation, state, political or religious group. In fact, it is a legitimate «marriage of history and

memory». The didactic historiography shifts more towards analytic history, yet within its memory is not viewed as separate from historiography. In contrast, the analytical history (historiography) claims to be separate from memory; actually, it purports to offer criticism that comes from outside the realm of memory/ies. Thus, the author comes to the conclusion that «the historical policy» can be described as an intentional deliberate blending of history and memory, as a domination of an affirmative historiography, or as the attempts to separate history from memory, to reconcile them with the means of didactic history.

The book argues that the ideal historical policy characteristic of pluralist societies and stable democracies is an unrestricted coexistence of all three types of histories / historiographies, where the affirmative and didactic histories perform their functions without undermining the authority of the analytic history, which, in its turn, is free to reflect on the other two.

The subplot on the decomunization offered in the book deserves a special attention (and can be of use to the authorities). The author elaborates on an important component of the historical policy of most countries in Eastern Europe in the following areas: rehabilitation of victims of political repressions and financial compensations to them; restitution and financial compensation to individuals and institutions; lawsuits against functionaries of the communist regime in Romania, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia; bans on displaying the Communist and the Nazi symbols in public; laws against a public denial of crimes of the Communist (as well as the Nazi) regimes in Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Lithuania; the memory laws that reformed the official memory space; the lustration laws in Albania, Bulgaria, Hungary, East Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and Estonia. Various specialized institutions that were involved in the establishment of the historical policy are also dealt with: the Institute of National Remembrance in Poland, the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes in the Czech Republic, the Committee for National Remembrance in Hungary, the Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes and the Remembrance of the Romanian Emigration in Romania, the Institute of National Remembrance in Ukraine, and the others. The activities of other stakeholders in the realm of the historical policy in Ukraine – the President, the Verkhovna Rada (Parliament), the Cabinet of Ministers, the National Bank of Ukraine, the national postal service, courts, the Security Service of Ukraine, local authorities and self-government, archives, and museums – are identified and analyzed. Obviously, a special focus is on the Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance, which, according to H. Kasianov, for a long time has been conducting a domestic historical policy that is prone to cause conflicts, since it boils down to administrative and political imposition of the one and only (usually pro-government) version of the collective / historical memory at the expense of the others. In addition to this, the book offers a critical analysis of the activities of non-state stakeholders: the political parties, NGOs, the mass media, the social media communities.

Analyzing the activities of the stakeholders of Ukrainian historical policy of the 1980-ies-2000-ies, the researcher uses a typology of «mnemonic actors», proposed by the political scientists Michael Bernhard and Jan Kubik. According to it, there are four ideal-type actors, a warrior, a pluralist, an abnegator and a prospective, who are engaged in different practices. Following his colleagues, H. Kasianov claims that the Ukrainian case is dominated by prospective (interpreting the past as a collection of mistakes which need to be considered and corrected) and warriors (supporting the only 'true' vision of history) (pp. 101–102).

A detailed typology of actors in the realm of Ukrainian historical policy offered in the book made it possible to identify a whole network of institutions and organizations that make use of the past instrumental. This multi-level typology allowed the researcher to demonstrate the regional specifics of Ukrainian memory, and, consequently, its heterogeneity. In our opinion, more attention should be given to the role of the state and private museums in contemporary political

practices, as their public and exhibition activities are often instrumentalized by the authorities, especially at the regional level.

H. Kasianov observes rightly that «historical policy» is produced by public servants of various ranks, political and public figures, «discourse-mongers» (journalists, writers, cultural figures). In this company a special place is reserved for a professional group whose main occupation is to study, to interpret and to explain the past, that is, historians. The author described the activities of the latter in the context of ideological changes of the late 1980-ies and the nationalization of the Soviet narrative. In addition, the historian has paid special attention to the phenomenon of the public history, discussing its virtual absence from the Ukrainian cultural tradition. Few active public Ukrainian historians (Yaroslav Hrytsak, Andriy Portnov, Vasyl Rasevych) are treated as an evidence of attempts to bring foreign (French, German, Polish) experience to Ukraine.

H. Kasianov understands the gravity or even the danger of manipulating the past both in Ukraine and its closest neighbours (Russia, Poland). It is the intense, systematic actions of Russian and Ukrainian politicians, and the differences among the Ukrainians in relation to the past that led to the annexation of the Crimea and the war in Donbas region. Conflict potential of historical policy is shown on the example of the disputes about historical events between Ukraine and Poland and Russia. In democratic Poland, the communicative memory and political manipulation of the Kresy and right-wing parties led to the beginning of the anti-Ukrainian campaign under the slogans of «returning to the truth» about the Volhynia tragedy of 1943. The historian showed how a systematic celebration of the tragedy anniversaries radicalized Polish society and led to an introduction at a state level of the term «genocide» as denoting the Ukrainian-Polish tragedy of 1943. Another issue that caused tensions in Ukrainian and Polish societies was the issue of the restoration of the Cemetery of the Defenders of Lwów on the Lychakiv cemetery. Analyzing Ukrainian-Polish historical discussions, the author identifies a phenomenon which he calls a «division of labour», that is, an active role played by the right-wing and right-conservative organizations that «cultivated an exclusive model of the historical memory based on the national / nationalist narrative» (p. 323). The discussions with Russia followed the similar patterns and made use of comparable discursive practices. Their central themes were Holodomor of 1932 – 1933 and opposition to the aggressive Ukrainian nationalism. The author called this a conflict between the Soviet-nostalgic and the national / nationalistic narratives of memory.

To the honor of the author it should be said that he acknowledged existing gaps in his monograph. An important historical policy stakeholder missing in the book is church, its structures and institutions. However, some research has been already done in this area; Lviv researcher Nazar Kis in his book «Memory and Identity of Ukrainian Greek Catholics» (2018) talks about sources of the historical policy of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church. Yet, similar activities of the Orthodox churches, the Jewish and Muslim religious organizations require further studies.

To sum up, the new book by Heorhiy Kasianov is undeniably a positive signal for the Ukrainian academic community. This is a study of the secondary sources, a very popular direction of the historical research in Western historiography, yet underrepresented in domestic academia. Foreign researchers (including Polish, German, and French) started to reflect on the phenomenon of memory and its influence on everyday life, political and social practices a long time ago, while the Ukrainian research community (with some exceptions) is still at the very beginning of defining the role and the place of a historical heritage in a contemporary public field. Even though H. Kasianov admitted that the historical policy and its actors do not appeal to him personally «since they clearly or implicitly demonstrate an irresistible desire to make to march in one line those, who are not adapted to such an exciting task», his work is an example of a reasonable academic approach to such a complex phenomenon as a modern Ukrainian historical policy.

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