

Muravska, Svitlana; Hodovanska, Oksana

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# ORGANIZATION OF MUSEUMS OF WESTERN UKRAINE<sup>1</sup> AFTER THE FULL-SCALE INVASION OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

SVITLANA MURAVSKA – OKSANA HODOVANSKA

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## ABSTRACT/ABSTRAKT:

During the war Russian troops are carrying out a targeted and systematic destruction of cultural and religious monuments of Ukraine with the help of various types of weapons and aviation. UNESCO World Heritage sites in Ukraine are under threat of destruction. In the course of modern war, the entire territory of Ukraine is in danger. At the same time, the western Ukrainian regions are considered to be a relatively safe territory. The population from the front-line areas, museum collections are evacuated here.<sup>1</sup>

One of the first initiatives to save Ukrainian museums was the Museum Crisis Center, the Heritage Emergency Response Initiative and the Western Ukrainian Union of Museums is based on substantial international assistance. Foremost due to international support, it was possible to receive grants for generators, power banks, as well as the purchase of personal protective equipment for museum workers in case of chemical and nuclear attacks.

The activity of Western Ukraine museums was focused on two main directions. Firstly, on financial assistance to colleagues and organizing the evacuation of museum collections from the zone of hostilities or occupation. And secondly, on the preservation of museum valuables in the museums of Western Ukraine by digitizing them and filling the museum funds with the necessary amount of packaging materials.

On the other hand, as it follows from the short field study of the master's degree students, there were only minor fears or worries about possible military actions of the Russian Federation in the museum environment. At the same time there were no government instructions, explanations or warnings about the preparation for the possible evacuation of museum valuables or their more reliable storage. Unfortunately, letters from the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine belatedly responded to the current situation after February 2022 having left the main initiative to non-governmental unions and organizations. In the museum environment after the full-scale invasion of the Russian Federation only personal initiatives were the most efficient in forming support and assistance for museum workers.

## Fungování muzeí na západní Ukrajině po totální invazi Ruské federace

V průběhu války ruské jednotky cíleně a systematicky likvidují kulturní a církevní památky Ukrajiny s pomocí různých druhů zbraní a letectva. Památkám světového dědictví UNESCO na Ukrajině tak hrozí zničení. Během současné války je celé území Ukrajiny v ohrožení. Oblasti na západě Ukrajiny jsou přitom považovány za relativně bezpečné území. Je sem evakuováno obyvatelstvo a muzejní sbírky z frontových oblastí.

Jednou z prvních iniciativ na záchranu ukrajinských muzeí bylo Muzejní krizové centrum. Hnutí na záchranu ohrožených památek a Asociace muzeí západní Ukrajiny do velké míry využívají mezinárodní pomoc. Především díky zahraniční podpoře se podařilo získat dotace na generátory, powerbanky a také na nákup osobních ochranných prostředků pro muzejní pracovníky pro případ chemických a jaderných útoků.

Činnost západoukrajinských muzeí je zaměřena dvěma hlavními směry. Prvním je finanční pomoc kolegům a organizování evakuace muzejních sbírek z nepřátelské či okupační zóny. Druhý hlavní zájem se soustřeďuje na uchování cenných předmětů v muzeích západní Ukrajiny pomocí jejich digitalizace a na

<sup>1</sup> Mostly only for three regions (oblasts) – Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, and Ternopil. But it is also often used to designate the territories of seven regions, in addition to three abovementioned. They are Volyn, Rivne, Chernivtsi and Zakarpattia regions. These are the territories that were annexed to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic of the USSR at the beginning and after the end of the Second World War.

zajištění potřebného množství obalových materiálů pro depozitáře. Jak ale vyplynulo z krátkého oborového průzkumu studentů magisterského studia, v muzejním prostředí panovaly jen malé obavy či strach z možných vojenských akcí Ruské federace. Zároveň neexistovaly žádné oficiální pokyny, vysvětlení či výstrahy ohledně přípravy na možnou evakuaci cenných muzeálií nebo jejich bezpečnější uložení. Opatření ze strany Ministerstva kultury a informační politiky Ukrajiny bohužel na současnou situaci po únoru 2022 reagovaly opožděně, přenechávaje tak hlavní zátěž na bedrech mimovládních sdružení a neziskových organizací. V muzejním prostředí po totální invazi Ruské federace byla proto podpora a pomoc muzejním pracovníkům nejefektivněji organizována na základě osobní iniciativy.

#### KEYWORDS/KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA:

*Heritage – destruction – Western Ukrainian museums – postcolonial methodology*  
*památky – ničení – muzea*  
*západní Ukrajiny – postkoloniální metodologie*

#### Russia's tactics in waging war against Ukraine include the destruction of Ukrainian monuments

With the beginning of full-scale invasion of Russia, Russian troops are carrying out a targeted and systematic destruction of cultural and religious monuments of Ukraine with the help of various types of weapons and aviation. Museums, memorials, university buildings have fallen under air strikes carried out by Russia; churches, temples, cathedrals and monuments are being bombed. Since February 24, 2022, more than 400 objects of cultural heritage in Ukraine have been seriously

damaged or destroyed by Russian troops. UNESCO World Heritage sites in Ukraine are under threat of destruction. The Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine has created a special register of damaged and destroyed monuments.<sup>2</sup> It also collects and documents evidence of crimes against Ukrainian culture.<sup>3</sup> The Ministry opened an account to raise funds for the reconstruction of destroyed cultural objects.<sup>4</sup>

As of now, three museums have been destroyed. The first one, *Ivankiv Historical and Local History Museum* in Kyiv region, which is located 83 km from Kyiv. It was founded in 1980 by the local historian Petro Zinchenko. Before its destruction, the museum housed 410 exhibits representing local flora, fauna and artifacts from the Second World War and the Chernobyl disaster. The pride of the museum was the collection of works of art of Ukrainian folk artist Maria Prymachenko in the genre of “naive art”. She was one of the most famous folk artists of Ukraine. In 1930s Pablo Picasso and Marc Chagall were fascinated by her paintings at the International Exhibition in Paris. About 25 paintings by Maria Prymachenko were stored in the museum. At the end of February 2022, during the battle for the

town of Ivankiv the museum burned down after being bombed. Maria Prymachenko's works were considered lost. Later, there were reports that the residents of Ivankiv saved some paintings and other exhibits.<sup>5</sup>

The next one is the *Museum of Local History in the city of Okhtyrka*, the regional center of Sumy Region. The museum was located in an estate of the late 19th–early 20th centuries. Almost 10,000 exhibits were stored there – collections of ceramics, fauna, flora and archaeology. On the night of March 7–8, 2022, a bomb fell on the Okhtyrka City Council, which also destroyed the museum. The bomb exploded three meters from the facility, so the building was badly damaged. The museum had a destroyed roof, wooden beams between floors, cracked walls, broken windows and doors. There were practically no losses among the exhibits, but the museum building, as a landmark of local importance, could not be repaired. Currently, the museum has moved to the former children's library in the city.<sup>6</sup>

The third one is the *National Literary and Memorial Museum of H. S. Skovoroda*. The museum was located in the building of the 18th century, where the most famous Ukrainian philosopher of the that time Hryhoriy Skovoroda worked and was buried nearby. The adjacent ancient park, which layout has practically not changed since the time of Skovoroda, is also of historical importance.

<sup>2</sup> Zberezhit' ukraïns'ku kul'turu [Save Ukrainian culture]. In *Vikipedia – vilna entsyklopediia* [online]. [accessed 2023-07-17]. Available from www: <[https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%97%D0%B1%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%B6%D1%96%D1%82%D1%8C\\_%D1%83%D0%BA%D1%80%D0%B0%D1%97%D0%BD%D1%81%D1%8C%D0%BA%D1%83\\_%D0%BA%D1%83%D0%BB%D1%8C%D1%82%D1%83%D1%80%D1%83](https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%97%D0%B1%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%B6%D1%96%D1%82%D1%8C_%D1%83%D0%BA%D1%80%D0%B0%D1%97%D0%BD%D1%81%D1%8C%D0%BA%D1%83_%D0%BA%D1%83%D0%BB%D1%8C%D1%82%D1%83%D1%80%D1%83)>.

<sup>3</sup> *Destroyed Cultural Heritage Of Ukraine/ Zruinovana kulturna spadshchyna Ukrainy* [online]. [accessed 2023-07-17]. Available from www: <<https://culturecrimes.mkp.gov.ua/>>.

<sup>4</sup> Zapochatkovano zbir koshtiv na vidnovlennia zruinovanoi rosiianamy kulturnoi spadshchyny [Fundraising for the restoration of cultural heritage destroyed by Russians launched]. In *Uriadovyi kurier: hazeta kabynetu minystrye Ukrainy* [online]. [accessed 2023-07-31]. Available from www: <<https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/news/zapochatkovano-zbir-koshtiv-na-vidnovlennya/>>.

<sup>5</sup> Ivankivs'kyy rayonnyy istoryko-krayeznavchyy muzey 1981–2022 [Ivankiv Historical and Local History Museum 1981–2022]. In *Instagram* [online]. [accessed 2023-07-17]. Available from www: <[https://www.instagram.com/p/Ch7FzJ6NaZw/?img\\_index=1](https://www.instagram.com/p/Ch7FzJ6NaZw/?img_index=1)>.

<sup>6</sup> *Okhtyrsk'kyy mis'kyy krayeznavchyy muzey 1995–2022* [Okhtyrka Museum of Local History 1995–2022]. [online]. [accessed 2023-07-31]. Available from www: <<https://savethespot.org/museums/local-history-museum-of-okhtyrka.html>>.

On May 7, 2022, the Russian military purposefully destroyed this museum during the shelling. The shell flew under the roof of the building, a fire broke out and engulfed the entire building. The most valuable exhibits of the collection were saved, they were moved in advance to a safe place, but the memorial house suffered irreparable losses. The cynicism and irony consists in the fact that in 2022, according to the decision of UNESCO, the world commemorated the 300th anniversary of Hryhoriy Skovoroda. Due to this, restoration was carried out in the museum, grand events were planned that, unfortunately, did not take place.<sup>7</sup>

### Western Ukraine as a relatively safe territory for museums during the war

In the course of modern war, the entire territory of Ukraine is in danger. The facts of missile strikes and air raids are recorded in all regions of Ukraine. For example, the city of Lviv, which is considered the capital of Western Ukraine and is located thousands of kilometers from the epicenter of hostilities, is subject to Russian missile attacks as well. The first strikes were carried out already in March 2022, and the latest took place from July 5 to 6, 2023 destroying a residential building, a landmark of local importance, almost in the central part of the city. Russian missile strikes are always accompanied by numerous human casualties. At the same time, the western Ukrainian regions are considered to be a relatively safe territory. The population from the front-line areas, museum collections are evacuated here. This is also the place of large

relocation (movement) of Ukrainian businesses.

One of the first initiatives to save Ukrainian museums was the *Museum Crisis Center*. In her interview, the initiator of the center and at the same time the director of the *Lviv Memorial Museum of Totalitarian Regimes "Territory of Terror"* Olha Honchar talks about the distribution of individual financial assistance to museum workers who remained in Ukraine, continue their professional activities but are in difficult life circumstances and need help. First of all these are museum workers from Donetsk, Luhansk and Kherson region and Zaporizhzhia. Donors of the crisis center are international funds, Ukrainian businesses and Ukrainian foundations, private funds and funds from auctions, actions in support of Ukraine, during which funds were collected. The museum crisis center unites several non-profitable organizations, museums and individual museum workers who left Ukraine and organize help in various European countries.<sup>8</sup>

Very efficient is the work of non-governmental organization *Heritage Emergency Response Initiative*. Their quick response to the war and protection of museum collections consists in finding and creating new opportunities to support the cultural heritage of Ukraine. For example, the organization acts as an intermediary in supporting Ukrainian cultural projects with the funds of the Stabilization Fund for Culture and Education from Goethe-Institut with the

help of special funds from the additional budget of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Germany. In 2022 70 projects in Ukraine have been supported. As of now, a new grant opportunity is opened for cultural organizations and museums.<sup>9</sup> Another example of their assistance to museums can be found on Facebook page of the *Archaeological Museum of the Institute of Ukrainian Studies named after Ivan Kryp'yakevych of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine*, located in Lviv. There is a post of gratitude for the received generator, power banks, torches and work clothes.<sup>10</sup>

The non-governmental organization *West Ukrainian Union of Museums*, created in February 2016, also joined campaign of helping museums during the war. It was created for the purpose of realization and protection of professional, cultural, educational, scientific interests, popularization of museum work, training, internship of young specialists, etc. Ihor Tymets, the director of Vynnyky Historical and Local History Museum, located near Lviv, was elected as the head of the Union.<sup>11</sup> The Union organizes charity fairs on the territory of the museum to raise funds for the Armed Forces of Ukraine. On Facebook page of the West Ukrainian Union of Museums, you

<sup>9</sup> Shtab poryatunku spadshchyny/Heritage Emergency Response Initiative. In *Facebook* [online]. [accessed 2023-07-15]. Available from [www: <https://www.facebook.com/HERI.Ukraine>](http://www.facebook.com/HERI.Ukraine).

<sup>10</sup> Arkheolohichnoho muzeyu Instytutu ukrayinoznavstva imeni Ivana Kryp'yakevycha NAN Ukrayiny [Archaeological Museum of the Institute of Ukrainian Studies named after Ivan Kryp'yakevich of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine]. In *Facebook* [online]. [accessed 2023-07-15]. Available from [www: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100067856100294>](http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100067856100294).

<sup>11</sup> Zakhidnoukrayins'ka spilka muzeyiv postala u L'vovi [The West Ukrainian Union of Museums was founded in Lviv]. In *Prostir. Museum* [online]. 12 February 2016 [accessed 2023-07-31]. Available from [www: <http://prostir.museum/ua/post/36590>](http://prostir.museum.ua/post/36590).

<sup>7</sup> *Natsional'nyy literaturno-memorial'nyy muzey H. S. Skovorody 1972–2022* [National Literary and Memorial Museum of H. S. Skovoroda 1972–2022]. [online]. [accessed 2023-07-16]. Available from [www: <https://savethespot.org/museums/hryhori-skovoroda-literary-memorial-museum.html>](https://savethespot.org/museums/hryhori-skovoroda-literary-memorial-museum.html).

<sup>8</sup> PUSHNOVA, Tetiana. «Tse toloka, de muzeynyky sami ryatuyut' sebu i ukrayins'ku spadshchynu»: initsiatorka Muzeynoho kryzovoho tsentru Ol'ha Honchar [This is a place where museum workers save themselves and Ukrainian heritage: the initiator of the Museum Crisis Center Olha Honchar]. In *Ukrainska pravda* [online]. [accessed 2023-07-31]. Available from [www: <https://lifepravda.com.ua/culture/2023/03/10/253273/>](https://lifepravda.com.ua/culture/2023/03/10/253273/).

can often read thank-you posts and report posts about international partners and the help they provided. Partners are German colleagues, who with the funds of the *Federal Minister of Culture and mass media* (BKM), send aid to Ukrainian museums. This aid is transported to nature reserves, archives, libraries and wooden churches, which are architectural monuments of Ukraine.<sup>12</sup>

### Field research as part of the master's course

Working as lecturers at the Department of History, Museum Studies and Cultural Heritage in *Lviv Polytechnic National University*, we conduct various courses on the master's program. One of them was on *The principles of legal regulation of cultural heritage and cultural tourism in Ukraine* conducted by Oksana Hodovanska for master's degree students in the II semester. As part of the course, together with the master's degree students she prepared and implemented a mini-project (field research) on the topic *Activities of the museums of Lviv and Ternopil regions after the full-scale invasion of the Russian Federation*. The main goal of the project was to find out and identify the impact of the full-scale invasion of the Russian Federation on the work of museums in the two Western Ukrainian territories. Among the main tasks of the project were: to identify fears before and after February 24, 2022 (taking into account the fact that military actions of the Russian Federation against Ukraine began in 2014); to find out the priority security measures in museums for the preservation of cultural values; to

show the support of international organizations in the protection of museum values; to find out the reasons for the restoration of exhibition and excursion work in museums. The project tasks were planned to be implemented by recording 10–15 interviews with experts, employees and managers of museums of Western Ukrainian territories, studying documents and photographic materials.

Thematic interviews were conducted according to a prepared questionnaire, which was compiled by Oksana Hodovanska together with master's degree students. It included several main blocks arising from the set tasks. Among them were range of anxiety and uncertainty after the start of military operations by the Russian Federation in Donbas and Crimea; fears before and in the first weeks after February 24, 2022; priority security measures in museums to preserve cultural values; finding and organizing help from the international partners; ways of communication in the museum community, etc. During the interviews, the masters made field observations, took photographs, and copied certain authorized documents.

After the completion of this mini-field research and analysis of the collected information, in June 2023, it was planned to prepare individual projects by master's degree students. In these individual projects, masters could offer specific conclusions on the impact of a full-scale invasion of the Russian Federation on the activities of museums and prepare recommendations for museum managers and local authorities to create or clarify a real action plan for the preservation of cultural values during martial law.

Unfortunately, due to some personal problems of the master's degree students and the difficulties associated with air raids and curfew during the field research, it was only possible to partially fulfill the set tasks. 5 interviews were recorded and separate documents of the Department of Culture and Tourism of Ternopil Regional Military Administration and orders of the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine were studied. The analysis of the recorded interviews made it possible to assert that museum workers were a bit frightened about the actions of the Russian Federation after 2014, since the beginning of hostilities. Especially if they were involved in the volunteer movement in the country and directly knew about Russian methods of dealing with Ukrainian cultural heritage in the occupied part of Ukraine. After 2014 in some museums a group of objects was identified, which should be preserved first of all if the danger is close. Scenarios for the evacuation of museum valuables were discussed by museum management before the start of a full-scale war as well. Options where to hide were considered. In order to avoid risks, information about hiding places or evacuation plans was not shared among employees. At the same time among the majority of museums and state departments workers, no one took "Putin's threats" seriously, so no real steps were implemented in advance.

In the first weeks after February 24, 2022, everyone was mostly in a state of shock, stress, and fear. After overcoming the first shock, personal initiatives to help museum colleagues, who immediately found themselves in the war zone, began. As Andriy Levchuk, the director of Kremenets Local History Museum said: "*...first of all we thought about the people. Then I made a post*

<sup>12</sup> HS «Zakhidnoukrayins'ka spilka muzeyiv» [Non-profitable union "West Ukrainian Union of Museums"]. In *Facebook* [online]. [accessed 2023-07-15]. Available from [www: <https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story\\_fbid=pfbid023qKvQVg6oshzAfqHSXrH7kP6wZ5aB-mN9guWtK4DWPEJ3Xh96aKjDv66FPzB3MohT-l&id=100080657974159>](https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=pfbid023qKvQVg6oshzAfqHSXrH7kP6wZ5aB-mN9guWtK4DWPEJ3Xh96aKjDv66FPzB3MohT-l&id=100080657974159).

on Facebook community saying that I was ready to accept and help colleagues from the eastern regions. Noting that I can accept the evacuation of the museum or funds of institutions from the east of Ukraine, where active hostilities began...”<sup>13</sup> The head of Dergachi Local History Museum (also known as “Bagrachiv Manor”) from the village of Dergachi, located 18 km from Kharkiv, responded to the abovementioned suggestion and immediately moved to Kremenets. The museum’s collections temporarily found shelter in Kremenets Local History Museum. Subsequently, the museum objects were transported to Volyn region.

The next steps in the organization of museum work were closing of current exhibitions, packing and preparation for the evacuation of the most valuable objects. In addition to personal initiatives and communication between familiar museum workers, local self-government bodies and central state bodies resumed their work and joined the evacuation and preservation of museum collections. Based on letters from the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine, the museum management started providing information on the amount of information that had cultural value or contained personal data in Google Forms via a special link.<sup>14</sup> At the same time, preparations for placing state information resources and public electronic registers on cloud resources located outside Ukraine had begun. Electronic records of museum exhibits that were created in special software or photos/scans of handwritten records were subject to mandatory back-up on

<sup>13</sup> Interview with Andriy Levchuk, director of Kremenets Local History Museum, March 8, 2023.

<sup>14</sup> *Departament kul'tury ta turyzmu Ternopil's'koyi obldierzhadministratsiyi* [Decree of Department of Culture and Tourism of Ternopil Regional State Administration], no. 02.01-46/324, March 28, 2022.

the cloud storage; accounting cards of museum values; materials of photo fixations of museum values (photos of exhibits and values of the fund); video and photo materials in electronic form that have a unique cultural significance and others.<sup>15</sup>

In museum community the main sources of obtaining information about assistance or grant support of international organizations were the mass media, social networks and websites of official state institutions.<sup>16</sup> Firstly, museum workers mention the received humanitarian aid in the form of powerful generators, plywood (building material, glued wood), packaging materials for storage or evacuation of museum objects. The aid came from Ukrainian organizations that accumulated foreign aid. Among such non-governmental organizations were the *Western Ukrainian Union of Museums* and the *Heritage Rescue Headquarters/Heritage Emergency Response Initiative*.<sup>17</sup>

Limited funding was noticeable for most museum workers, when their salary was only 2/3 of the usual amount. Almost all of 2022, the majority of cultural institutions that were communally owned by territorial communities had reduced funding. For example, Zaloztsi Local History Museum (located in the urban-type village of Zaloztsi, Ternopil region) received full payment and funding only from January 2023.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> *Shchodo nadannya informatsiyi. Povidomlennya Ministers'ka kul'tury ta informatsynoyi polityky Ukrainy* [Notice of the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine, Regarding the provision of information], no. 2068/39.2, March 26, 2022.

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Natalya Sobkovych, head of the Section of Culture and Cultural Heritage Protection in the Department of Culture and Tourism of Ternopil Regional Military Administration, April 18, 2023.

<sup>17</sup> Interview with Andriy Levchuk, director of Kremenets Local History Museum. March 8, 2023.

<sup>18</sup> Interview with Vasyl Ilchysyn, director of Zaloztsi Local History Museum, March 8, 2023.

## Conclusions

It is appropriate to start conclusions with the fact that for the Ukrainian academic community Russian tactics to destroy cultural and religious monuments of Ukraine in the modern war was not a surprise. The current actions of the Russian Federation are a logical continuation of the colonial strategies of the USSR in relation to all Soviet republics, except for the Russian Soviet Republic itself. If we analyze the Soviet period of Ukrainian museum work, applying the post-colonial methodology, then the position of the Russian Federation as the legal successor of the USSR becomes quite clear.

A new stage in the development of postcolonial studies in the 1990s was related to the involvement of issues regarding the post-socialist countries of Eastern Europe. The basis for this was the understanding that the former Soviet block was structurally a system where the mechanisms of colonization, enslavement and domination worked. And after the collapse of the USSR, which functioned as an imperial structure, postcolonial studies spread to the postsocialist area. In this context the experience of Ukraine, which was in a situation of semi-colonial dependence starting from the 17th century and which experienced totalitarian colonization in the 20th century, especially suited to the application of postcolonial methodology. This methodology unmasks open and hidden mechanisms of colonial and neocolonial enslavement.<sup>19</sup> In general the

<sup>19</sup> HUNDOROVA, Tamara. Heneratsynnyy vyklyk i postkolonializm na skhodi Yevropy. Vstupni zauvazhennya [Generational challenge and postcolonialism in Eastern Europe. Introductory remarks]. In HUNDOROVA, Tamara and Agnieszka MATUSIAK (eds.). *Postkolonializm. Heneratsiyi. Kul'tura* [Postcolonialism. Generations. Culture]. [online]. Kyiv: Laurus, 2014, pp. 7–8 [accessed 2023-07-24]. Available from www: <<http://uamoderna.com/images/biblioteka/Postcolonialism.pdf>>.

thesis that postcolonialism and postcommunism are united is gaining more and more popularity in the Ukrainian academic environment. Both of them demystify the grand narratives of the past, colonial and soviet, respectively. Both intellectual trends analyze personal and collective memory; explore the nature of resistance to authorities.<sup>20</sup> The use of postcolonial methodology in museum work is not a banal transfer of western methods and is not a tribute to intellectual fashion but offers new interpretations, new aspects and directions of research. At the same time, the fact that the postcolonial approach does not solve all museum problems of soviet-era Ukraine, is generally understood.

In museum work, which is in the wider context of culture, the key category “coloniality” can be explained in the following way. Likewise the economic sphere, where actions and structures that subordinate the economic activity of the territory to the interests of an external agent are “colonial”. Thus, in culture, that which subordinates the cultural interests of the colonized to the interests of the colonizer, will be considered colonial. The attribute “colonial” can be applied to cultural phenomena if they show a tendency to subordinate the interests of the colonized community to the interests of the colonizer. In the field of culture, the strategies of colonialism include the exploitation of cultural resources, i.e. the people, institutions, histories, cultural artifacts of the colonized

20 HUNDOROVA, Tamara. Postkolonial'nyy roman heneratsiynoyi travmy ta postkolonial'ne chytannya na skhodi Yevropy [Postcolonial novel of generational trauma and postcolonial reading in Eastern Europe]. In HUNDOROVA, Tamara and Agnieszka MATUSIAK (eds.). *Postkolonializm. Heneratsiyni. Kul'tura* [Postcolonialism. Generations. Culture]. [online]. Kyiv: Laurus, 2014, p. 29 [accessed 2023-07-24]. Available from www: <<http://uamoderna.com/images/biblioteka/Postcolonialism.pdf>>.

as well as getting control of the cultural evaluations system. And the prestige and aura of universalism belongs exclusively to the colonizer, while the colony appears as a marginal one, acquiring meaning only through the mediation of the colonizer. Strategies of colonialism include regulating cultural activity in the colony in such a way that it cannot compete for visibility and prestige with the cultural assets of the colonizer.<sup>21</sup> The attribute “colonial” is relevant to cultural texts and phenomena, if they serve the purpose of subjugation and apply strategies of exploitation, control, etc.

During the Soviet era, in the museum work in Ukraine, one could find a large number of examples of “anti-colonial” cultural phenomena and texts that promoted the opposite goal – asserting the autonomy, dignity and value of the colonized and counteracting the strategies of cultural colonialism. Instead, after the collapse of the USSR and gaining of independence by Ukraine, the category of “post-coloniality” became of key importance, i.e., that, rejecting the explicit and implicit encroachments on power inherent in colonial and anti-colonial positions, promotes a state of affairs where the antagonisms and competitive intentions of the colonizer and the colonized are removed. Mutual understanding takes the place of resentment as the main emotional content of the relationship between the former colonizer and the

21 PAVLYSHYN, Marco. Postkolonializm yak metod i sklad dumky. Sposterezheniya shchodo ukraïns'koho literaturoznavstva na storinkakh zhurnalu «Slovo i chas» u rokakh 1991–2011 [Postcolonialism as a method and way of thinking. Observations on Ukrainian literary studies on the pages of the magazine “Slovo i Chas” during 1991–2011]. In HUNDOROVA, Tamara and Agnieszka MATUSIAK (eds.). *Postkolonializm. Heneratsiyni. Kul'tura* [Postcolonialism. Generations. Culture]. Kyiv: Laurus, 2014, p. 73 [online]. [accessed 2023-07-25]. Available from www: <<http://uamoderna.com/images/biblioteka/Postcolonialism.pdf>>.

colonized, and historical wrongs are recognized, but are perceived as the past; not as the engine of modern behavior, where the former colonizer and the colonized find a way of being that corresponds to the interests of both.<sup>22</sup> Analyzing the tactics of the Russian Federation in the destruction of cultural and religious monuments of Ukraine in the modern war, it is possible to affirm the persistence of colonial thinking of the leaders of this country.

The following conclusion is based on the analysis of public information about the work of several non-governmental organizations that provide assistance and support to Ukrainian museums and rescue museum collections situated in the war zone. The work of the Museum Crisis Center, the Heritage Emergency Response Initiative and the Western Ukrainian Union of Museums is based on substantial international assistance. The main financial support comes from the International Alliance for the Protection of Heritage in Conflict Zones ALIPH Foundation, from Gerda Henkel Stiftung and contributions from partners of the charity fund “Cultural Heritage Fund of Ukraine”. Foremost due to international support, it was possible to receive grants for generators, power banks, as well as the purchase of personal protective equipment for museum workers in case of chemical and nuclear attacks. Teams of non-governmental organizations are actively working on attracting new international partnerships to support Ukrainian museums in the future.<sup>23</sup>

22 PAVLYSHYN, Marco. Pro koryst' i shkodu postkolonializmu dlya zhyttia [Benefits and harms of postcolonialism for life]. *Vsesvit* [online]. 2014, no. 03-04, March-April [accessed 2023-07-26]. Available from www: <[https://chtyvo.org.ua/authors/Marko\\_Pavlyshyn/Pro\\_koryst\\_i\\_shkodu\\_postkolonializmu\\_dlia\\_zhyttia/](https://chtyvo.org.ua/authors/Marko_Pavlyshyn/Pro_koryst_i_shkodu_postkolonializmu_dlia_zhyttia/)>.

23 Muzeynyy kryzovyy tsentr [Museum Crisis Center]. In *Facebook* [online].

On the other hand, as it follows from the short field study of the master's degree students, there were only minor fears or worries about possible military actions of the Russian Federation in the museum environment. At the same time there were no government instructions, explanations or warnings about the preparation for the possible evacuation of museum valuables or their more reliable storage. Unfortunately, letters from the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine belatedly responded to the current situation after February 2022 having left the main initiative to non-governmental unions and organizations. In the museum environment after the full-scale invasion of the Russian Federation only personal initiatives were the most efficient in forming support and assistance for museum workers. Gradually, obtaining information about assistance or grant support of international organizations became possible thanks to social networks, mass media and websites of official state institutions. The organization of work of Western Ukraine museums at the beginning of the full-scale war was left to personal communications in the museum community and to the museum workers themselves, to their active capacity. The activity of Western Ukraine museums was focused on two main directions. Firstly, on financial assistance to colleagues and organizing the evacuation of museum collections from the zone of hostilities or occupation. And secondly, on the preservation of museum valuables in the museums of Western Ukraine by digitizing them and filling the museum funds with the necessary amount of packaging materials.

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- SVITLANA MURAVSKA  
Department of History, Museology and Cultural Heritage, Lviv Polytechnic National University, Lviv, Ukraine  
[svitlana.v.muravska@lpnu.ua](mailto:svitlana.v.muravska@lpnu.ua)
- OKSANA HODOVANSKA  
Department of History, Museology and Cultural Heritage, Lviv Polytechnic National University, Lviv;  
Department of Social anthropology, Ethnology Institute of National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, Lviv, Ukraine  
[oksana.m.hodovanska@lpnu.ua](mailto:oksana.m.hodovanska@lpnu.ua)

