

MEMORY OF WAR DURING WAR: SOVIET MEMORIAL SITES IN CHERNIVTSI REGION OF UKRAINE

(Reflections on the Survey)

As part of our project, the following question and response options were prepared (which, in our opinion, fully reflect the essence of the posed problem):

What do you think should be done with Soviet memorial objects dedicated to World War II?

1. Dismantle and destroy.
2. Dismantle and move to a specially designated «**Museum of Totalitarian Epoch Memory**».
3. Leave unchanged where the monuments are currently located.
4. Leave but remove Soviet symbols and add Ukrainian identity elements.

Survey Participants:

The survey included 2,114 residents of the Chernivtsi region categorized by age:

- 60+ years: 562 respondents.
- 40-60 years: 431 respondents.
- 20-40 years: 523 respondents.
- Under 20 years: 598 respondents.

Survey Results by Age Category

Age Group	Dismantle and Destroy (%)	Move to Museum (%)	Leave Unchanged (%)	Modify Symbolism (%)
60+	41	19	24	16
40-60	57	31	10	2
20-40	64	27	3	6
Under 20	83	11	0	6

Reflections on Survey Results

Age 60+ Years

This age group has a distinct perspective on historical events due to their personal life experiences, upbringing in the Soviet Union, and ideological conditioning.

Key Results:

1. **Dismantle and Destroy (41%)**
The highest support for this option reflects a significant increase in critical attitudes toward Soviet heritage among older generations, driven by the impact of the full-scale Russian-Ukrainian war, which has profoundly altered the perception of the Soviet past as a form of «colonial legacy».

2. **Move to Museum (19%)**
Limited support indicates the unpopularity of the «museum preservation» concept, possibly due to challenges in implementation or a lack of appreciation for its value.
3. **Leave Unchanged (24%)**
A quarter of respondents prefer preserving monuments in their original form, reflecting the stereotypical view of older generations as more conservative. This share, however, is not dominant, indicating a gradual shift in mindset.
4. **Modify Symbolism (16%)**
Minimal support for this option may be due to perceptions that partial changes are insufficient to address the issue.

Characteristics of the Age Group:

1. **Nostalgia for the Past:** Some individuals who grew up in the USSR may retain sentimental attachments to objects symbolizing their youth.
2. **Influence of Propaganda:** The Soviet Union's promotion of the «Great Patriotic War» cult has left a lasting impression on older generations.
3. **Impact of War with Russia:** The war has significantly altered attitudes toward Soviet heritage, which is now associated with Russia, seen as an aggressor and a symbol of evil.

Recommendations for Action:

1. **Education and Awareness:** Organize discussions, lectures, and documentaries to explain the historical context and the importance of reevaluating Soviet heritage.
2. **Gradual Approach:** Initially dismantle propaganda-heavy objects while establishing museums to preserve history without erasure.
3. **Public Dialogue:** Conduct surveys across regions and age groups to consider all perspectives before making decisions.
4. **Ukrainian Contextualization:** Add informative plaques with accurate history and elements of Ukrainian identity to retained objects.

Age 40-60 Years

This group demonstrates significantly more critical attitudes toward Soviet memorial objects compared to the 60+ age group. They are characterized by active social engagement, worldview formation during the transitional periods of the USSR's collapse, and Ukraine's independence, as well as the influence of contemporary events.

Key Results:

1. **Dismantle and Destroy (57%)**
A majority supports the complete removal of Soviet monuments, indicating negative attitudes toward the USSR's legacy, amplified by the ongoing war with Russia. For this group, Soviet memorials symbolize imperial ideology and are perceived as incompatible with Ukrainian identity.
2. **Move to Museum (31%)**
A significant portion supports the idea of creating specialized museums, indicating a

desire to preserve cultural memory but in contexts that clearly separate the Soviet past from modern Ukraine.

3. **Leave Unchanged (10%)**

A low level of support reflects radical societal changes within this age group. Only a small fraction of respondents are willing to keep the monuments as they are.

4. **Modify Symbolism (2%)**

Almost no support for this compromise suggests perceptions that partial changes are insufficient or an unwillingness to retain any Soviet legacy.

Characteristics of the Age Group:

1. **Experience of Change:** This group lived through the USSR's collapse and the establishment of an independent Ukraine, shaping critical views of Soviet heritage.
2. **Active Civic Engagement:** Members of this age group often play an active role in shaping national discourse, showing a strong preference for constructing a new national identity.
3. **Impact of War:** Russian aggression has significantly altered historical perceptions, with Soviet monuments increasingly viewed as symbols of the «Russian World.»

Recommendations for Action:

1. **Priority on Dismantling:** Begin with removing propaganda-heavy objects to align with significant public support for their demolition.
2. **Development of Museums:** Create interactive museums to preserve historical memory while educating the public about the totalitarian past.
3. **Awareness Campaigns:** Engage the public through educational campaigns explaining the importance of dismantling Soviet symbols as part of decolonization efforts.
4. **Focus on National Identity:** Promote the establishment of new memorials reflecting Ukraine's perspective on history, particularly highlighting figures who fought for independence during WWII.

Age 20-40 Years

This younger group shows even more radical attitudes toward Soviet heritage compared to older generations. It consists of individuals who grew up in independent Ukraine and significantly influenced the transformation of societal perspectives.

Key Results:

1. **Dismantle and Destroy (64%)**

The overwhelming majority support the complete destruction of Soviet memorials, indicating sharp rejection of Soviet symbols as remnants of imperial legacy, especially in the context of the war with Russia.

2. **Move to Museum (27%)**

A substantial portion supports creating museums, showing an awareness of the need to preserve history in formats that exclude its presence in public spaces.

3. **Leave Unchanged (3%)**

Almost no support demonstrates the generation's absolute rejection of Soviet objects in their original form.

4. **Modify Symbolism (6%)**

Low support indicates little interest in compromise. Young people believe partial changes fail to address identity issues.

Characteristics of the Age Group:

1. **Post-Soviet Generation:** This group matured after the USSR's collapse, growing up in an environment of rethinking Soviet heritage. Their views were shaped by Ukraine's independence and European values.
2. **Impact of Modern War:** Many in this group are participants or witnesses of the war with Russia, strengthening anti-Russian sentiments and rejection of Soviet symbols as part of the «Russian World.»
3. **Critical Thinking:** Young people tend to analyze history through the lens of decolonization, understanding the effects of totalitarian regimes on Ukraine.
4. **European Orientation:** A majority aspire to integrate Ukraine into Europe, which they see as incompatible with the Soviet past.

Recommendations for Action:

1. **Prioritize Dismantling and Museum Creation:** Gradually remove Soviet memorials and relocate them to museums, preserving cultural memory without dominating public spaces.
2. **Engage Youth in Discussions:** Create platforms for youth to discuss historical heritage and include them in decision-making processes to build trust in authorities.
3. **Focus on Ukrainian Identity:** Replace Soviet objects with new memorials reflecting Ukraine's historical perspective, including heroes of the independence struggle.
4. **Innovative Museums:** Establish modern, interactive museum spaces that expose the truth about totalitarian regimes and their impact on Ukraine.

Age Under 20 Years

Survey results show that the youngest generation (under 20 years) holds the most critical and radical views on Soviet heritage. Formed during the ongoing war with Russia and a period of intensive Ukrainian identity-building, this group exhibits the strongest rejection of Soviet memorials compared to other age categories.

Key Results:

1. **Dismantle and Destroy (83%)**

The vast majority favor total destruction of Soviet monuments, viewing them solely as parts of imperial and totalitarian ideologies with no place in modern Ukraine.

2. **Move to Museum (11%)**

A small proportion supports museum preservation, indicating a desire to retain cultural memory but not in public spaces.

- 3. **Leave Unchanged (0%)**
No support reflects a complete absence of nostalgia for the Soviet past, which is expected as this generation grew up during Ukraine’s focus on European integration and experienced Russia’s aggression firsthand.
- 4. **Modify Symbolism (6%)**
Minimal support highlights the rejection of compromise solutions. This group is inclined toward radical change and active reevaluation of historical heritage.

Characteristics of the Age Group:

- 1. **Formed in Independent Ukraine:** This generation grew up valuing Ukrainian identity and seeing Soviet heritage as a burden.
- 2. **Impact of War with Russia:** Experiencing war has heightened their rejection of Soviet history as an ideology justifying Russian aggression.
- 3. **Digitalization and Globalization:** Access to information and a global context have shaped critical views of totalitarian legacies.
- 4. **Future Orientation:** The youngest generation is less focused on preserving the past and more interested in creating new symbols reflecting modern values.

Recommendations for Action:

- 1. **Focus on Removing Soviet Symbols:** Prioritize dismantling Soviet objects that symbolize imperial ideology, considering the strong sentiments of youth.
- 2. **Educational Campaigns:** Develop programs and media projects explaining the historical context of Soviet memorials and their role in propaganda.
- 3. **Interactive Museum Forms:** Young people prefer modern presentations like interactive exhibits, VR technology, and digital archives.
- 4. **Introduce New Symbols:** Establish new memorials reflecting Ukraine’s contemporary history, such as the Revolution of Dignity or the war with Russia.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF RESULTS ACROSS DIFFERENT AGE CATEGORIES

Surveys conducted among various age groups of Ukrainians regarding Soviet memorial objects reveal significant differences in attitudes toward Soviet heritage. These differences reflect the worldviews, historical experiences, and sociocultural conditions that shaped these groups.

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Key Observations

1. Dismantle and Destroy (Radical Approach):

- The highest support for this option is observed among the youngest group (83%) and decreases with age (64% for 20-40, 57% for 40-60, 41% for 60+).
- **Reasons:**
 - Younger generations categorically view Soviet heritage as an element of imperial ideology, especially in the context of the war with Russia.
 - Older generations have a stronger emotional connection to Soviet history due to personal experience, making them more inclined to preserve or partially modify the objects.

2. Dismantle and Move to a Museum (Compromise Approach):

- This approach has the highest support among the 40-60 age group (31%), reflecting their desire to preserve history in specialized locations.
- Younger groups (11% for under 20, 27% for 20-40) and older groups (19% for 60+) are less inclined toward such a compromise.
- **Reasons:**
 - For the 40-60 group, this approach avoids the destruction of monuments while separating them from contemporary public spaces.
 - Younger generations, however, see no need to preserve these objects, even in museums.

3. Leave Unchanged (Conservative Approach):

- This option receives the most support among the older category (60+) at 24%, while it has no support among the youngest group (0%).
- **Reasons:**
 - Older generations associate Soviet monuments with positive personal memories (victory in war, stability).
 - Younger people have no emotional connection to the Soviet past and are categorically against retaining such objects.

4. Keep and Alter Symbolism (Moderate Approach):

- The highest support is among those aged 60+ (16%), though even here, it remains minimal.
- The lowest support is in the 40-60 group (2%).
- **Reasons:**
 - For older respondents, this approach adapts the monuments to modernity without destroying them.
 - Younger age groups believe this does not solve the problem of decolonization.

General Trends

1. Clear Generational Gradient in Radicalism:

The younger the respondent, the more radical their attitude toward Soviet monuments. Older age groups tend to favor compromises or preservation.

2. Impact of Historical Experience:

Older generations (60+) with personal experience of life in the USSR have a more positive or neutral attitude toward Soviet heritage. Younger generations, formed in independent Ukraine, exhibit greater categorical rejection.

3. **Role of Contemporary Context:**

The war with Russia has significantly intensified anti-Russian sentiments across all age groups, with the strongest impact on the youth.

4. **Lack of Support for the Conservative Approach:**

The “leave unchanged” option has low support across all groups except for those 60+. This indicates a general societal readiness for change.

CONCLUSION

- The Older Generation (60+): The most conservative and inclined to partial changes. They value the Soviet legacy more due to personal experience and memories:
- The Middle Generation (40-60): A balance between radicalism and preserving history. They support dismantling with relocation to museums.
- The Youth (20-40): Categorically and radically reject Soviet symbolism. They strive for a complete break with the past.
- The Youngest Generation (under 20): The most radical in their views. They perceive Soviet memorials as symbols of a hostile ideology and see no place for them in modern society.

Across all age groups, attitudes toward Soviet memorial objects vary based on personal experiences, historical perceptions, and the current sociopolitical climate. However, a clear trend emerges: younger generations demonstrate increasingly radical rejection of Soviet heritage, favoring full decolonization of public spaces. This shift highlights the growing national identity focus and the move toward a new historical narrative free from totalitarian influence.