Postcolonial Estrangements: Claiming a Space Between Stalin and Hitler

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> You know, it was always like that: the French, the Germans, the Swedes, they all went through the Belarusians, back and forth, pushing us, pressing us, kicking us. One day Russia includes us in its empire, another day—Rzeczpospolita, and so on; plus all those permanent wars that went for years. . . . So all that shaped us in such a way . . . you know, so that we have to think, always to think.
> —ALEKSANDR LUKASHENKO, 2005

> To describe the timing of a past event, Belarusians would usually say that it happened "under [*pri*] the Poles," or "under the Germans," or "under the Soviets." The mother tongue contains no categories marking the people's independent existence in their own land.
> —VALIANTSIN AKUDOVICH, 2008

History is rarely predictable in the world of postsocialism. Historical institutions are even less so. Things that were taken for granted for decades might lose their credibility overnight. And regain it few years later. Historical figures quickly become national stars and—just as quickly—fall into complete oblivion. For the last two decades, postsocialism has been driven by a desire to build a market economy and political democracy, just as much as it has been an attempt to work through a complex and contradictory history of the socialist experience. Couched in a language of occupation, new national histories and commemorative rituals are frequently motivated by

the desire to draw a clear line between the "Soviet" and the "national" to re-
claim sources of authenticity outside the discursive realm of state socialism.[1]

Often, these histories and rituals of commemoration are grafted onto the
material legacy of the recent past. Important locations are recaptured, re-
named, or even repurposed. Yet these acts of spatial reappropriation fre-
quently do very little to change the syntax or even the vocabulary of places
that persist in "speaking Bolshevik."[2] What strategies of signification, sym-
bolic recycling, or both can be used in regard to such structures? When
demolition is not feasible, when stylistic gutting or retrofitting of the inher-
ited historical forms is not possible, how, then, can the hardscape of state
socialism be incorporated into nonsocialist or even antisocialist discursive
frames? In this essay, I take a close look at public debates associated with
two historical sites in Belarus.[3] One is the Khatyn' Memorial built near
Minsk in the 1960s to commemorate the victims of the war that is usually
described in Russian as "the Great Patriotic War" and is meant to single
out the period of the Second World War (1941–45) when the USSR and
Hitler's Germany were directly fighting with each other. Just like the Rus-
sian Katyn, the place of mass executions of Polish prisoners by the Soviet
secret service in 1940, the Belarusian Khatyn' is also a killing site. A crucial
part of the Soviet narrative about the atrocities of the war with fascism,
Khatyn' became an object of heated discussions in Belarus during and after
the collapse of the USSR. The other place is the Kuropaty grave site, on the
outskirts of the Belarusian capital. Discovered in 1988, Kuropaty contains
the bodies of people executed in 1937–41. In the end of the 1980s through
the early 1990s, the emerging anti-Stalinist and, eventually, anti-Soviet
movements turned the grave site into their crucial emblem.

Since perestroika, intense historical and political discussions about the
significance of these two locations have had a considerable impact on the
process of national identification in Belarus. Remarkably, though, this in-
tensive "memory work" did not produce a narrative that could unite the
nation-in-the-making. No new national history emerged; no positive val-
ues were articulated. Instead, two martyrological projects compete with
each other, trying to present one of "the regimes of occupation" (Stalin's or
Hitler's) as the nation's ultimate enemy. I suggest that this martyrological
perception of the recent past is crucial for understanding the ways through
which memory and history are deployed now in former socialist states. Re-
membrance and commemoration are aimed not so much at rescuing people
and events from oblivion. Rather, these mnemonic practices are structured
by a desire to contain and distance the traumatic past.

The two debates that I will discuss reveal a key problem with writ-
ing new (postcolonial) histories after Communism: the drive to equate the

"Soviet" with the "colonial," as Maria Todorova astutely pointed out, "often serves as a cover for the perpetual lament of self-victimization."[4] In this essay, I will approach such laments seriously—as a particular symptom of a new form of postcoloniality that is taking shape in former Soviet space. As a form of historical critique, post-Soviet postcoloniality is less preoccupied with uncovering sources of subaltern agency within the structures of domination that became so characteristic of postcolonial studies of South Asia.[5] The paradigm of resistance is not the main driving force for post-Soviet postcoloniality. Instead, studies of the colonialist past are predominantly done to demonstrate the brutality of the colonizers. If anything, the portrayal of the colonized is used negatively—to highlight their nonpresence in the history of the Soviet experiment. A potential history of Soviet subalternity is replaced here by a chronicle of subalternation, documenting successions of occupation regimes. Current accounts of past suffering, then, will be read as parables of domination narrated from below, as stories about the "fatality of exteriority."[6] I will also attempt to demonstrate that these perpetual laments of self-victimization index the double nature of current historicist engagement with the Soviet period: retrospective discoveries of coloniality in the socialist past are intertwined here with discursive practices of postcolonial estrangement from this past.

Incinerating Memory

> Our present is somebody else's past. Our future is somebody else's present.
> —IGAR BABKOV, 2005

In spring 2010, during a field trip to Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, I spotted a small pin in one of the local museum shops. The bronze rectangle showed a church bell squeezed by two vertical columns, with a sign underneath: *Khatyn'*. True evidence of the ubiquity of Soviet agitprop, the bells of Belarusian Khatyn' found their presence in the middle of Central Asia, more than two thousand miles away from their original location (figure 26). The pin was a small part of a major campaign of late socialism, aimed at creating a wide network of spatio-symbolic memorials that would acknowledge the losses of the Great Patriotic War.

The last edition of the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia,* published in 1969–78, had the following to say about Khatyn':

> Khatyn'—an architectural and sculptural memorial complex created on the spot of the former village of Khatyn (the Minsk region, the

Figure 26. The Bells of Khatyn', a metal pin commemorating the victims of the Khatyn' massacre. Photograph by Serguei Oushakine, Bishkek, 2010.

Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic). It was unveiled on July 5, 1969 to commemorate the inhabitants of the Belarusian villages and settlements that were completely erased by the Fascist invaders. Simple sculptural forms make up a laconic architectural composition . . . imbued with great drama and heroic pathos.[7]

Pravda's official correspondent was more descriptive in his report from the unveiling ceremony:

A sculptural group erected on the spot where a village and its inhabitants were incinerated: a man, shaken by the horror and pain, carries a teenager on his arms. This is not a scene imagined by an artist. The sculptor S. Selikhanov depicted a real episode of the Khatyn' tragedy, when, wounded and bleeding, Iosif Kaminskii rescued from the fire his dying son, who had been shot by a bullet [figure 27]. Miraculously, Iosif survived and now he stands next to me, facing the spot where his house used to be. In front of us, there is a symbolic chimney, the remains of the burned down house. The top of the chimney has a bell; periodically it rings disturbingly. Iosif looks up at the bell and drops, as if unwillingly: "They ring and ring; but nobody will come back." Yes, they will never come back; those who were killed twice by the Fascists—first with guns, then, again, with the fire. But the bells of Khatyn' ring not to resurrect the dead. Instead, they appeal to the survivors and their successors: "Be vigilant. Preserve the peace!"[8]

Figure 27. *The Unvanquished Man*, the Khatyn' Memorial complex, architects Yu. Gradov, V. Zankovich, and L. Levin; sculptor S. Selikhanov. Courtesy of Elena Baraban.

The Khatyn' Memorial was an emblematic example of a quick and remarkably successful memorialization campaign that the Soviet government started in the mid-1960s. On April 26, 1965, *Pravda* published a landmark decision that signified a radical change of the attitude toward the Great Patriotic War. Without any additional explanation, a concise *ukaz* of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR simply announced that "from now on" (*vpred'*) May 9 shall be "a nonworking day" reserved to celebrate the victory of the Soviet people in the Great Patriotic War.[9] Restoring the

situation that existed from 1945 to 1948, this decision significantly influenced the remaining twenty-five years of the USSR's history. The official holiday became a temporal anchor around which a broad network of memorial complexes was created around the country. Within a very short time, this combination of a specifically designated day and specifically created spatial settings produced a variety of new Soviet rituals and forms of affective exchange associated with the Great Patriotic War.

Khatyn' was an integral part of this process. Already in December 1965, following the dominant trend, the Belarusian Ministry of Culture drafted an extended program for "the perpetuation [*uvekovechivanie*] of the memory of fallen warriors, partisans, and victims of Fascism" in Belorussia. Within three weeks, the program was approved by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Belorussia.[10] On March 3, 1966, the ruling board of the Union of Belarusian Architects announced an invited competition for a series of memorial projects (potential participants were given three weeks to create and submit their drafts of monuments).[11] To emphasize the restorative and historical aspect of the memorial in Khatyn', official documents initially described the future complex as "a museum-preserve" (*muzei-zapovednik*).[12] The winning project fully responded to this vision. Designed by a group of young architects from Minsk, the initial proposal grew out of the landscape of the "former village."[13] Surrounded by a forest, the original Khatyn' was populated by 153 residents. The village's three short streets were made up by twenty-six houses, four wells, and several barns and woodsheds used for storing hay and keeping animals. In one of these barns, 149 residents of Khatyn' were shot and then burned (some alive) on March 22, 1943.[14] A few days later, residents from a neighboring village buried the bodies on the edge of the forest.

Preserving the historical plan of the village, the authors of the memorial decided to restore the traces of the main structures, fortifying them with concrete. Yurii Gradov, a member of the architect team, recollected: "We changed nothing whatsoever in the outline of the [burned down] village. All the houses stayed where they were."[15] Leonid Levin, the leader of the team, in his recent book also insisted that the landscape of the village (trees included) was "left untouched" (*netronutyi*).[16]

Nonetheless, the architects decided to add to each footprint of the burned houses two identical symbolic elements: a concrete gate and a concrete chimney with a bell on the top (figure 29). Each chimney carried a plaque with the names of inhabitants who lived in the house. Perhaps, the most striking "documentary" element of the memorial was a six-meter-tall expressionistic sculpture of *The Unvanquished Man* (*Nepokorennyi chelovek*). The features of *The Unvanquished Man* resembled those of Iosif Kaminskii,

Figure 28. A road sign pointing to the Khatyn' Memorial, Khatyn'. Photograph by Yuri Baidakov. Courtesy of the author (http://darriuss. livejournal.com).

the only adult witness of the Khatyn' tragedy.[17] Soon after the opening of the memorial, Kaminskii would even resettle in one of the houses not far away from the museum's campus. Until his death in 1973, he would often accompany official tour guides, offering visitors his account of the events that happened at the site.[18]

As Leonid Levin explained retrospectively, the complex initially was supposed to convey just that: a historically conscious attempt to commemorate a village that vanished during the war. Yet, the documentary status of the museum-preserve did not last for too long. In late December 1968, Belorussia celebrated its fiftieth anniversary, and a large group of party leaders from Soviet republics was taken to the "unofficial" opening of the memorial. Impressed by the memorial, Piotr Masherov, the head of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Belorussia, decided to radically change its scale and persuaded the team of architects to start working on a "second phase" of the memorial, which would "convey the tragedy of the entire Belarusian people through the tragedy of Khatyn'."[19] As a result, the "memorial-document" quickly evolved into a vast spatio-symbolic ensemble that now occupies seventy-five acres and includes several large-scale structures.[20]

**Figure 29. An outline of a burned house re-created by artists, the Khatyn'
Memorial complex. Photograph by Yuri Baidakov. Courtesy of the author (http://
darriuss. livejournal.com).**

In response to this new task, the architects supplemented the documen-
tary features of the complex with several metaphorical elements, creating
a powerful emotional effect. Next to the grave of the residents of Khatyn',
a new complex arose: an unprecedented "cemetery of villages," contain-
ing 185 "graves" of settlements that, like Khatyn', were incinerated along
with their citizens and were never rebuilt. Each "grave" contains a cap-
sule with "ashes" brought from the former settlement (figure 30). Next to
these uniformly repeated headstones for the "killed villages," the architects
placed several metal trees that listed 433 "villages that were resurrected"
after being completely destroyed during the war. Nearby, a 225-foot-
long Wall of Sorrow exhibited sixty-six names of major concentration
camps and killing sites (out of 260 total) that existed in Belorussia during
the war.

In the middle of a forest, removed from distracting urban noises, the
memorial does succeed in forcing its visitors to pause and contemplate the
fate of the village, and, by extension, the fate of the Belarusian people. Pro-
viding a contextual link, specially designed signs remind the visitors that

Figure 30. The Cemetery of Incinerated Villages, the Khatyn' Memorial complex. Photograph by Elena Baraban. Courtesy of the author.

Khatyn' was only the most emblematic example of a more comprehensive policy of "scorched earth" (*vyzhzhenoi zemli*). As the composition of the memorial's eternal flame vividly indicates, "every fourth" Belarusian was killed during the three years of occupation (2.2 million people altogether).[21]

In the early 1970s, along with a handful of complexes such as Mamaev Hill in Volgograd and the Brest Fortress in Brest, the Khatyn' ensemble became a major Soviet memorial to the losses of the war. Fifty kilometers from Minsk, the Khatyn' Memorial was also turned into a key destination (figure 28). Richard Nixon went there; Fidel Castro and Yasser Arafat visited the place, too.[22] From 1969 to 1993, more than thirty-three million people saw the place. In 1988, the memorial probably had the highest attendance in its history—two years before the collapse of the Soviet Union, 1.7 million people visited Khatyn'.[23]

Inflated as these official numbers might be, they do reflect the prominent role of the Khatyn' Memorial within the cultural industry of war memorialization in the USSR. Rewarded in 1970 with the Lenin Prize, the highest state award, the place was a source of inspiration for multiple songs, poems, novels, films, a symphonic oratorio, a vocal cantata, and so on.

The site's (and memorial's) reputation as a major document of the war's atrocities reached its apex when Ales' Adamovich, a former partisan and a famous Belarusian writer, published two books motivated by the Khatyn' tragedy. His *Khatyn'* (1971) presented a semi-fictionalized account of the war through the eyes of a teenager who gradually loses his sight after the trauma of Khatyn'.[24] Adamovich's second, coauthored, volume, *I Am from a Fire Village . . .* (1977), solidified the evidentiary status of Khatyn' even more. The book presented a collection of interviews with people whose settlements, like Khatyn', were burned down during the war. Quite unusually for the time, the book was accompanied by two small audio discs with excerpts from accounts of eyewitnesses recorded by Adamovich and his colleagues.

Containing shocking pictures of atrocities, suffering, and survival, both books presented the war as a nightmare whose overall scope is doomed to remain incomprehensible but whose horrific impact, nonetheless, could be felt through details that stuck forever in people's memories. One of the respondents, Ivan Savitskii, for instance, recalled how his village of Zbyshin was burned down by the German troops. Unlike his sister and his father, he and his mother managed to escape the worst; they returned to the smoking village the next day:

> My mother started looking for her daughter, my sister. I managed to hold myself together when I was burying my father, but when we got to the place where the women were burned to death, I was about to lose it; I was on a verge of collapse. . . . I said, "Let's stop searching." And we went to the place where the men were burned to death. What I remembered for the rest of my life was my cousin's son. There was a barn, so he hid in the barn's empty oven, and was burned there. And his legs were sticking out, charred. . . . Twenty-five relatives of mine were killed on that day. And two hundred ninety-six people altogether, in Zbyshin.[25]

Another witness, a woman, also recalled an episode from what Adamovich termed later the "incinerating [*ispepeliaiushchaia*] memory" of the war: "My neighbor saw Germans encircling the village and heard somebody crying, 'They will kill us, too!' Suddenly she asked her eight-year-old son: 'Sonny, why did you put these rubber shoes on? Your feet would smolder forever. In rubber shoes.'"[26]

By focusing almost exclusively on the ethnography of everyday atrocities, Adamovich in the end placed the Khatyn' tragedy within a global geography of war violence: "Buchenwalds, Khatyns, and Hiroshimas."[27] Or

slightly differently: Songmi [My Lai] in Vietnam, Lidice in Czechoslovakia, Oradour-sur-Glane in France, and Khatyn', "hundreds and hundreds of Khatyns."[28]

This striving to multiply and, by multiplying, to replace the specificity of a particular historical experience with its topological qualities is important. As Adamovich seemed to suggest, the specific genealogy of a particular act of violence—significant as it is—could neither justify nor explain what happened. The project, in other words, was less driven by a desire to collect *historical* evidence. Instead, narratives were perceived as fragments of a large epic about the brutality of war. Equated by death, all these sites were seen as documenting the repetition of the same basic story about one group of human beings purposefully exterminating another.

It was this version and vision of the Khatyn' tragedy that became canonical in the 1970s, entering popular memory and mass culture, propagandistic clichés and academic discourses. Streamlined and simplified, the basic narrative was eventually boiled down to a few unproblematic lines like these: "Khatyn' was a Belarusian village. In 1943, the Germans rounded up all the residents of the village—including the children—into a wooden barn and burned them to death."[29] History, as it turned out, was much more complex.

On November 10, 1990, in the midst of glasnost revelations, *Rabochaia Tribuna,* a major Moscow newspaper, published the article "The Unknown Khatyn'" on its front page. The subtitle promised a sensation: "Only today can we say it: the Belarusian village was burned down by Bandera's supporters [*banderovtsy*] and the fascists."[30] Using testimonies of a closed military trial that took place in 1986 in Minsk, the author of the article convincingly demonstrated that the famous tragedy was organized and implemented by the Special 118th Punitive (*karatelnyi*) Battalion, one of the police formations that were created by the Nazis in the occupied territories. *Schutzmannschaft* Battalion 118 consisted mostly of Ukrainians; but it also included Russians and Belarusians. Some had served in the Red Army and joined the Nazis after being taken prisoner in the very beginning of the war; others enlisted voluntarily for political or opportunistic reasons. *Schutzmannschaft* Battalion 118 had a double leadership: the German Major Erich Körner was in charge, while the Ukrainian Grigorii Vasiura, the battalion's chief of staff, supervised the battalion on a daily basis. Formed in Kiev, the battalion included about five hundred soldiers who were used initially in Ukraine and were transferred to Belorussia in early 1943.[31] Along with the Khatyn' massacre, the 118th Battalion took part in a series of antipartisan "pacification" operations in Belorussia, until it retreated with the Nazi troops in 1944.[32]

At the time of its publication, this radical revision of the canonical story

got somewhat lost in the midst of more pressing reports about the after-
math of the Chernobyl disaster, news about the recently unified Germany,
and information about the collapsing Soviet economy. Yet, the topic, sanc-
tioned by the Moscow newspaper, was quickly picked up in Minsk. In less
than two weeks, *Vo slavu Rodiny,* a Belarusian newspaper published by the
Ministry of Defense, printed an interview with Viktor Glazkov, a retired
lieutenant colonel, who had presided over the 1986 military trial. The publi-
cation was titled affirmatively "Khatyn' Was Burned by Polizeis."[33] Refuting
the link between the 118th Punitive Squad and Stepan Bandera, a leader
of the Ukrainian nationalist movement, Glazkov put it plainly: "The truth
is: Khatyn' was destroyed not by Germans but by the 118th punitive battal-
ion. . . . Yes, these traitors were fascists. The atrocities that they committed
had no limits. These people cannot be forgiven. But they were born and they
grew up in our own country; they were brought up by our land. This is a fact,
irrefutable and undeniable. A fact we have to accept."[34]

It is precisely the acceptance of the fact that the village was incinerated
by "our own compatriots" (*nashi s vami sootechestvenniki*), as one newspaper
put it, that proved to be very difficult.[35] A clear-cut story about German
invaders and the Belarusian popular resistance was gradually turning into a
messy narrative about a civil war, in which relatives were split between *parti-
zany* and *polizeis,* and neighbors switched sides almost on an hourly basis.[36]
Increasingly, what happened in (mostly Catholic) Khatyn' was looking more
and more like the pogrom in the village of Jedwabne (Poland), where Polish
residents murdered three hundred Jewish neighbors on July 10, 1941, soon
after the Nazis established their control over the territory.[37]

The interview with Glazkov and a subsequent stream of publications
revealed another puzzling fact. While ordinary Soviet citizens might have
had no clue about the actual perpetrators of the Khatyn' massacre, this was
hardly a secret for the professionals from the KGB, the Ministry of the
Interior, and the Ministry of Justice. Documents from the archive of the
Belarusian KGB, for instance, demonstrate that as early as April 1961 (at
least four years before the decision to memorialize Khatyn' was made), the
republican KGB had investigated cases of collaboration between the lo-
cals and the Nazis, interrogating several members of the 118th Battalion
who participated in the destruction of Khatyn'. F. F. Graborovsky, a former
member of the punitive squad, disclosed during his interrogation in Au-
gust 1961:

> We arrived at Khatyn'. We rounded up all the residents who did not
> manage to escape, and pushed them down to a barn of sorts. Whose
> barn it was, I have no idea. I do not remember how many people I

personally brought to this barn but I know that I rounded up a few families several times. When all the villagers were collected by the barn, we pushed them into the barn, and then shot them down on the order of the Germans. I had a rifle, so I also shot at the barn. After the killing of the citizens in the barn, the barn with corpses and the rest of the village were set on fire. I do not remember who started the fire. . . . I do not remember anyone escaping the barn.[38]

In 1973–75 more members of the battalion were put on trial in Belorussia, and, finally, in 1986, the KGB arrested Grigorii Vasiura, the chief of staff of the 118th Battalion, and brought him to Minsk. Until then, Vasiura had lived as a successful member of the Soviet *nomenklatura* in a small Ukrainian town, even serving as an honorary cadet in a Kiev military school.[39]

Given this—well-documented—history, it is hard to explain (and to understand) now why Khatyn' was selected as the emblematic site for the perpetuation of the losses of the war. Anna Van'kevich, a historian from the Belarusian Museum of the Great Patriotic War, who was charged with preparing background materials for the memorial complex, put it simply: "In 1966, when the decision to commemorate Khatyn' as a symbol of the villages destroyed in Belorussia was made, we knew very little about the place."[40] Viktor Glazkov, who presided over the Vasiura trial in 1986, explained that publications about the involvement of Grigorii Vasiura in particular and the 118th Punitive Squad in general were blocked at the time by Vladimir Shcherbitskii and Nikolai Sliun'kov, the party leaders of Ukraine and Belorussia, respectively, out of the fear that this news could provoke interethnic conflicts between the two republics.[41]

Other historians and journalists insist that the very plan of the Khatyn' Memorial from the very beginning was supposed to be a large-scale deception. Pointing to the phonetic resemblance between Khatyn' and Katyn, the supporters of this version have maintained that the tragedy of the Belarusian village was used to deflect attention from the massacre of Polish soldiers and officers conducted in 1940 by the NKVD in the Katyn forest not far away from the city of Smolensk (Russia).[42] Plausible as it might be, this version, however, lacks any evidentiary basis and relies almost completely on the phonetic parallelism and negative evidence.[43]

Perhaps, the true history of the Khatyn' Memorial will never be known. Yet the important thing about the Khatyn' affair is not so much its status as a compromised historical document. Along with ongoing debates about the Stalinist legacy, discussions about Khatyn' and its memorialization helped shape the colonial problematics and (post)colonial identity in contemporary Belarus. More specifically, the debates pointed to a core dilemma of

postcoloniality, with its radical split (if not a complete separation) between subjectivity and agency, between an ability to reflect and the possibility to act.[44] The Khatyn' debates forced (some) Belarusian intellectuals to conduct a rhetorical realignment of the national history along new narrative and ethical lines. In the next section, I will show how this realignment resulted in the material production—or retrieval—of alternative sites of historical memory. I want to finish this part by demonstrating how this realignment has been manifested through a particular rhetoric of postcolonial estrangement, through what Helmut Lethen calls in his study of Weimar Germany "the regulating practice of distance."[45]

The Khatyn' controversy hardly changed the outline of the traditional (official) narrative about war violence and its victims. Recent guides to the Khatyn' Memorial—restored and updated in 2004—continue to use the blanket term "fascists" to describe the perpetrators of the Khatyn' massacre. The Khatyn' revelations, however, made increasingly problematic the existing tradition of locating the accounts of suffering and atrocities during the Second World War within a larger framework of the popular partisan resistance to the fascists. Belarusian pop culture and serious academic publications alike demonstrate the same fundamental paradigm shift: the trope of "resistance" is gradually being replaced by the trope of "occupation."[46] Discursively, such a rhetorical move helps to externalize possible sources of violence and domination; it legitimizes the perceived lack of agency or moral choice, too. Valiantsin Akudovich, a leading Belarusian philosopher, historicizes the new ontological foundation in the following way: "For the Belarusians, the subaltern state [*podnevol'noe sostoianie*], the state of occupation became natural; with time, they got used to the foreign yoke [*chuzhezemyi gnet*], as one gets used to atmospheric pressure."[47]

This language of subalternity is not accidental. From the end of the 1990s, Belarusian intellectuals have been developing their own versions of postcoloniality, trying to redefine their relationship with historical narratives that routinely framed their past as a part of somebody else's history, be it Poland, the Russian Empire, or the USSR.[48] Postcolonial studies in Belarus are far from homogeneous, and different scholars pick different key points in their constructions of alternative histories. Yet, it would not be a stretch to say that for postcolonial studies of occupation the meaning and the role of the Great Patriotic War have become paramount.[49] Within this "mode of validation of conscious existence," the war—seen from a distance—is conceived of as a traumatic historical experience that imposed an unhappy choice "between Stalin and Hitler," as a recent film about Khatyn' framed it.[50] This rhetorical framing makes possible the next important move: the problematic histories of resistance and collaboration are dismissed as

equally meaningless. It is the nature of occupation, not the experience of subjection, that becomes the site of principal intellectual investments. As a result, the partisan movement in Soviet Belarus is recoded as an enforced heroism, as an imposed form of agency that contradicted each and every rational calculation of the local population. Valiantsin Akudovich explains: "Spearheaded by Moscow, the partisan movement provoked the Germans to act with additional, 'unplanned' brutality. At the same time, this movement forced the Belarusians towards . . . an unnatural, unnecessary, and, in the end, disastrous fight against the occupation. . . . Neither from a sociopolitical point of view, . . . nor from the point of view of a natural drive to protect oneself, one's family, and one's kin, could the idea of the struggle against the occupation be perceived by the people as vitally necessary."[51] If earlier attempts to question reckless and dangerous aspects of the partisan movement (*partizanshchina*) were usually framed as attempts to approach the history of the Great Patriotic War also as a history of a civil war *within* one nation, then current interpretations of the partisan resistance are structured by a definite desire to place the very figure of the partisan *outside* the local context.[52] Postcolonial estrangement is realized as a retroactive expulsion. For instance, in her recent study of "the concept of the partisan," Daria Sitnikova neatly juxtaposes "the Soviet" and "the Belarusian," concluding that "the Belarusian national myth of partisan(ship) is, in fact, a Soviet/imperial myth of partisanship, in which the Belarusians (as a nation) were to perform a subservient function as ideological fighters against the empire's enemies."[53] Just like the fascist, the partisan becomes a sign of invasion, in this case—from the east.

To some extent, these structuralist interpretations of occupation reproduce the already familiar logic of Adamovich's writings about Khatyn'. Back in the 1970s, perceiving violence only in terms of its effect, Adamovich also avoided the uneasy task of having to differentiate between various wars. The trope of "hundreds of Khatyns" was instrumental in putting aside questions of the motivation of violence or its selective application. In today's Belarus, postcolonial historicists in a similar structuralist move bracket off specific circumstances that brought to life specific forms of the deployment of power. In this approach, the subaltern state is a reversed version of domination, with subjectivity understood as something eternally given, not contextually produced. Hence the intrinsic negativity of this type of postcoloniality: by and large it constitutes itself through a compulsion to reject forms of identity, linguistic behavior, or types of agency that are perceived as imposed by outsiders. Unlike subaltern studies of South Asia, which aim to perceive imperial structures of domination also as a source of colonial agency that displaces and destabilizes these very structures from

within, postcolonial historicists limit their criticism mostly to the gesture of withdrawal from the experience that should not have happened in the first place.[54]

In his study of structurally similar tendencies of social and symbolic disassociations in Weimar Germany, Peter Sloterdijk offers a conceptualization that I find extremely useful for understanding the logic of postcolonial estrangements in contemporary Belarus. Dealing with artistic and social examples of "combatant consciousness," Sloterdijk defines this socio-symbolic positionality of self-evacuation as "strategic immoralism."[55] For Sloterdijk, this "cynical structure" is a form of social behavior and a genre of discursive production—a "procedural possibility" and a "poetic opportunity"—that enables performances of social alienation, unmasked by imaginary fantasies, and promises of a brighter future.[56] The strategic immoralism of this kind of subalternity is a form of aesthetic and ethical disengagement from situations that could not be controlled and from frameworks that could not be changed. Not able to secure a safe *location*, strategic immoralism, nonetheless, manifests a discursive fissure between the structures of domination and those who have to embody them.

As I have tried to show, post-Soviet postcoloniality is motivated by a similar feeling of being beholden to a historical locality. Like Sloterdijk's cynical structure, this form of postcoloniality also stems from an implicit recognition of the absence of other spatial alternatives, while being driven by a desire to experience and express a certain noncorrespondence between "the state of occupation" and a state that preceded the moment of radical alienation from one's own history.

There is one crucial difference between Sloterdijk's "functionalist cynicism" and postsocialist subalternation, though.[57] For Sloterdijk's strategic immoralists, their "nonaffirmative form of affirmation," their cool embrace of the structures they cannot avoid, was all there was.[58] Distancing was practiced as a lack of complete identification with the structures of domination, not as a form of complete self-erasure. For Belarus's postcolonial historicists, their performances of discursive alienation from the structures, which they could not flee, are still wrapped in clothes of romantic nationalism.[59] Nostalgic and retrospective, the postcolonial critique is understood here mainly as an opportunity for the "information retrieval" of identities and practices of the past, which have been silenced.[60] Distancing from the Soviet past is envisioned as a temporal escapism. To put it simply: the postcolonial is equated here with the preimperial and precolonial, with a time that had no place either for *polizeis,* or for partisans.

The Khatyn' affair was helpful for reformatting the nation's war legacy in postcolonial terms, but it was neither the first nor the most significant at-

tempt to revisit the Soviet past. The key toponym of the postcolonial version of socialism—"*between Stalin and Hitler*"—which emerged so prominently during the Khatyn' debates, was initially formulated in the late 1980s when mass graves were discovered on the outskirts of Minsk. With its clearly emphasized politics of distancing and rhetoric of detachment, the analytical space claimed "between Stalin and Hitler" interestingly epitomized a widespread attempt to conceptualize the experience and consequences of being a part of the two most brutal regimes of the twentieth century. A symptom of the upcoming collapse of the USSR, this toponym was a form of refusal to be associated with either of these regimes.

By the end of the 1990s, this search for an autonomous domain, for a subject position, which would not be reducible to the structures of occupation (whatever this occupation might be), evolved into diverse intellectual debates. The initial space "between Stalin and Hitler" was reframed and abstracted as the "borderland space" (*pamezhzha*), as ontological and epistemological "in-between-ness," called upon to represent the core feature of the Belarusian nation.[61] I want to emphasize this characteristic feature of post-Soviet postcoloniality: attempts to revise history along the axes of colonial narratives so far have not produced a clearly articulated vision of post-Soviet subalternity. To push it even more: instead of subalternity, with its Foucauldian emphasis on the simultaneity of the repressive and productive effects of power, we see the work of a mechanism of *subalternation* that focuses on the final *outcome* of subordination, while leaving aside the internal principles and dynamics of this process.[62] The Schmittian perception of politics as an ability to make a clear distinction between friend and enemy undergoes a radical change here: "strategic immoralism" knows *no* friend.[63] Within this approach, postcolonial condition, then, is a form of retrospective oscillation between external sources of power and domination, a perpetual alternation between different enemies.

No Place for Historical Truth

> The Kuropaty tragedy is as big as the Khatyn' tragedy is. It should and it will be thought through by generations of people. . . . Like the crucifixion of Christ.
> —ZIANON PAZNIAK, 1994

In comparison to the Khatyn' case, the debates associated with the killing site in Kuropaty were less driven by a desire to revise already existing master narratives. Postcolonial narratives had to be created from scratch. However, just as in the case of Khatyn', the participants of the Kuropaty debates

grounded their stories, their arguments, and their commemorative practices in the spatial structures inherited from the past. New national narratives, in other words, are still inseparable from the landscape of history. Space, not time, continues to dominate stories about the nation's past and future.

In October 2009, Pavel Iakubovich, the editor in chief of the main governmental newspaper *Sovetskaia Belarus,* appealed to the participants of a roundtable gathered in the newspaper's editorial office: "Let's think about Kuropaty; but let's do it outside the traditional and well familiar framework of 'the battle of worldviews' [*mirovozzrencheskaia bitva*]. It is about time for all of us to realize—regardless of our personal opinions—that Kuropaty is not a place to look for historical truth [*istoricheskaia istina*]! Kuropaty is a tragic lesson for our society."[64] The transcript of the roundtable, published on October 29, the day on which the Belarusian political opposition and human rights activists commemorate the victims of Stalinist repressions each year, was an unusual move on the part of the state-run newspaper. For more than two decades "Kuropaty" had been a divisive issue in Belarus, splitting apart those who were firmly rooted in the Soviet past and those who wanted to leave this past behind. In a sense, Iakubovich's version of *el pacto de olvido*—the pact of forgetting in the name of general reconciliation—with its clear appeal to abandon all attempts to establish a final and definite version of what happened, reflected historical fatigue following twenty years of intense historical debates.[65] Perhaps more important, this epistemological surrender—regardless of its actual political motivation—pointed to a gradual acceptance of the fact that the political and ethical ambiguity of the nation's recent history could not be overcome. Multiple interpellations and contradictory forms of subjectivity produced by the past could not be streamlined. The promise of analytical autonomy that the space "in-between" offered in the late 1980s had turned out to be illusory. Historical uncertainty and political undecidability were increasingly seen as a position from which new forms of national belonging could be imagined and articulated. Unlike the Khatyn' ensemble, the Kuropaty Memorial emerged spontaneously—as a popular attempt to remember victims of the Stalinist terror. Yet despite this difference, the mnemonic practices associated with these two sites demonstrate a striking affinity of their development: in both cases, the initial desire to commemorate *victims* was transformed into a persistent striving to memorialize victimhood.

The term *Kuropaty* entered public debates in Belorussia on June 3, 1988, when a local newspaper *Litaratura i mastastva* published an exposé written by Zianon Pazniak, an archaeologist and historian of theater from the History Division of the Belarusian Academy of Sciences, and Yauhen Shmyhalou, an engineer with a strong passion for history.[66] In their essay "Kuropaty—

The Road of Death," the two men described how they discovered several mass graves in a forest near the Minsk Ring Road in the spring of 1988. Zianon Pazniak insisted that he had known "subconsciously" about these graves since the 1970s, but could publicize the information only during the glasnost period.[67] The graves contained skeletons and gunshot skulls as well as various objects: ceramic mugs, clothes, shoes, toothbrushes, combs, and so on. Some of the objects provided clues about the timing of the murders: a leather purse contained Soviet coins, with the latest dated 1936; rubber galoshes bore imprints of Soviet factories and a date "1937."[68] Interviews with residents of neighboring villages confirmed the idea that the grave site emerged before the Nazis occupied Minsk in June 1941. Combining all their evidence, Pazniak and Shmyhalou concluded that Kuropaty (as they called the place) was a site of mass executions conducted by the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs (NKVD) between 1937 and 1941, and suggested that the site might hide "thousands of bodies."[69]

The article caused a major social explosion. In ten days, on June 14, 1988, the Office of the Republican Prosecutor opened a criminal case, citing mass murders as the main reason; the Belarusian Parliament followed up by creating a special commission. Iazep Brolishs, appointed by the general prosecutor in charge of the special group of investigators, recalled later that the criminal case had no precedents in the Soviet history: while the crime scene was clearly present, it was totally unclear "who or what the investigative team should be searching for."[70]

Nonetheless, during several months of searches and excavations, the investigators established that a seventy-acre wooded area had 510 ditches, possibly containing the bodies of people executed before the Nazi occupation. Selective exhumations revealed the remains of 356 bodies. Objects found in these graves indicated that the executed were predominantly from Belorussia, but some were, most likely, from the Baltic region. Based on these data, the group suggested that the site might contain "no less" than thirty thousand bodies.[71] None of the bodies could be identified, and all efforts to find any documentation concerning mass executions in the archives of the republican KGB failed.[72] In November 1988, the Office of the General Prosecutor closed the case, stating that the mass executions at Kuropaty took place "no earlier than 1933 and no later than June 1941." The final report provided a list of names of NKVD officials of various ranks who were involved in mass executions. However, as the report explained, "it was impossible to interrogate people involved in these executions. [Because] all the heads of the NKVD and other officials responsible for these repressions, either have already been executed [by the NKVD in the 1930s and 1940s] or are dead."[73]

Very quickly Kuropaty became a place of spontaneous pilgrimage: on June 19, 1988, two weeks after the initial publication of the essay, up to ten thousand people gathered at this previously unknown place for a "meeting-requiem." Their slogans read "We'll not forget! We'll not forgive!" and "Keep alive the memory of genocide victims!"[74] "Dziady-88," another major march to Kuropaty on October 30, 1988, became, arguably, the first mass Soviet demonstration that was dispelled by the police, using tear gas.[75]

Eventually, these spontaneous acts of commemoration gave rise to organizations that determine the political landscape of independent Belarus. The initial association, Martyrology of Belarus, created after the publication of the essay on Kuropaty, became a launching pad for a political organization called the Belarusian Popular Front (the BNF), a party that was the core of the Belarus opposition for almost two decades. As Pazniak put it later, "Kuropaty marked the beginning of a new political revival for Belarus. . . . Kuropaty marked the beginning of the collapse of communism" in the republic.[76]

In 1989, the government decided to memorialize the victims of Stalinist repressions at Kuropaty by establishing a monument there.[77] In 1993, the state registered Kuropaty as a site of "historical and cultural value," granting it the official status of a landmark-memorial ("The killing field of victims of political repressions").[78] Somewhat predictably, this national revival, which the BNF anchored around two major traumas—the Chernobyl disaster and the Kuropaty grave site—produced its own resistance. Yet the main objection was not the overall attempt to frame the national revival through the tropes of victimhood. It was the source of oppression, it was the cause of suffering that became a subject of major disputes. The BNF's resolute view that the mass murders at Kuropaty were conducted by the Soviet authorities incited "the battle of worldviews," a "battle" that has been going on and off in Belarus ever since. War veterans and former partisans were, perhaps, the most vocal opposition to the anti-Stalinist reading of the grave site. With the Khatyn' revelations in the background, more evidence of the fact that one group of compatriots executed another group of compatriots was hard to digest. Dismissing the decision of the governmental investigators as biased, they created their own independent public commission. Their search had some unexpected results. In August 1991, several newspapers published the testimony of Mikhail Pozniakov, a former partisan, who insisted that Kuropaty was a killing camp created by the Nazis in August 1941 to exterminate Jews brought to Minsk from Poland, Austria, and Germany. *Vechernii Minsk,* the city's major newspaper, for instance, ran a front-page article, in which Pozniakov explained in detail that, as a prisoner of war, he was forced to dig up common graves and bury the bodies after the executions in Kuropaty.[79]

Under the pressure of the independent public commission, the general prosecutor reopened the case and conducted two rounds of additional investigations in 1992–93. No new evidence resurfaced, and in 1995 the case was closed again. In its final statement, the general prosecutor dismissed the version of the public commission by explaining that archival searches conducted in Israel and Germany provided no support for the idea that Kuropaty was used as a site for the mass extermination of Jews.[80]

What I find important about these opposite readings of the same site is the similarity of their motivation. Regardless of their concrete political views, both sides were interpreting the murders at Kuropaty within the same framework of *external* occupation: the enemy, the perpetrator always comes from the outside. Evil is always done by the other. The metonymic logic of this postcolonial lament produced another interpretative parallel: both sides agreed that Kuropaty was only the tip of a much larger political campaign. The language of genocide, quickly adopted by each side, located the Kuropaty victims within a broad master narrative about purposeful ethnic annihilation. "Genocide," in other words, provided a rationalizing structure for understanding and normalizing murders that might have had no rational basis in the first place.[81] "Genocide" also delineates a specific subject position of this form of postcoloniality—the position of the victim, devoid of agency to resist/evade the regime of occupation but fully capable of reflecting on its effects.

Despite their structural similarities, the two sides differed dramatically in their views on the subject of culpability and the status of the victim. Former partisans, war veterans, and their (usually Russo-phonic) supporters internationalized the tragedy. The dead at Kuropaty were persistently described as "innocent citizens" of the USSR and foreign countries who became "victims of the Hitler's [*gitlerovskii*] genocide."[82] By and large, the tragedy in Kuropaty was inscribed within the framework of the familiar story about the Central European Holocaust.

The other side, increasing the estimated number of people buried at Kuropaty to 200,000–250,000, was more discriminating about the ethnic makeup of the victims. In this version, the location was a symbol of "the Russo-German Communist-Fascist cooperative work aimed at exterminating the Belarusians."[83] As Pazniak characterized it in 1991, "This genocide was even bigger than the genocide conducted against the Serbs and the Jews. The only difference was—they suffered at the hands of the fascists, while the Belarusians suffered at the hands of the communists."[84] Despite the fact that none of the victims at Kuropaty were identified, the supporters of this view presented the grave site as the national necropolis, where the best and the brightest of the Belarusians were killed en masse.[85]

For a decade or so, neither side could win the battle of worldviews, in which Stalin's Terror was juxtaposed to Hitler's Holocaust. To some degree, the denial of prewar political terror by one group was neutralized by the nationalist attempt of the other to rhetorically exploit unidentified bodies. Meanwhile, the place itself remained almost in its original condition. Commemorative projects were undertaken exclusively by volunteers who raised "crosses of suffering" along the "road of death."[86]

After 1994, during the presidency of Aleksandr Lukashenko, the polarizing reformatting of the past slowed down somewhat. Pazniak's emigration in 1996 left the opposition with no charismatic leader able to mobilize the masses around a powerful national cause. By the late 1990s, the situation had reached a state of equilibrium of sorts: each side relied on its own evidence and testimonies, and emphasized blank spots and logical gaps in the other side's narratives. Therefore, the general prosecutor's 1998 decision to reopen the case took many by surprise. The fourth round took about two years. The final report in this criminal case—the last one to date—was never disclosed. However, in 2001, the general prosecutor's office publicized a press release that drew a line. Confirming earlier conclusions about the NKVD's involvement in mass executions, the release, at the same time, included several points that until then had not been a part of the standard official narrative about Kuropaty.

First, the release pointed out that there were accounts indicating that some murders "were also committed by the German occupational authorities during the Patriotic war. However, these accounts could not be corroborated." The document also confirmed earlier statements by the prosecutor's office regarding exaggerated estimates of the number of victims buried at Kuropaty. Citing new evidence—out of twenty-three graves opened during this round of investigation, only nine had human remains—the release stated that "the number of victims initially associated with the graves, was overestimated by several orders." It did not provide new estimates, however.[87] The prosecutor's office left unexplained another major point of contention. Multiple household objects and pieces of clothing found in the graves indicated that they were produced abroad—in Germany, Poland, Austria, and Czechoslovakia. Not taking responsibility for any final interpretation, the release suggested that these objects could have belonged to the citizens of western Belorussia as well as to those foreigners who were "brought over by the Germans from Europe." Finally, the prosecutor's office did not offer any ideas as to how to interpret the seemingly incongruous objects found in some graves such as knives, razors, gun parts, and pieces of equipment that could be used for producing ammunition. Without naming

names, the release remarked euphemistically that "lapses of this sort were totally uncharacteristic for the NKVD's style of work."[88]

The release did produce one major piece of new evidence, though. During one of the excavations, the investigators discovered prison receipts acknowledging the confiscation of money during the arrests. Written in Russian, the receipts were dated by October 1939 and June 1940. However, as the office of the general prosecutor clarified, the names listed in the receipts—Moshe Kramer and Mordehai Shuleskis—left no criminal paper trail in the available state archives and therefore provided no clue for further investigations.[89]

In a sense, the general prosecutor confirmed the status quo, leaving each side in a state of suspension. In its own idiosyncratic way, the prosecutor articulated the point that Pavel Iakubovich would formulate in 2009: "Kuropaty is not a place to search for historical truth." Commenting on the new decision on the case, one Belarusian weekly translated it in terms of postcolonial pragmatics: "In the end, it is not that important who is buried at Kuropaty. They were victims of repression. Let history decide whether these repressions were Stalin's or Hitler's. The most important thing is— this is a necropolis."[90]

Started as an attempt to construct a critique of Stalinism by appealing to the memory of the dead, the debates about commemoration of the victims at Kuropaty gradually transformed into an act of symbolic distancing from both Soviet socialism and the Nazi occupation. However, this search for a safe subject position, uncontaminated by the legacies of the oppressors, has ended (for now) with a social and discursive deadlock. Initially perceived as a space of relative autonomy, the space "in-between" resembles more and more a space of double exposure, a space for the social and symbolic conflation of contradictory historical legacies.[91]

To some degree, this move—from a fantasy of autonomy to the recognition of double subjection—does reproduce the intellectual trajectory of the subaltern studies of South Asia in the 1980s. Back then, the initial attempts to retrieve the silenced voices and unnoticed histories of the subalterns resulted in a discouraging recognition of the basic fact that the history of the subalterns is the history of their repeated failures. Summarizing the first decade of subaltern studies, Gyan Prakash, for instance, wrote in 1994, "The desire to recover the subaltern's autonomy was repeatedly frustrated because subalternity, by definition, signifies the impossibility of autonomy."[92] This recognition, then, produced two distinctive moves. The emphasis on the impossibility of subaltern authenticity forced scholars to assume "a position of critique," aimed at identifying "a recalcitrant difference that arises

not outside but inside elite discourses to exert pressure on forces and forms that subordinate it."[93] In turn, a desire to retain a more nuanced vision of identity pushed other scholars to construe authenticity not in ontological but in performative terms—for instance, as cultural practices of "validation, perpetuation, and aesthetic evaluation" that are not coeval with that of occupational regimes.[94]

While none of these positions were clearly articulated during the twenty years of the Kuropaty debates, the very impossibility of coming to terms with this location is prominent evidence of the futility of efforts aimed at carving out in colonial history a space untouched by the imperial presence.

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In this essay I have tried to follow debates about forms and sites of memorialization in post-Soviet Belarus. Begun during perestroika, the public discussions about Khatyn' and Kuropaty eventually evolved into persistent attempts to realign the Soviet past along new narrative axes. Most prominently, this discursive reformatting of the socialist experience was reflected in various gestures of withdrawal and distancing. I have suggested that these discursive and mnemonic moves—from commemorating victims to memorializing victimhood—could be seen as signs of the emergence and development of postcolonial reasoning in post-Soviet Belarus. The postcolonial estrangement that these historicist projects have produced is a consequence of a utopian search for sources of authenticity outside the power structures imposed by "occupation regimes." So far, this retrospective quest for a safe place "in-between" has resulted in a series of dead ends. Instead of bringing the nation together, it has polarized the society. Instead of providing an attractive alternative to the moral duplicity of state socialism, it has offered a historical justification for ethical relativism. These deadlocks and false turns of postcolonial studies of socialism can be seen as reflecting the early stage of this intellectual movement. Alternatively, they may signify the emergence of a different—conservative and nostalgic—form of postcoloniality. In either case, these debates helpfully outline the uneasy process of the retroactive creation of colonial subjectivity, demonstrating how the act of reclaiming an important historical place can become indistinguishable from being beholden to this place. More significantly, though, these debates also allow us to perceive postsocialism not only as an operation that dismantles key configurations produced by seven decades of the Soviet way of life, but also as a form of intense investment in these structures, conventions, and forms—an investment that makes the very critique of these historical forms and their originary narratives possible.

Notes

1. For more on new national historiographies, see *Natsional'nye istorii na postsovetskom prostranstve—II. Desiat' let spustia,* ed. Falk Bomsdorf and Gennadyi Bordiugov (Moscow: Fond Fridrikha Naumanna, 2010).

2. Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

3. Throughout the essay, I will follow the emerging tradition of using "Belorussia" to describe the Soviet part of the country's history, while retaining "Belarus" for referring to its independent status.

4. Maria Todorova, "Balkanism and Postcolonialism, or On the Beauty of the Airplane View," in *Marx's Shadow: Knowledge, Power, and Intellectuals in Eastern Europe and Russia,* ed. Costica Bradatan and Serguei Alex. Oushakine (New York: Lexington Books, 2010), 181.

5. See Ranajit Guha, *Dominance Without Hegemony: History and Power in Colonial India* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997).

6. On the fatality of exteriority, see Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau, Raphaël Confiant, and Mohamed B. Taleb Khyar, "In Praise of Creoleness," *Callaloo* 13, no. 4 (Autumn 1990): 890.

7. See the entry "Khatyn'" in *Bolshaia Sovetskaia Entsiklopediia-online,* http://www.big-soviet.ru/759/86409/%D5%E0%F2%FB%ED%FC.

8. N. Novikov, "Kholm bessmertiia," *Pravda,* July 6, 1969.

9. Ukaz Presidiuma Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR, "Ob obiavlenii 9 maia nerabochim dnem," *Pravda,* April 26, 1965.

10. *Uvekovechivanie pamiati zashchitnikov Otechestva i zhertv voin v Belarusi. 1941–2008 gg.,* ed. Vladimir Adamushko et al. (Minsk: NARB, 2008), 148–50, 150–52.

11. *Khatyn'. Tragediia i pamiat'. Dokumenty i materialy,* ed. Vladimir Adamushko, Igor Valakhanovich, and Natalia Kirillova (Minsk: Natsional'nyi arkhiv Respubliki Belarus', 2009), 138–39.

12. See *Uvekovechivanie pamiati,* 133.

13. Mariia Eismont, "Memorial 'Khatyn' sozdavali tridtsatiletnie rebiata," *Narodnaia volia,* July 16, 1999.

14. See a detailed account of the event and the survivors: Elena Kobets-Filimonova, *Raspiataia Khatyn'* (Minsk: Bellitfond, 2005), 114–16.

15. Vladimir Padaliak, "Nizki paklon . . . ," *Golas Radzini,* July 2, 2009.

16. Leonid Levin, *Khatyn'. Avtobiograficheskaia povest'* (Minsk: Asobny Dakh, 2005), 58.

17. See Viktor Leshchenko, "Tainy Khatyni," *Narodnaia gazeta,* February 20, 2003; Alla Van'kevich, "Pravda o Khatyni," *Narodnaia gazeta,* February 20, 1993.

18. Levin, *Khatyn',* 46; Mariia Zalivskaia, "Vstrechu s Kaminskim ne zabyvaiu," *Narodnaia gazeta,* June 16, 1993; P. Kosmynin, "Ia iz sozhzhennoi derevni," *Vo slavu Rodiny,* April 2, 1992; Ludmila Selitskaiia, "Ia iz vognennai veski," *Sovetskaia Belorussiia,* April 20, 2004.

19. Levin, *Khatyn',* 92.

20. For an outline and a virtual tour, see the museum's website: http://www.khatyn.by.

21. *Khatyn'* (Minsk: Belarus, 1973). A recently published guide to the Khatyn' Memorial provides the updated data: during the occupation, 209 cities and towns were destroyed; 9,200 villages were burned down; 2.6 million people were killed (that is, every third person). Natallia Kirilava, ed., *Khatyn'. Khatyn. Chatyn* (Minsk: Belarus, 2007), 14.

22. M. Shimanskii, "Kolokola Khatyni," *Izvestiia,* September 21, 1981; Viachaslav Dubinka, "Daroga na Khatyn': Natatki fotakarespandenta z khatynskikh yrazhanniav," *Nasha svaboda,* August 6, 2002.

23. N. Kuts, "Kolokola Khatyni," *Vo slavy Rodiny,* March 27, 1993.

24. The book was used as the basis for the film *Come and See* (Mosfilm and Belarusfilm, 1985), directed by Elem Klimov. For an interview with the film director, see Elem Klimov, "Bezdna," *Iskusstvo kino,* no. 5 (2004), 86–88.

25. Ales' Adamovich, Ianka Bryl', and Vladimir Kolesnik, *Ia iz ognennoi derevni . . .* (Minsk: Mastaska literature, 1977), 186.

26. See Adamovich, "Cherty literatury poslednikh let," *Voprosy literatury,* no. 5 (1976): 100; Adamovich et al., *Ia iz ognennoi derevni,* 80.

27. Ales' Adamovich, *Khatyn'skaia povest'. O voine i mire* (Moscow: Voennoe izdatel'stvo, 1973), 186.

28. Ibid., 186, 200.

29. Nina Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead: The Rise and Fall of the Cult of World War II in Russia* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 207.

30. V. Roshchin, "Neizvestnaia Khatyn'," *Rabochaia Tribuna,* November 10, 1990, 1, 4. *Banderovtsy* refers to the supporters of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists headed by Stepan Bandera. For details, see David Marples, "Stepan Bandera: The Resurrection of a Ukrainian National Hero," *Europe-Asia Studies* 58, no. 4 (2006): 555–66.

31. Sergei Krapivin, "'Izbytochnaia' pravda o Khatyni," *Trud v Belarusi,* March 20, 2003.

32. For an excellent review of the history of the 118th Battalion, see Per Anders Rudling's essays: "Terror and Local Collaboration in Occupied Belarus: The Case of the Schutzmannschaft Battalion 118. I. Background," *Historical Yearbook: Journal of the "Nicolae Iorga" History Institute,* no. 8 (2011): 195–214; and "The Khatyn Massacre in Belorussia: A Historical Controversy Revisited," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 26, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 29–58.

33. "Polizei" (*politstai*) is normally used to refer to Soviet citizens who collaborated with the Nazi regime, usually in the form of implementing close police control in occupied territory.

34. Vasilii Zdaniuk, "'Khatyn' sozhgli politsai': Interv'iu s Viktorom Glazkovym," *Vo slavu Rodiny,* November 20, 1990.

35. Vasilii Zdaniuk, "'Khatyn' sozhgli politsai'," *Svobodnye novosti-plius,* no. 12, March 22–29, 1996.

36. For a detailed account of the Khatyn' tragedy see Kobets-Filimonova, *Raspiataia Khatyn'.*

37. See Jan T. Gross, *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001).

38. "Iz protokola doprosa obviniaemogo F. F. Graborovskogo. August 14, 1961," in *Khatyn'. Tragediia i pamiat',* 65. The description is almost identical to the testimony about the massacre of Jews in Jedwabne quoted in Jan Gross's *Neighbors* (1–7).

39. Mikhail Tokarev, "Khatynskaia tragediia. Obviniaet glavnyi svidetel'," *Vo slavu Rodiny,* March 20, 1998; Zdaniuk, "'Khatyn' sozhgli politsai,'" 3; "Zdes' ubivali luidei," *Sovetskaia Belarus,* March 22, 2008; "Kto szheg Khatyn?" The program was aired by ONT (Obshenatsional'noe televidenie), Minsk, June 20, 2008.

40. Van'kevich, "Pravda o Khatyni," 7.

41. Zdaniuk, "'Khatyn' sozhgli politsai.'"

42. Sergei Shapran, "Pervoe otkrovenie," *Belorusskaia delovaia gazeta*, July 2, 2004. See also Gasan Gusseinov, *D.S.P. Sovetskie ideologemy v rossiiskom diskurse 1990-kh* (Moscow: Tri kvadrata, 2003), 73–75; *Pravda Khatyni* (BelSat, 2008, 35 min.); Alexandra Goujon, "Memorial Narratives of WWII: Partisans and Genocide in Belarus," *East European Politics and Society* 24, no. 1 (February 2010): 17–18.

43. In my correspondence with two active supporters of the link between Khatyn' and Katyn, Igor Kuznetsov, the consultant of the film *Pravda Khatyni,* and Gasan Gusseinov, a Moscow philologist, confirmed that they had neither documentary evidence corroborating this version nor any oral confirmation of the purposeful link between Khatyn' and Katyn.

44. Ritu Birla, "Postcolonial Studies: Now That's History," *Can the Subaltern Speak? Reflections on the History of an Idea,* ed. Rosalind C. Morris (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 88.

45. Helmut Lethen, *Cool Conduct: The Culture of Distance in Weimar Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 96.

46. For a paradigmatic example, see the feature film *Okkupatsia. Misteria,* directed by Andrei Kudinenko (Navigator, 2003, 90 min.).

47. Valiantsin Akudovich, *Kod otsutstviia. Osnovy belaruskai mental'nasti* (Vilnius: Ministerstvo inostrannykh del Litovskoi respubliki, 2008), 69. For a similar use of the trope of "occupation" in contemporary Latvia, see Kevin M. F. Platt, "Okkupatsia vs. kolonizatsia: istoriia, postkolonial'nost' i geograficheskaia identichnost'. Sluchai Latvii," *Neprikosnovennyi zapas,* no. 3 (2010), http://magazines.russ.ru/nz/2010/3/k5-pr.html.

48. Igar Babkov, "Etika pamezhzha. Transkulturnast ak bearuski dos'ved," *Fragmenty,* nos. 1–2 (1999): 75–88; Vladimir Abushenko, "Kreol'stvo kak ino-modernost vostochnoi Evropy," *Perekrestki,* nos. 1–2 (2004): 124–56.

49. Elena Gapova, "On Nation, Gender, and Class Formation in Belarus . . . and Elsewhere in the Post-Soviet World," *Nationalities Papers* 30, no. 4 (2002): 646–47.

50. On modes of validation, see Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcoloniality* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 17. The film referenced is *Pravda Khatyni* (Belsat, 2008).

51. Akudovich, *Kod otsutsviia,* 71, 72.

52. Iadviga Uiferova, "Nas tak dolgo uchili liubit' cheloveka s ruzh'em," *Izvestiia,* February 29, 1996.

53. Dar'ia Sitnikova, "Partizan: Prikliucheniia odnogo konstepta v strane bol'shevikov," *Belorusskii format: nevidimaia real'nost',* ed. Almira Ousmanova (Vilnius: Evropeiskii gumanitarnyi universitet, 2008), 433.

54. Gyan Prakash, "Subaltern Studies as Postcolonial Criticism," *American Historical Review* 99, no. 5 (December 1994): 1483.

55. Peter Sloterdijk, *Critique of Cynical Reason* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 389.

56. Ibid., 441.

57. Ibid., 434.

58. Ibid., 441.

59. Akudovich epitomized well this approach in the following description: "By taking part in the expansion of communism all over the world, Belarusians compensated themselves for the lack of that *supreme* [*vysokoi*] Belarus (Great Lithuania) that they were deprived of by fate." (*Kod otsutstviia,* 96.) For useful reviews of national debates in Belarus after 1991, see Gapova, "On Nation, Gender, and Class," 639–62; Grigory Ioffe, *Understanding Belarus and How Western Foreign Policy Misses the Mark* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2008).

60. Multiple scenarios of counterfactual history that try to "activate" alternative legacies and genealogies (mostly linked with the Grand Duchy of Lithuania) are a perfect example of such informational excavations. For a discussion, see Nelly Bekus, *Struggle over Identity: The Official and the Alternative "Belarussianness"* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2010). For more on informational retrieval, see Rosalind C. Morris, introduction to *Can the Subaltern Speak? Reflections,* 2.

61. The journals *Perekrestki* and *Fragmenty* are the two main examples of this approach. See Andrei Dyn'ko, "Mezh bratskoi Rossiei i mirnoi Evropoi," *Perekrestki,* nos. 1–2 (2006): 182–219; see also Aleksei Dzermant's "Metaphizika 'tuteishesti'," and Oleg Breskii's "Lokal'nost'," *Perekrestki,* no. 1 (2008): 105–29, 130–49; Igar Babkov, "Etika pamezhzha. Transkulturnast ak bearuski dos'ved," and Adryian Melenik, "Belaruskaia ideia iak germafradytyzm natsyi: Z pavagai da teoryi, akaia lychila satsialism khvarobai," in *Fragmenty,* nos. 1–2 (1999): 75–88 and 235–45, respectively.

62. Following William of Ockham, Steven J. Livesey explains subalternation as a particular form of knowledge production in the following way: "Subalternation in the strict sense of occurs when a principle is known in one science and the conclusion in another." William of Ockham, "The Subalternate Sciences, and Aristotle's Theory of *Metabasis,*" *British Journal for the History of Science* 18, no. 2 (July 1985): 141.

63. On the distinction of friend and enemy, see Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 36–37.

64. "Kuropaty: Mir pod sosnami," *Sovietskaia Belarus,* October 29, 2009.

65. The pact of forgetting was a tacit collective agreement to avoid major public debates about the fascist past in the name of a peaceful transition toward democracy in post-Franco Spain. See Paul Preston, *The Politics of Revenge: Fascism and the Military in the Twentieth-Century Spain* (London: Routledge, 1990).

66. Zianon Pazniak and Yauhen Shmyhalou, "Kurapaty—doroga smerti," *Litaratura i mastastva,* no. 23 (June 3, 1988). For an English translation, see *Kurapaty,* ed. Pazniak, Shmyhalou, M. Kryval'tsevich, and A. Iov (Minsk: Tekhnalogia, 1994), 78–92.

67. Zianon Pazniak, "Kuropaty. Dzdesiats gadov pas'lia," *Nasha Niva,* no. 12 (1998).

68. Pazniak and Shmyhalou, "Kuropaty—The Road of Death," 90. See also Pazniak Zianon, "Astiarozhna, 'Stalinism!'," *Litaratura i mastastva,* no. 33 (August 19, 1991).

69. Pazniak and Shmyhalou, "Kuropaty—The Road of Death." For a detailed discussion, see David R. Marples, "Kuropaty: The Investigation of a Stalinist Historical Controversy," *Slavic Review* 53, no. 2 (Summer 1994): 513–23.

70. As quoted in Igor Kuznetsov, "Zabyt' znachit predat'," *Belorusskaia delovaia gazeta,* April 16, 2004.

71. Kuznetsov, "Zabyt' znachit predat'," 12. See also Georgii Tarnavskii, Valerii Sobolev, and Evgenii Gorelik, *Kuropaty: sledstvie prodolzhaetsia* (Moscow: Iuridicheskaia litereatura, 1990), 196–97.

72. Tarnavski et al., *Kuropaty: sledstvie prodolzhaetsia,* 44, 160.

73. Ibid., 262.

74. Anatol' Viarstinski, "Kurapaty: tsiazhkaia daroga da praudy," *Litaratura i mastastva,* July 5, 1998.

75. For recent testimonies and photo-documents, see *Vspomni Dziady 88,* a web page created by Radio Freedom, http://www.svaboda.org/content/Article/1331330 .html.

76. Sergei Pul'sha, "Kuropaty—aposhniaia pesnia," *Belarus maladezhznaia,* November 16–25, 2001.

77. Anatol' Viarstinski, "Akim byt' pomniku v Kurapatakh," *Litaratura i mastastva,* December 3, 1989.

78. "Zaiava gramadzkoi initsyatyvy 'Za vratavan'ne memaryialy Kurapaty'," *Nasha Niva,* October 1, 2001; Dar'ia Mal'kovskaia, "Kurpaty ne mogut byt' nicheinymi," *Narodnaia volia,* July 23, 2003; Viktor Korbut, "Kuropatam sueta protivopokazana," *Sovetskaia Belarus,* August 28, 2003.

79. Mikhail Pozniakov, "Ia—ochevidets, ia—zhivoi svidetel'," *Verchernii Minsk,* August 2, 1991; Aleksandr Sanich, "Kuropaty: zhivoi svidetel' tragedii priekhal iz Maikopa," *Belorusskaia niva,* August 10, 1991; M. Pozniakov, "Budu srazhat'sia za pravdu o Kuropatakh," *Vo slavu Rodiny,* August 16, 1991.

80. V. Kondrat'ev, "Kuropaty: prokuratura eshche raz podvertzhaet," *Svaboda,* no. 46 (June 21, 1996).

81. For more on the use of the language of genocide for building national identities, see James von Geldern's essay in this volume.

82. Valentin Korzun, "Kto i v kogo strelial v Kuropatakh," *Sem' dnei,* November 24, 2001; V. Korzun, "Pora skazat' pravdu," *Belaia Rus',* July 1, 1994; V. Korzun "Esche raz o Kuropatakh: Fakty protestuiut," *Tovarishch,* no. 20 (May 19, 1995). See also A. Zalesskii, "Delo o Kuropatakh: I vse-taki fashisty," *Tovarishch,* no. 3 (January 19, 1996); Ivan Zagorodniuk, "Kuropaty: Istina vsegda odna," *Minskaia Pravda,* December 15, 1994; Maria Osipova, "V dele o Kuropatakh tochku stavit' rano," *Tovarishch,* September 20, 1996.

83. Pazniak, "Kuropaty. Dzdesiats gadov pas'lia."

84. Zianon Pazniak, "Biazvinnaia krov ne znikae biassledna," *Belaruskaia maladezh,* no. 7 (1994).

85. Svetlana Klimentsenka, "Kurapastkiia tsulpany," *Narodnaia volia,* May 21, 2004.

86. For a brief discussion of the history of the Kuropaty monumentalization, see Valiantsina Trygubovich, "Narodnaia memarializatsya," *Kurapaty: Zbornik materyialov* (Minsk: Hramadskaia initsyiatyva "Za ŭratavanne memaryīalu Kurapaty," 2002), 61–68. See also a collection of documents about the concept of the memorial at Kuropaty published in the same volume (84–112).

87. As Viktor Somov, the chief investigator in the case, put it, "we cannot speak of 250,000 victims, as was previously reported; not even of 30,000." Georgii Vasil'ev, "Kuropaty: Sledstvie prodolzhaetsia," *Ugolovnoe delo,* no. 4 (1998).

88. "Adkaz Prokuratury pra Kuropaty," *Nasha Svaboda,* December 17, 2001. For a

detailed commentary, see Sergei Malinovskii, "V Kuropatakh rasstrelivalo NKVD," *Komsomol'skaia Pravda v Belarusi,* December 15, 2001.

89. Igor Kuznetsov, "Kuropaty: Sledstvie zakoncheno?," *Narodnaia volia,* April 18, 2001; "Adkaz Prokuratury pra Kuropaty." For a detailed rebuttal of the decision, see Igor Kuznetsov's "Da likvidatsyi prystupits" and "Bez pavedamlennia prychynav smersti," published in *Kurapaty: Zbornik materyialov,* 36–45 and 45–50, respectively.

90. Aleksandr Kaval'skii, "Finita la tragedia," *Zgoda,* November 12–19, 2001.

91. For more on competing historical legacies in postsocialist world, see Todorova, "Balkanism and Postcolonialism."

92. Prakash, "Subaltern Studies," 1480.

93. Ibid., 1481.

94. Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks, "At the Margin of Postcolonial Studies: Part 1," in *The Pre-Occupation of Postcolonial Studies,* ed. Fawzia Afzal-Khan and Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2000), 8–11.