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**The Marshal Koněv Monument as a “Site of  
Memory”: Mediating Post-Soviet Collective  
Memory in Prague**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis critically examines the interaction between memory construction, representation, contestation, and interpretation within the Czech collective memory context through a detailed qualitative analysis examination of one Czech “site of memory” – the former monument to Marshal Ivan Stěpanovič Koněv in Prague 6. The analysis is informed by the theoretical assumption that collective memory construction and interpretation are continually interacting, and the meaning and function are continuously changing. As such, multiple components of the memory site are incorporated: the changing site in Prague 6, counter-monument responses occurring elsewhere in Prague, discourses surrounding the site in media and social media, and qualitative survey research of individual and local consumption of memory narratives surrounding the monument and media discourses. The results of this analysis demonstrate a clearly articulated struggle for the possession of memory narratives surrounding the monument. These tensions reflect shifts in the Czech collective mnemonic framework and the inherent plurality of memories within that framework. Consequently, there is no clear consensus as to how collective memory regarding Koněv and his historic legacy should or is represented in the present-day Czech political, cultural, and social contexts.

## **Klíčová slova**

**Česká republika, sovětský pomník, místa paměti, historická politika, kolektivní paměť, národní identita, památník, Ivan Koněv**

## **Keywords**

**Czech Republic, Soviet memorials, sites of memory, history politics, collective memory, national identity, monument, Ivan Konev**

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## **Declaration of Authorship**

1. The author hereby declares that he compiled this thesis independently, using only the listed resources and literature.
2. The author hereby declares that all the sources and literature used have been properly cited.
3. The author hereby declares that the thesis has not been used to obtain a different or the same degree.

Prague July 1, 2022

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<b>Short description of the topic:</b>	<p>This thesis critically examines the interaction between memory construction, representation, contestation, and interpretation within the Czech collective memory context through a detailed qualitative examination of one Czech “site of memory” – the former monument to Marshal Ivan Štěpanovič Koněv in Prague 6. The analysis depends on the theoretical assumption that collective memory construction and interpretation are continually interacting. As such, multiple components of the memory site will be explored: the changing site in Prague 6, counter-monument responses occurring elsewhere in Prague, discourses surrounding the site in media and social media, and qualitative survey research of individual and local consumption of memory narratives surrounding the monument and media discourses. This analysis attempts to answer the questions: How does the political and community debate surrounding the Marshal Konev monument(s) reflect the intricacies of collective memory in the post-Soviet physical and discursive space of the capital, Prague? And to what extent do political, community, and personal collective representations reflect and contrast with one another?</p>
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<https://konev.pametnaroda.cz/biography/>

## Contents

<b>1. INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2. LITERATURE REVIEW .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....</b>	<b>7</b>
3.1 COLLECTIVE MEMORY ORIGINS .....	7
3.2 INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE MEMORY .....	9
3.3 SITES OF MEMORY .....	13
3.4 FORGETTING AND COUNTERING MEMORY .....	15
3.5 MARSHAL KONĚV MONUMENT .....	17
3.6 THEORETICAL APPROACH .....	19
<b>4. METHODOLOGY.....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>5. KONĚV IN HISTORY.....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>6. MONUMENT ANALYSIS.....</b>	<b>31</b>
6.1 KONĚV MONUMENT HISTORY .....	31
6.2 MONUMENT VANDALISM .....	35
6.3 MODIFIED PLAQUE .....	39
6.4 REMOVAL.....	40
6.5 NEW EXHIBITION .....	45
6.6 POST UKRAINE INVASION.....	52
<b>7. EXTENDED MNEMONIC SITE .....</b>	<b>55</b>
7.1 COUNTER-MONUMENTS .....	55
7.1.1 <i>Vlasov Monument</i> .....	56
7.1.2 <i>Koněvmen</i> .....	59
7.2 MEDIA DISCOURSES.....	62
7.2.1 <i>Russian Media</i> .....	64
7.2.2 <i>Czech Media</i> .....	66
7.3 FACEBOOK OPPOSITION .....	67
7.4 COMMUNITY SURVEY .....	69
<b>8. CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>LIST OF APPENDICES .....</b>	<b>92</b>
<b>APPENDICES.....</b>	<b>93</b>

## 1. Introduction

This research aims to investigate the interaction between memory construction, representation, contestation, and interpretation within the Czech collective memory context. To approach this theoretical investigation, this research provides a thorough and detailed qualitative case study examination of one Czech “site of memory” – the former monument to Marshal Ivan Stěpanovič Koněv in Prague 6. In April 2020, the statue of Marshal Ivan Konev in Prague 6 was removed, surrounded by significant controversy. As Edward Said states “the processes of memory are frequently, if not always, manipulated and intervened in for sometimes urgent purposes in the present.”<sup>1</sup> In this research, a comprehensive analysis of the Koněv monument site(s) of memory is employed to examine the tension between the processes which reassert and reframe collective memory narratives for present ends. This analysis further attempts to answer the questions: How does the political and community debate surrounding the Marshal Konev monuments reflect the intricacies of collective memory in the post-Soviet physical and discursive space of the capital, Prague? And to what extent do political, community, and personal collective representations reflect and contrast with one another?

To this end, the following research includes a comprehensive examination of the former Koněv monument site as a reflection of Marshal Koněv as a historical figure within the Czech context. Several distinct aspects of the collective memory site have been identified that reflect and substantiate the socio-mnemonic framework of the mnemonic

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<sup>1</sup> Edward W. Said, “Invention, Memory, and Place,” *Critical Inquiry* 26, no. 2 (2000): 175–92.

site. These aspects include constructions and reconstructions at the site itself, artistic and media responses, and reception of the site by memory consumers. The present work begins with a literature review of similar collective memory case studies in other countries along with existing research regarding Koněv as a historical figure and the Koněv monument in Prague (Chapter 2). The literature review is then followed by an extensive discussion regarding memory studies theory more broadly (Chapter 3) and its methodological application to the current work (Chapter 4). Then, a brief background history of Koněv is supplied to provide historical context (Chapter 5). The analysis itself is divided into aspects of memory construction, reception, and contestation of the memory site, with the theoretical assumption that collective memory construction and interpretation are continually interacting. As such, the first analysis section (Chapter 6) focuses on the site in Prague 6 as it has changed over time. Following this is an analysis of significant counter-monument responses to the original monument occurring elsewhere in Prague (Chapter 7.1). Chapter 7.2 focuses on discourse surrounding the site in media and chapter 7.3 in social media. The final analysis chapter (7.4) includes qualitative survey research of individual and local consumption of memory narratives surrounding both the monument and the media discourse regarding it, followed by concluding remarks (Chapter 8).

In summary, the approach employed includes an exploration of the ways in which personal memories, official memories, and representations in art and media interact, highlighting the ways in which these mnemonic practices all comprise distinct but cooperative aspects of the collective memory surrounding the Koněv monument as a site of memory. These aspects reveal how the site of memory is represented, how these

representations are contested, and how representations are reframed and reinterpreted to align with present socio-political interests.

## 2. Literature Review

Numerous researchers have extensively discussed the social impact of Soviet monuments and memorial sites on collective memory in Central and Eastern Europe. The existing body of literature surrounding memorialization and cultural studies, specifically post-Communist memorialization includes qualitative and quantitative studies in many post-Soviet countries. These include case studies regarding specific mnemonic sites, as well as theoretical explorations of monuments and mnemonic landscape. For example, some significant case studies and nationally focused studies of memory include Young<sup>2</sup> and Koshar<sup>34</sup> in Germany; Condee,<sup>5</sup> Forest and Johnson<sup>6</sup> in Russia; Smith,<sup>7</sup> Kuczyńska-Zonik,<sup>8</sup> and Lehti, Jutila, and Jokisipilä<sup>9</sup> in Estonia; Ochman<sup>10</sup> and Blacke in Poland; James<sup>11</sup> and Fowkes<sup>1213</sup> in Hungary; Stanciugelu,

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<sup>2</sup> James E. Young, "The Counter-Monument: Memory against Itself in Germany Today," *Critical Inquiry* 18, no. 2 (1992): 267–96.

<sup>3</sup> Rudy J. Koshar, *Germany's Transient Pasts: Preservation and National Memory in the Twentieth Century*, New edition (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

<sup>4</sup> Rudy Koshar, *From Monuments to Traces: Artifacts of German Memory, 1870-1990*, First edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

<sup>5</sup> Nancy Condee, *Soviet Hieroglyphics: Visual Culture in Late Twentieth-Century Russia* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995).

<sup>6</sup> Benjamin Forest and Juliet Johnson, "Unraveling the Threads of History: Soviet-Era Monuments and Post-Soviet National Identity in Moscow," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 92, no. 3 (2002): 524–47.

<sup>7</sup> David J. Smith, "'WOE FROM STONES': COMMEMORATION, IDENTITY POLITICS AND ESTONIA'S 'WAR OF MONUMENTS,'" *Journal of Baltic Studies* 39, no. 4 (2008): 419–30.

<sup>8</sup> Aleksandra Kuczyńska-Zonik, "Monument Wars in the Baltic States," *New Eastern Europe*, no. 06 (24) (2016): 165–69.

<sup>9</sup> Marko Lehti, Matti Jutila, and Markku Jokisipilä, "Never-Ending Second World War: Public Performances of National Dignity and the Drama of the Bronze Soldier," *Journal of Baltic Studies* 39, no. 4 (December 1, 2008): 393–418, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01629770802461175>.

<sup>10</sup> Ewa Ochman, "Soviet War Memorials and the Re-Construction of National and Local Identities in Post-Communist Poland," *Nationalities Papers* 38 (July 1, 2010): 509–30, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2010.482130>.

Taranu and Rusu<sup>14</sup> in Romania; Vukov<sup>15</sup> in Bulgaria; Rithman-Augustin<sup>16</sup> in Croatia; Herscher<sup>17</sup> in Bosnia; Kabachnik, Gugushvili and Kirvalidze<sup>18</sup> in Georgia; Todorova<sup>19</sup> in the Balkans; and Segal,<sup>20</sup> Harrison,<sup>21</sup> and Kaminsky<sup>22</sup> regarding memorial sites in Post-Soviet Eastern/Central Europe more generally, among many others.

Additionally, discussions regarding monuments and memorialization of confederate generals in the US have increasingly become a topic of political and public debate, exacerbated exponentially by the Black Lives Matter movement and 2020 national protests, including the ritual toppling of several monuments to confederate generals.

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<sup>11</sup> Beverly James, "Fencing in the Past: Budapest's Statue Park Museum," *Media, Culture & Society* 21, no. 3 (May 1, 1999): 291–311, <https://doi.org/10.1177/016344399021003001>.

<sup>12</sup> Reuben Fowkes, "The Role of Monumental Sculpture in the Construction of Socialist Space in Stalinist Hungary," 2002, <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781350057692.ch-004>.

<sup>13</sup> Reuben Fowkes, "The Role of Monumental Sculpture in the Construction of Socialist Space in Stalinist Hungary," 2002, <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781350057692.ch-004>.

<sup>14</sup> Stefan Stanciugelu, Andrei Taranu, and Iulian Rusu, "The Communist Cultural Heritage in the Social Representations of a Post-Communist Generation," *European Journal of Science and Theology* 9 (April 1, 2013): 3–21.

<sup>15</sup> Nikolai Vukov, "Cities, Memorial Sites, Memory: The Case of Plovdiv," *Our Europe. Ethnography–Ethnology–Anthropology of Culture* 2 (2013): 129–44.

<sup>16</sup> Dunja Rithman-Augustin, "The Monument in the Main City Square: Constructing and Erasing Memory in Contemporary Croatia," in *Balkan Identities: Nation and Memory* (Washington Square, N.Y: NYU Press, 2004).

<sup>17</sup> Andrew Herscher, "In Ruins Architecture, Memory, Countermemory," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 73, no. 4 (December 1, 2014): 464–69, <https://doi.org/10.1525/jsah.2014.73.4.464>.

<sup>18</sup> Peter Kabachnik, Alexi Gugushvili, and Ana Kirvalidze, "What about the Monument?," *Problems of Post-Communism* 67, no. 3 (May 3, 2020): 264–76, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10758216.2018.1540276>.

<sup>19</sup> Maria Todorova, *Balkan Identities: Nation and Memory* (Washington Square, N.Y: NYU Press, 2004).

<sup>20</sup> Joes Segal, "A Heavy Heritage: Monuments in the Former Soviet Bloc," in *Art and Politics: Between Purity and Propaganda* (Amsterdam University Press, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.1515/9789048531516>.

<sup>21</sup> Frances Harrison, "Reviving Heritage in Post-Soviet Eastern Europe: A Visual Approach To National Identity," *Totem: The University of Western Ontario Journal of Anthropology* 20, no. 1 (July 1, 2012), <https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/totem/vol20/iss1/3>.

<sup>22</sup> Anna Kaminsky, "Visible Memories – Memorial Sites Commemorating the Victims of Communist Regimes in Central Europe," *ENRS*, August 20, 2011, <https://enrs.eu/article/visible-memories-memorial-sites-commemorating-the-victims-of-communist-regimes-in-central-europe>.

Researchers who cover monuments and memory in the American context include Levinson 2018,<sup>23</sup> and Bodner 1991.<sup>24</sup>

Regarding the Marshal Koněv statue in Prague 6, a report entitled ‘Russian Battles Over Historical Narratives: The Case of Prague’s Koněv Statue,’ by the European Values Center for Security Policy<sup>25</sup> thoroughly describes a timeline of the controversy surrounding the monument’s removal, especially concerning Russian-Czech relations until 2020. Additionally, researchers Gibas and Pauknerova<sup>26</sup> have discussed the Koněv monument’s removal in a post-Socialist context and Řehořová<sup>27</sup> and Kazharski Makarychev<sup>28</sup> directly addressed the intersection of the Koněv monument and memory. Ogrodnik<sup>29</sup> further addresses Koněv, memory, and geopolitical relations between Russia and the Czech Republic. Brichkov, Nikonorov, Pertsev<sup>30</sup> and Permyakov and

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<sup>23</sup> Prof Sanford Levinson, *Written in Stone: Public Monuments in Changing Societies*, 1st edition (Durham, NC: Duke University Press Books, 1998).

<sup>24</sup> John E Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1991), <https://press.princeton.edu/books/paperback/9780691034959/remaking-america>.

<sup>25</sup> David Stulík, “Russian Battles Over Historical Narratives: The Case of Prague’s Konev Statue” (European Values Center for Security Policy, 2020), [https://europeanvalues.cz/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/RUSSIAN\\_BATTLES\\_OVER\\_HISTORICAL\\_NARRATIVES\\_THE\\_CASE\\_OF\\_PRAGUES\\_KONEV\\_STATUE\\_2020.pdf](https://europeanvalues.cz/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/RUSSIAN_BATTLES_OVER_HISTORICAL_NARRATIVES_THE_CASE_OF_PRAGUES_KONEV_STATUE_2020.pdf).

<sup>26</sup> Petr Gibas and Karolína Pauknerová, “The Fall of Marshall Konev: Silencing Beyond Post-Socialist Monument Removal(s),” *Ethnologia Polona* 42 (November 30, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.23858/ethp.2021.42.2681>.

<sup>27</sup> Irena Řehořová, “Visual Symbols, Democracy and Memory: The Monument of Ivan Stepanovich Konev and the Memory of Communism in the Czech Republic,” *Memory Studies* 14, no. 6 (December 1, 2021): 1241–54, <https://doi.org/10.1177/17506980211054306>.

<sup>28</sup> Aliaksei Kazharski and Andrey Makarychev, “From the Bronze Soldier to the ‘Bloody Marshal’: Monument Wars and Russia’s Aesthetic Vulnerability in Estonia and the Czech Republic,” *East European Politics and Societies*, September 16, 2021, 08883254211043856, <https://doi.org/10.1177/08883254211043856>.

<sup>29</sup> Łukasz Ogrodnik, “Complications in the Czech Republic’s Relations towards Russia,” *Polski Instytut Spraw Międzynarodowych*, 2019, <https://www.ceool.com/search/gray-literature-detail?id=847482>.

<sup>30</sup> A. S. Brichkov, G. A. Nikonorov, and A. A. Pertsev, “The geopolitical context of events in Czechoslovakia: historical memory and national security (Czechoslovakia in the year of the 75th anniversary of the Great Victory),” *Вестник Палескага дзяржаўнага ўніверсітэта. Серыя грамадскіх і гуманітарных навук*, no. 2 (December 23, 2021): 14–20.

Antonenko<sup>31</sup> additionally address the removal from a Russian perspective. Historian Jiří Fidler has also commented extensively on the monument's removal in newspaper and media publications. Fidler published a book in Czech about Koněv as a liberator and occupier entitled "Koněv. Osvoboditel, Nebo Okupant?".<sup>32</sup> The following Czech case study example will be positioned within the existing body of literature focusing on monuments and memory in the post-Soviet sphere and will add to this body of work.

### 3. Theoretical Framework

#### 3.1 *Collective Memory Origins*

In his seminal sociological work, Maurice Halbwachs coined the term *collective memory*. Halbwachs' collective memory challenged the existing scientific conception of memory as a reproduction in the mind of an individual of a static moment in the past. Instead, Halbwachs posited that representations of the past within a society are modified over time, forming a *collective memory*<sup>33</sup> in which "individuals always use a social framework when they remember."<sup>34</sup> Halbwachs identifies three dimensions of collective memory: an affective community, space, and time.<sup>35</sup> These affective communities are defined as groups with shared experiences, in many ways similar to Benedict Anderson's imagined communities.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, according to Halbwachs, a collective

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<sup>31</sup> I. A. Permyakov and S. G. Antonenko, "Attempt to save Friendship, or What the Liberator of Prague Did in Czechoslovakia in May 1968," *MGIMO Review of International Relations* 13, no. 4 (2020): 92–108, <https://doi.org/10.24833/2071-8160-2020-4-73-92-108>.

<sup>32</sup> Jiří Fidler, *Koněv: Osvoboditel, Nebo Okupant?. Druhé Aktualizované a Doplněné Vydání* (Praha: Eurpmedia Group, 2019).

<sup>33</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), <https://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/O/bo3619875.html>.

<sup>34</sup> Halbwachs.

<sup>35</sup> Halbwachs.

<sup>36</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), [https://is.muni.cz/el/1423/podzim2013/SOC571E/um/Anderson\\_B\\_-\\_Imagined\\_Communities.pdf](https://is.muni.cz/el/1423/podzim2013/SOC571E/um/Anderson_B_-_Imagined_Communities.pdf).

memory of events is a memory constructed by a social group to reflect current social needs. Thus, collective memory depends on sustained memory through communication practices and specific temporal and spatial reference points, but is also dependent upon interpretations from the present, making it fundamentally both unstable and fluid.<sup>37</sup> The theoretical application and study of collective memory led to the increased prominence of Memory Studies as a discipline of academic study throughout the latter half of the 20th century into the 21st century.

Since Halbwachs conceived of *collective memory* and Jan Assmann's subsequent introduction of the term *cultural memory*,<sup>38</sup> discussions of the intersection of cultural practices and memory have abounded, along with a proliferation of specifying terms to identify distinct types of collective memory. Assmann, in his study of collective memory, expanded upon Halbwachs's theoretical framework to examine how memory is memorialized into *cultural memory* through material culture –monuments, documents, cities, art, images, etc.<sup>39</sup> Exploring memory, culture, and society, Assmann proposes that cultural memory creates social unity through the formation of shared knowledge and the establishment of a shared self-image surrounding chosen cultural heritage and historiography.<sup>40</sup> Therefore, *cultural memory* can exist independent of individual communications and carriers of memory. Cultural memory is also distinctly different from what Assmann identifies as *communicative memory*, the aspect of collective memory dependent on oral and everyday communications. Weissberg and Ben-Amosin further describe the transition in theoretical study from memory as a

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<sup>37</sup> Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*.

<sup>38</sup> Halbwachs.

<sup>39</sup> Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," *New German Critique*, no. 65 (1995): 125–33, <https://doi.org/10.2307/488538>.

<sup>40</sup> Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," *New German Critique*, no. 65 (1995): 125–33, <https://doi.org/10.2307/488538>.

collective to a cultural endeavor, claiming that while *collective memory* describes a phenomenon within social thought, concepts such as *cultural memory* and *public memory* further investigate changes within social thought and memory discourses.<sup>41</sup> Specifying terms such as cultural memory, public memory, collected memory, political memory, and others allow researchers to precisely identify the positionality of collective memory within a variety of fields and contexts. In the following research, many of these concepts are employed to explore the iterations of mnemonic representation with regard to the Marshal Koněv monument in Prague 6.

### **3.2 Individual and Collective Memory**

Within the memory studies community, there exists significant debate surrounding the role of individuals within the realm of collective memory. Both Assman and Halbwach's definitions resolutely assert that collective memory as a theoretical concept does not include the individual and is fully distanced from the everyday or personal. Furthermore, Assmann's *communicative memory* "...is characterized by its proximity to the everyday" whereas *cultural memory* is characterized by its "distance from the everyday."<sup>42</sup> Therefore, Assmann claims that *communicative memory* has a "limited temporal horizon"<sup>43</sup> and lacks the fixity of *cultural memory*. While Halbwachs admits that memory "maintains the lived experience of individuals within groups,"<sup>44</sup> his conceptualization of collective memory de-emphasizes the contribution of individual group members through participatory memory practices toward creating and

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<sup>41</sup> Dan Ben-Amos and Liliane Weissberg, *Cultural Memory and the Construction of Identity* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1999).

<sup>42</sup> Assmann and Czaplicka, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity."

<sup>43</sup> Assmann and Czaplicka.

<sup>44</sup> Susan A. Crane, "Writing the Individual Back into Collective Memory," *The American Historical Review* 102, no. 5 (1997): 1372–85, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2171068>.

maintaining collective memory, something heavily criticized by subsequent memory scholars. Pierre Nora further highlights the inherent tension in memory studies in parsing the separation between a theoretical collective memory and individual experiences of and with memory when he describes Halbwachs collective memory as “...by nature multiple and yet specific; collective, plural, and yet individual.”<sup>45</sup>

Scholar Susan Crane argues that the individual *is* central to collective memory. Crane states “...collective memory ultimately is located not in sites but in individuals.”<sup>46</sup> For Crane, memory sites and texts must be “‘read’ ... by individuals thinking historically”<sup>47</sup> to become more than simple objects. However, critics of a purely individualistic approach like Crane’s contend that memory studies researchers often include a methodological conflation of individual and collective, whereas collective memory *should* be something more than purely an aggregate collection of individual memories – something that incorporates a broader social, symbolic, and cultural dynamic.

According to Kerwin E Klein, “Memory is not a property of individual minds, but a diverse and shifting collection of material artifacts and social practices.”<sup>48</sup> Therefore, larger social structures are a critical component of collective memory, meaning that they exist beyond individuals or collections of individuals. Michael Shudson further asserts that rather than individuals playing the central role in memory production, there can be no such thing as individual memory when all memories are created and expressed

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<sup>45</sup> Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire,” *Representations* 26 (April 1, 1989): 7–24, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2928520>.

<sup>46</sup> Susan A. Crane, “Writing the Individual Back into Collective Memory,” *The American Historical Review* 102, no. 5 (1997): 1372–85, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2171068>.

<sup>47</sup> Crane, “Writing the Individual Back into Collective Memory.”

<sup>48</sup> Kerwin Lee Klein, *From History to Theory* (Univ of California Press, 2011).

within social systems.<sup>49</sup> Arguments between an individualistic and collectivist approach highlight one of the key issues in collective memory research – while on a theoretical level collective memory represents larger social structures beyond the individual, methodologically it is difficult for researchers to study collective memory without relying on individual reproductions of memory.

Attempting to synthesize collective memory as truly collective while at the same time not wholly discounting the individual, Wulf Kansteiner defines collective memories as coming from “shared communications about the meaning of the past...anchored in the life-worlds of individuals who partake in the communal life of the respective collective,”<sup>50</sup> which are stored through an “inventory of signs and symbols.”<sup>51</sup>

Kansteiner further states that memory studies as a field is limited methodologically when it “misrepresents the social dynamics of collective memory as an effect and extension of individual, autobiographical memory,” but argues that these issues can be fixed with extensive contextualization linking memory makers and representation with memory consumers and reception.<sup>52</sup>

In his methodological approach to memory, Jeffrey Olick justifies the use of a “multidimensional rapprochement between individualist and collective approaches”<sup>53</sup> where collective memory is “both shared by a group and appropriated by its

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<sup>49</sup> Michael Schudson, “Dynamics of Distortion in Collective Memory,” *Memory Distortion: How Minds, Brains, and Societies Reconstruct the Past*, 1997, 346–64.

<sup>50</sup> Wulf Kansteiner, “Finding Meaning in Memory: A Methodological Critique of Collective Memory Studies,” *History and Theory* 41, no. 2 (2002): 179–97.

<sup>51</sup> Kansteiner.

<sup>52</sup> Kansteiner.

<sup>53</sup> Jeffrey K. Olick, “Collective Memory: The Two Cultures,” *Sociological Theory* 17, no. 3 (1999): 333–48.

members.”<sup>54</sup> This approach takes into account distinct phenomena related to collective memory identified by Halbwachs in his research: socially framed individual memories, and collective commemorative representations.<sup>55</sup> Halbwachs does not explore the relationships, mediation, or interaction between the two, rather believing they exist as unrelated or binary aspects of memory. However, Olick’s approach focuses primarily on the interactions between socially framed individual memories and collective commemorative representations. As Olick further explains, all forms and structures of memory – public and private, from the top and bottom of society, reminiscence and commemoration, personal testimony, and national narrative<sup>56</sup> – are important and relevant to the composition of a collective memory whole.

According to the preceding theorists, whether memory is stored in material symbolic artifacts or in individuals themselves, when individuals remember, they remember as part of a collective mnemonic community.<sup>57</sup> Collective memory is therefore a broadly collective phenomenon, but one that is manifested only in its meditation through production and interpretation by individuals, meaning that both micro and macro-level interpretations of memory manifestations are important to consider when studying collective memory. As such, while individual memory and collective memory are not one and the same, individuals can both contribute to and reflect larger collective memory frameworks. Material productions and collective manifestations as well as individualized interpretations of the Koněv monument are both investigated in this

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<sup>54</sup> Constance de Saint-Laurent, “Memory Acts: A Theory for the Study of Collective Memory in Everyday Life,” *Journal of Constructivist Psychology* 31 (February 2, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.1080/10720537.2016.1271375>.

<sup>55</sup> Olick, “Collective Memory.”

<sup>56</sup> Olick.

<sup>57</sup> Eviatar Zerubavel, “Social Memories: Steps to a Sociology of the Past,” *Qualitative Sociology* 19, no. 3 (September 1, 1996): 283–99, <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02393273>.

research to establish links between individual interpretations of history and collective memory.

### **3.3 Sites of Memory**

Explanations for how and when collective memories are substantiated often rely heavily on Pierre Nora's *lieux de mémoire*, or sites of memory. Nora describes lieux de mémoire as embodiments of memorial consciousness where "memory crystallizes and secretes itself."<sup>58</sup> Nora contrasts memory, an inherently active process that incorporates the lived experiences of societies, with history, which acts as a reconstruction of the past.<sup>59</sup> He posits that while memory is physically actualized in objects, spaces, images, and symbols, history is temporal and relational. With history in control, sites of material culture like museums and monuments would be void of any memory anchors to allow for the concretion of the site into a lieux de mémoire.<sup>60</sup> Nora further distinguishes between the *milieux de mémoire*, or social environments of memory, and the *lieux de mémoire*, or sites that have been constructed to preserve memories.

While Nora believed that memorial sites exist because the social environment for memory no longer exists, scholars such as Alan Confino argue that the social environment and memory sites themselves are intrinsically linked. In essence, sites of memory are continuously influencing and being influenced upon by social factors, meaning that each memory site is part of its continual metamorphosis and exchange. In his criticisms of memory studies methodology, Alan Confino argues that memory researchers often fail to incorporate the cultural, social, and political influences on

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<sup>58</sup> Nora, "Between Memory and History."

<sup>59</sup> Nora.

<sup>60</sup> Nora.

memory, focusing only on memory representation rather than memory reception, transmission, or interpretation, and the interaction between these factors and memory production.<sup>61</sup> In what Confino refers to as a “multiplicity of memory” approach, collective memory acts as a dynamic relationship between representation, reception, and contestation.<sup>62</sup> Thus, Confino argues for the necessity of exploring further connections between memory representation and social experience, including social mediation and mnemonic intermediaries.

Further exploring theoretical and physical sites of memory, Aleida Assman identifies “sites and monuments that present palpable relics” as an important factor in the transformation from what she identifies as the ephemeral “bottom-up” *social memory* to the more concrete *collective memory*.<sup>63</sup> In his exploration of memory and space in the post-Soviet Bulgarian context, scholar Nikolai Vukov emphasizes the importance of physical urban space in maintaining memory. Memorial sites such as monuments and street names function as important places of memory on personal and collective levels. Physical memory sites “are connected with public commemorations, official discourses and the political culture of their time” *and* “constitute inseparable elements of the collective memory of every city, of the rhythm of its daily life, of the memoirs and stories told by its citizens.”<sup>64</sup> Vukov’s approach entangles sites of memory as facilitators of top-down collective constructions of memory and bottom-up mundane everyday-life interactions where social and collective memories exist in one place. The Koněv monument “site of memory,” as illustrated in the following research,

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<sup>61</sup> Alon Confino, “Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method,” *The American Historical Review* 102, no. 5 (1997): 1386–1403, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2171069>.

<sup>62</sup> Confino.

<sup>63</sup> Aleida Assmann, “Transformations between History and Memory,” *Social Research* 75, no. 1 (2008): 49–72.

<sup>64</sup> Vukov, “Cities, Memorial Sites, Memory.”

incorporates both top-down and bottom-up constructions of memory where connections between memory production and social mediation play a significant role in the mnemonic significance of the site.

### ***3.4 Forgetting and Countering Memory***

Before 1989, Soviet monuments served the function of reasserting the Soviet historical narrative centered around larger-than-life heroic figures through a top-down approach to collective memory construction. Commemorative practices and celebrations accompanying the establishment of monuments and important anniversaries in history encouraged active participation in ideological memory practices. Placed in parks or prominent locations, these sites could hardly be ignored. In contrast, after 1989, these monuments to Soviet heroes became representations of history that new post-Soviet governments wanted to forget rather than remember. Many of these sites were turned into “emblematic sites of forgetting”<sup>65</sup> after 1989. Often, the most prominent Soviet monuments across Eastern and Central Europe were removed, destroyed, or left to crumble. While some faded quietly into disrepaired ruins, others became key spaces for ongoing ideological controversy and continue to play a significant role in public debates surrounding collective memory and national historic narratives to this day.

While memorials as physical and mnemonic spaces often display the tension between memory and forgetting, Vukov also refers to the concept of the “unmemorable,” a space between memory and forgetting that reflects historical perspectives or events that are deemed unworthy of remembrance and therefore remain formally unrecognized in

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<sup>65</sup> Vukov.

official memory structures like memorials or museum exhibits.<sup>66</sup> A monument may foreground a historical figure or event as worthy of memory, but the monument itself may also be used to obscure aspects of the very historical event it commemorates that have been deemed “unmemorable”. These aspects can still be remembered through more personal and individual modes of memory production. Therefore, the unmemorable is not always forgotten, but it lacks official representation. Attempts to represent the unmemorable or unveil historical narratives that have been directly suppressed by official memory politics and physical memory sites can sometimes take the form of *counter-monuments*, which reexamine the structure, purpose, and meaning of monuments and the memory they are meant to uphold.

According to linguist and theorist James Young, who coined the term *counter-monument* to refer to monument practices in the post-Holocaust memory context, counter-monuments “return the burden of memory to visitors themselves by forcing visitors into an active role.”<sup>67</sup> Traditional monuments, such as statues, obelisks, and other large structures often present static interpretations that aim to commemorate specific historical narratives regarding influential figures, tragic events, or aspects of cultural heritage. Young contrasts the “state-sponsored...self- aggrandizing locus for national memory”<sup>68</sup> present in traditional monuments with the counter-monuments’ “brazen, painfully self-conscious memorial spaces conceived to challenge the very premises of their being.”<sup>69</sup> Consequently, counter-monuments act to subvert tradition

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<sup>66</sup> Nikolai Vukov, “The ‘Unmemorable’ and the ‘Unforgettable’ : ‘Museumizing’ the Socialist Past in Post-1989 Bulgaria,” in *Past for the Eyes : East European Representations of Communism in Cinema and Museums after 1989*, by Oksana Sarkisova and Péter Apor, CEUP Collection (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2013), 307–34, <http://books.openedition.org/ceup/686>.

<sup>67</sup> Young, “The Counter-Monument.”

<sup>68</sup> Young.

<sup>69</sup> Young.

and encourage bystanders to participate in the interpretation (and occasionally production) of monuments through dynamically interactive and performative art pieces. Often, counter-monuments are impermanent and fluid, serving as an interpretive foil to the fixity of the physical and ideological space that traditional monuments occupy, challenging viewers to critically engage with memory practices and historical discourses. Occasionally, counter-monuments take the form of traditional monuments, using their traditional structure to confront assumptions about space, monuments, and memory.

### ***3.5 Marshal Koněv Monument***

The former Marshal Koněv monument in Prague 6 (present from 1980 to 2020) represented the quintessential state-sponsored monument tradition referenced by Young. While the site surrounding Marshal Koněv's monument could have served as a site of "forgetting" – an unassuming statue in a public park -- in recent years it has served as a symbolic catalyst for disputes about how and if figures from the Soviet period should and will be remembered. After its removal in 2020, the monument was replaced with an interactive video exhibit and extensive explanatory background texts regarding Koněv as a figure. Does this replacement represent a new iteration of the official monumentalized narrative, or is it more akin to a counter-monument? Is this possible when the project stems from institutional memory narratives? Additional artistic reproductions, most notably a series of figurine Koněvmen and a monument to the Vlasovists, represent artistic counter-memory productions that very clearly repudiate the mnemonic narrative of the original Koněv statue. Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in early 2022, the exhibit at the original Koněv site was replaced again with information to aid Ukraine. Is this repurposing of a site of memory an act of top-down

official political memory, another iteration of counter-monument practice, or simply a new chapter in the evolving construction and reconstruction of the collective memory represented at the site?

In this research, both the Marshal Koněv memory site and its social environment are examined in detail according to Nora's definition of *lieux de mémoire*. Nora's *lieux de mémoire* have three distinct aspects – they are material, symbolic and functional. Koněv and his representations as a site of memory fall into each of these categories. First, the site is inherently material. Secondly, the original Koněv site is symbolic in many ways but most obviously in Koněv's depiction as the representational Russian liberator of Prague. The varied iterations of the site since its erection actively negate this symbolism by questioning previous historical and mnemonic narratives. Lastly, the site is functional – actively reasserting the symbolic narrative it represents for those around it. However, as Nora states "*lieux de mémoire* only exist because of their capacity for metamorphosis, an endless recycling of their meaning, and an unpredictable proliferation of their ramifications."<sup>70</sup> The Koněv monument as a site of memory perfectly exemplifies this as the discursive, physical, and symbolic spaces surrounding the site have changed significantly over time in response to political and social pressures and changes. This mutability reflects Wertsch's conception of *collective remembering* as a situation where static representations of collective memory are interpreted and mediated through group members' relationships to the past, creating narrative frameworks that provide discourses about history.<sup>71</sup> As Czechs navigate and grapple with Soviet legacies of the past, new mnemonic relationships with the

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<sup>70</sup> Nora, "Between Memory and History."

<sup>71</sup> James V. Wertsch and Henry L. Roediger, "Collective Memory: Conceptual Foundations and Theoretical Approaches," *Memory* 16, no. 3 (April 1, 2008): 318–26, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09658210701801434>.

monumental and memorial markers of that past are forged. The Marshal Koněv monument has become a symbolic representation of changing narrative frameworks and historical discourses, where complex interactions between history, politics, memory, and experience are renegotiated and reconstructed.

### **3.6 Theoretical Approach**

The theoretical approach to this research is loosely based upon Halbwachs definition of *collective memory* and Assman's definition of *cultural memory* as "a collective concept for all knowledge that directs behavior and experience in the interactive framework of a society and one that obtains through generations in repeated societal practice and initiation."<sup>72</sup> Scholar Jeffrey Olick's definition of *social memory* as "a sensitizing term for a wide variety of mnemonic processes, practices, and outcomes, neurological, cognitive, personal, aggregated, and collective"<sup>73</sup> along with Alan Confino's multiplicity of memory approach<sup>74</sup> are further incorporated into the working definition of collective memory. Thus, what Assman describes as *communicative memory* and, similarly, what other scholars, such as John Bodnar have referred to as *vernacular memory* or *public memory* are incorporated into a multidimensional approach to memory where personal and communicative interactions with the Koněv monument as a "figure of memory"<sup>75</sup> make up a collective memory milieu composed of private, public and institutionalized cultural memory formation.

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<sup>72</sup> Assmann and Czaplicka, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity."

<sup>73</sup> Olick, "Collective Memory."

<sup>74</sup> Confino, "Collective Memory and Cultural History."

<sup>75</sup> Assmann and Czaplicka, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity."

To achieve this, the present research focuses on collective memory and space surrounding the Koněv monument as a case study through official, public and vernacular modes of memory production as outlined by John Bodnar,<sup>76</sup> where *official memory* consists of a collective view of the past produced by elite institutions and *vernacular memory* is derived from the lived or shared experience of small groups.<sup>77</sup> However, a multimodal and multidimensional rather than dichotomous comparative approach using qualitative methods according to a constructivist ontological framework will be used, where official and communicative memory do not function as two opposing modes of memory, but as two parts of a public *collective memory* whole. Following this line of argumentation, this research includes multiple structures of memory surrounding the Koněv statue, to create a thick and detailed understanding of the mnemonic landscape where the agency of the public in constructing and receiving memory is considered. The intersection of bottom-up and top-down styles of memory production contributes to the multidimensionality of the mnemonic site. Here, top-down memory is exemplified by the concrete site of memory that was the Marshal Koněv monument, media discourse, and official statements surrounding it; and bottom-up, vernacular or “social” interactions with the site include artistic discourse through interpretation and counter-monuments, personal oral histories or *communicative memories*, as well as some media and social media responses. Individual memories and private testimonies regarding the Koněv statue comprise an important part of this research, which includes an analysis of the memories of individuals in Prague 6 as they reflect and substantiate collective mnemonic narratives alongside public and national narratives. A variety of qualitative methods are employed in the investigation of the

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<sup>76</sup> Bodnar, *Remaking America*.

<sup>77</sup> Bodnar.

interdiscursivity and recontextualization of narratives surrounding the Koněv monument.

## 4. Methodology

Within the contextual framework of memory studies and collective memory theory, this research's methodological approach incorporates qualitative analyses of collective memory discursive production, representation, reception, and contestation at the site of the former Koněv monument in Prague 6. Included is an investigation of the form, structure, and content of the discourses at and surrounding the mnemonic site, as well as the extended mnemonic space of the site beyond the spatial limits of the monument's former location. Each of these areas is important to incorporate into a full and rich analysis of the site as, according to Wulf Kansteiner, "the formal and semantic qualities of historical representations might have little in common with the intentions of their authors, and neither the object's characteristics nor the author's objectives are good indicators for the subsequent reception processes."<sup>78</sup> This approach allows for an examination, interrogation, and synthesis of the varied iterations of mnemonic production surrounding the site and the interactions between them.

The methodology for this research is aligned with constructivist theory, establishing that collective memory is socially constructed where "no memory is possible outside frameworks used by people in society to determine and retrieve their recollections."<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Kansteiner, "Finding Meaning in Memory."

<sup>79</sup> Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*.

This approach aligns with Bartlett's<sup>80</sup> conception of remembering and memory as a process of construction and reconstruction.<sup>81</sup> The analysis employs Maurice Halbwachs' theoretical concept of *collective memory*, where collective memory is defined as memory constructed by a social group to reflect their social needs and where the past is reinterpreted or reconstructed to "explain and confer meaning to a present experience."<sup>82</sup> The primarily methodological approach aligns with Jeffrey Olick's multidimensional individual/collectivist approach<sup>83</sup> and Alan Confino's Multiplicity of Memory approach, where the co-minglings of reception, representation, and contestation of memory structures are fundamental.<sup>84</sup>

The research is approached from a Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) perspective – examining the site of the Koněv monument and extensions of the mnemonic site, including artistic interpretations, counter-monuments, and media discourses. This is in accordance with Wulf Kansteiner's analysis of collective memory methodology in which collective memories can be "accessed and studied through their discursive and narrative foundations."<sup>85</sup> Discourse Analysis in this research is taken to mean "an interrelated set of texts and the practice of their production, dissemination, and reception."<sup>86</sup> Here, the Koněv monument site's mnemonic space serves as the case study's "interrelated texts" and further counter-monuments, texts and media discourses

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<sup>80</sup> Frederic C. Bartlett, *Remembering: A Study in Experimental and Social Psychology*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511759185>.

<sup>81</sup> de Saint-Laurent, "Memory Acts."

<sup>82</sup> Marin Manuela, "Between Memory and Nostalgia: The Image of Communism in Romanian Popular Culture. A Case Study of Libertatea Newspaper," *Palimpsest*, December 1, 2013, [https://www.academia.edu/5962843/Between\\_Memory\\_and\\_Nostalgia\\_The\\_Image\\_of\\_Communist\\_in\\_Romanian\\_Popular\\_Culture\\_A\\_Case\\_Study\\_of\\_Libertatea\\_Newspaper](https://www.academia.edu/5962843/Between_Memory_and_Nostalgia_The_Image_of_Communist_in_Romanian_Popular_Culture_A_Case_Study_of_Libertatea_Newspaper).

<sup>83</sup> Olick, "Collective Memory."

<sup>84</sup> Confino, "Collective Memory and Cultural History."

<sup>85</sup> Kansteiner, "Finding Meaning in Memory."

<sup>86</sup> Alan Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 5th ed. (Oxford University Press, 2015).

surrounding the monument serve as an extension of the mnemonic space, where its production, dissemination, and reception are analyzed. Discourse Analysis (DA) is employed as a method to study the site according to Gill's (referenced in Bryman<sup>87</sup>) description of discourse as "a way of constituting a particular view of social reality" and is reflective of those who create it.

Bryman further delineates three dimensions of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) – the text dimension, the discursive practice dimension, and the social practice dimension.<sup>88</sup> Each of these dimensions is evaluated in the context of the Koněv monument – the texts and structures of the site, media discourses, and social responses to the site (artistic and individual). Fairclough further describes the use of CDA as a way to "systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events, and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations, and processes."<sup>89</sup> The use of CDA is justifiable in this case because monuments as aspects of material culture communicate through visual and textual aspects to visitors. Furthermore, the wide variety of discursive practices surrounding the Koněv monument, such as changing textual and visual representations at the site, media coverage, and discussions online and in-person about the site all constitute aspects of the site that are deeply intertwined with cultural and political influences. Therefore, the incorporation of intertextuality, interdiscursivity, and socio-historical context through CDA as opposed to DA is useful.

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<sup>87</sup> Bryman.

<sup>88</sup> Bryman.

<sup>89</sup> Norman Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language* (Routledge, 2013).

Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) is described by Ledin and Manchin as incorporating multimodality to further "...[dig] out the discourses buried in texts to reveal ... power relations and ideologies."<sup>90</sup> A multimodal approach incorporates multiple semiotic modes – visual, textual, physical, and auditory. Consequently, the use of Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) is further justifiable as it investigates the socio-historical context of multiple discourses surrounding the texts of the Koněv monument within an intertextual socio-political and mnemonic context. Thus, it is appropriate to examine the Marshal Koněv monument and related counter-monuments, texts, and media discourses as an extension of the mnemonic "site" within an MCDA lens. This analytic approach is useful in highlighting the contradictions between (former) officially presented narratives of Koněv as a heroic Soviet figure and current official and vernacular engagement with the collective memory surrounding the Koněv monument and these narratives. The following analysis primarily focuses on the semiotics of form, structure, and content of the visual and lexical site representations. In cases where translation to English is required, the analysis focuses more heavily on key themes and patterns rather than specific keywords or vocabulary, as slight subtleties of meaning can be conveyed in word choice and translations do not always pick up on these subtleties.

Following a brief history of Koněv in Chapter Five, the following chapter (Chapter 6) focuses on MCDA of the production and representation of the Koněv monument site in Prague 6. Included is an investigation of official narratives of memory surrounding the

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<sup>90</sup> Per Ledin and David Machin, "Doing Critical Discourse Studies with Multimodality: From Metafunctions to Materiality," *Critical Discourse Studies* 16, no. 5 (October 20, 2019): 497–513, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17405904.2018.1468789>.

monument's erection in 1980,<sup>91</sup> instances of vandalism toward the monument, an analysis of the text on the explanatory plaque added to the monument in 2018,<sup>92</sup> official responses to the monument's removal, and finally the exhibition at the site after its removal in 2020, which includes explanatory poster boards and audio-visual media in two different iterations. As such, the CDA in this section takes a multimodal approach, including visual and textual analysis with an emphasis on interpreting the rhetorical detail of the content of the plaques and exhibits. According to Bryman, rhetorical analysis is used to examine the ways linguistic devices, choice of words, phrases, and styles are used to convey meaning.<sup>93</sup> Rhetorical analysis is particularly useful for analyzing the content of the monument's added plaque because the addition of explanatory text was expressly called for to contextualize the monument as a site of memory and the phraseology of the text was intensely scrutinized after its addition in 2018. In this case, vocabulary, tone, and thematic content are analyzed for larger thematic continuities and discontinuities within the mnemonic discourses.

Chapter Seven's analysis examines the extended mnemonic site of the Koněv monument through discursive and counter-monument practices, including representations in art, media, social media, and individual surveys. The chapter's subsections focus primarily on reception, interpretation, consumption, and contestation of the original site through an array of mnemonic dimensions. The first subsection (7.1) includes an analysis of two significant artistic contestations of the original site – the Vlasov monument in Reporyje<sup>94</sup> (7.1.1) and the Koněvmen statues in Zizkov<sup>95</sup> (7.1.2).

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<sup>91</sup> Zdeňka Krybus and Vratislav Růžička, *I. S. Koněva*, 1980, Statue, 1980, Prague 6 - Bubeneč.

<sup>92</sup> *I. S. Koněva*, 2018, 2018, Prague 6 - Bubeneč.

<sup>93</sup> Bryman, *Social Research Methods*.

<sup>94</sup> David Černý, *Vlasovci*, 2020, Statue, 2020, Prague - Řeporyje.

Here, the semiotics of modes of commemoration and counter-commemoration through counter-monument and discursive and interpretive dialogues between the sites and the “original” site of the Koněv statue are examined. The phraseology, structural and visual similarities between the sites are further compared. These counter-monuments were qualitatively chosen primarily because they represent the two most prominent artistic responses to the original Koněv monument. The following section (7.2) concentrates on an analysis of representational discourse content relating to media, specifically Russian and Czech media responses to the removal of the Koněv monument. The selection of this material was qualitative, focusing on articles from large publications that reflect historical narratives consistent with statements made by Russian officials in Prague and with Czech media narratives. This section is followed by a qualitative analysis of a prominent social media page responsible for the largest Czech protests against the Koněv monument’s removal (7.3).

The fourth and final subsection (7.4) presents an analysis of reception by local community members regarding the site using self-completion questionnaires as described by Bryman.<sup>96</sup> According to Barry Schwartz, “...collective memory works by subsuming individual experiences under cultural schemes that make them comprehensible and, therefore, meaningful.”<sup>97</sup> This justifies including individual surveys in this collective memory research. While the individual surveys examine the memory practices of individual members of the collective --members around Prague 6 --

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<sup>95</sup> Tomáš Vrána, Václav Minařík, and Martina Minařík Pavelková, *Koněvmen*, 2020, Statue, 2020, Prague - Žižkov.

<sup>96</sup> Alan Bryman, “Of Methods and Methodology,” *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management: An International Journal* 3 (August 22, 2008): 159–68, <https://doi.org/10.1108/17465640810900568>.

<sup>97</sup> Barry Schwartz, *Abraham Lincoln and the Forge of National Memory* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

the approach is by no means wholly individualistic. When used in conjunction with the preceding sections, the addition of this section contributes to the multimodality and multidimensionality of the methodological approach, aligning with Olick's argument that individual and collective memories are essentially two sides of the same coin.<sup>98</sup> Additionally, the survey research provides context for the production of collective memory regarding Marshal Koněv through an analysis of memory consumption.

The justification for the choice of a self-completion questionnaire aligns with Bryman's description of the advantages of online and postal questionnaires as a method for qualitative research.<sup>99</sup> Two Facebook groups associated with the neighborhood surrounding the monument site were qualitatively chosen, with the assumption that residents in the area surrounding the monument site may be more likely to have personal memories associated with the monument. This assumption is in line with Vukov's explanation of the function of monuments in cities where monuments make up the daily landscape of those who live near them.<sup>100</sup> Respondents were asked to complete a web survey questionnaire which included questions about the monument as a site for personal memory, their reaction to recent political and news controversy, and their feelings regarding the ultimate fate of the monument. This questionnaire can be considered a form of qualitative interview where "qualitative interviewing is meant to be flexible and to seek out the world views of research participants."<sup>101</sup> Each of the questions was open-ended but the format of the questionnaire was highly structured, meaning that the interviews were semi-structured. The questionnaire aimed to gain

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<sup>98</sup> Olick, "Collective Memory."

<sup>99</sup> Bryman, *Social Research Methods*.

<sup>100</sup> Vukov, "Cities, Memorial Sites, Memory."

<sup>101</sup> Bryman, *Social Research Methods*.

insight into the opinions and memory narratives of individual Prague residents to add an additional dimension to the collective mnemonic framework. The questionnaire was offered in both Czech and English. Questions and answers included in the questionnaire can be found in Appendices 1 and 2.

## 5. Koněv in History

Marshal Ivan Stepanovich Koněv was born in 1897 in the town of Lodenyo in the Vologda Governate of the Russian Empire. He was conscripted into the Russian army in 1916 and served for 2 years before joining the Bolshevik Party and subsequently the Red Army in 1918 where he quickly rose to the rank of officer.<sup>102</sup> In 1941, Koněv was named commander of the Western Front and later given the title of Colonel-General. Subsequently, Koněv faced significant losses during the Vyazma Offensive in October 1941.<sup>103</sup> It is believed that it was only the intervention of his longtime military rival Marshal Georgy Zhukov that prevented Koněv from severe censure or execution for these failures.<sup>104</sup> Koněv later commanded the Second Ukrainian Front and was promoted to Marshal after his victories in Ukraine.<sup>105</sup> In April 1945, Marshal Koněv and his troops in the Second Ukrainian Front, along with Marshal Georgy Zhukov and the First Belorussian Front surrounded and captured Berlin.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Fidler, *Koněv: Osvoboditel, Nebo Okupant?*

<sup>103</sup> Lev Lopukhovskiy, *The Viazma Catastrophe, 1941.*, 2nd ed. (Online: Super Publishing House LLC, 2017), <https://www.litmir.me/br/?b=591664&p=1>.

<sup>104</sup> Fidler, *Koněv: Osvoboditel, Nebo Okupant?*

<sup>105</sup> Fidler.

<sup>106</sup> Major Claude R Sasso, *Leavenworth Papers: Soviet Night Operations in World War II*, vol. 6 (Leavenworth, Kansas: Combat Studies Institute, 1982), <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Portals/7/combat-studies-institute/csi-books/sasso.pdf>.

On the 6th of May 1945, Koněv's Ukrainian Front began the Prague Offensive, targeting the significant concentration of remaining German troops in Czechoslovakia. The liberation was planned to take place May 12-14, but the Prague Uprising, which began on May 5th, pushed Koněv to begin the offensive earlier. In early May, American troops had already liberated Plzen, but it was understood that the Americans would hold off advancing further toward Prague because Russian forces had already planned Prague's liberation. By the morning of May 9th, Koněv and his troops entered Prague and liberated it from German control.<sup>107</sup> Marshal Koněv and the Russian troops were welcomed in Prague by its residents with enthusiasm as liberators and saviors, cheered in the streets, and offered bouquets of flowers.<sup>108</sup> The jubilant feeling of freedom Praguers felt following both the Prague Uprising and Prague's liberation easily contributed to subsequent narratives of positivity and gratitude toward the Soviet liberators, with Koněv as the symbolic liberating figurehead. In his own descriptions of the events in his memoir, Koněv references the heroism of the Czechs in the Prague Uprising, establishing associated solidarity between the Czechs and Russians, who both fought against the common enemy of the Nazis. In his memoir, Koněv remarks:

“I will not analyze the course of the Prague uprising in all its complex vicissitudes. I will only say what was most important in it - a nationwide outburst of indignation against the fascist invaders, the desire to take up arms, at any cost to help the speedy victory over fascism, while not considering either the danger or the victims. This is the heroic essence of the uprising... we, breaking through to Prague from afar to save it from the Nazis, felt this and swiftly moved to help the rebellious citizens of Prague.”<sup>109</sup>

By Koněv's own estimation, his military intervention aided Czechs in fighting against fascist control and was beneficial for both the Bolshevik cause and Czech citizens. This

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<sup>107</sup> David M. Glantz and Jonathan Mallory House, *When Titans Clashed: How the Red Army Stopped Hitler* (University Press of Kansas, 1995).

<sup>108</sup> Fidler, *Konev: Osvoboditel, Nebo Okupant?*

<sup>109</sup> Ivan Konev, *Year of Victory* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1969), [http://militera.lib.ru/memo/russian/konev\\_is2/index.html](http://militera.lib.ru/memo/russian/konev_is2/index.html).

narrative aligns with the subsequent historical narrative of the USSR, claiming that the Russian liberation of Prague saved the city from almost certain destruction by the Nazis.<sup>110</sup> However, according to modern interpretations by Czech and Western historians, Germans were already retreating from Prague at the time the Russians arrived, meaning it was unlikely that Prague would have been destroyed even without Russian intervention.<sup>111</sup> After the liberation in May 1945, Koněv was named an honorary citizen of Prague, and a plaque was placed on the wall of the town hall in Old Town Square in his honor.<sup>112</sup>

Marshal Koněv's later actions in crushing the Hungarian Uprising in 1956, where around 2,500 Hungarians were killed, significantly complicated Koněv's liberator status and the representation of Koněv in subsequent Czech historical narratives. From 1956 to 1960, Koněv served as the commander of the Soviet forces, stopping the Hungarian uprising of 1956.<sup>113</sup> Later, in 1961, Koněv commanded Soviet forces in Germany during the construction of the Berlin Wall.<sup>114</sup> In May 1968, Koněv, along with a Soviet delegation, visited Prague to congratulate the Czech president (Ludvík Svoboda) on his recent election and to celebrate the anniversary of the liberation of Prague. Historian Jiří Fidler argues that the visit took place in part to assess strategies for containing the Prague Spring and to obscure Soviet intelligence gathering,<sup>115</sup> though Koněv was already retired at the time. When asked about the visit, Koněv himself claimed he came

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<sup>110</sup> Владислав Шурыгин and Роман Крецул, "Маршальский Жест: Что Стоит За Сносом Памятника Конеvu в Праге," *Izvestiya (Известия)*, April 26, 2020, <https://iz.ru/1004222/vladislav-shurygin-roman-kretcul/marshalskii-zhest-cto-stoit-za-snosom-pamiatnika-konevu-v-prage>.

<sup>111</sup> Fidler, *Konev: Osvoboditel, Nebo Okupant?*

<sup>112</sup> Boris Polevoi, *Polkovodets* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1983), <https://www.booksite.ru/konev/19.html>.

<sup>113</sup> Timothy C. Dowling, *Russia at War: From the Mongol Conquest to Afghanistan, Chechnya, and Beyond [2 Volumes]* (Santa Barbara, UNITED STATES: ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2014), <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/cuni/detail.action?docID=1883940>.

<sup>114</sup> Fidler, *Konev: Osvoboditel, Nebo Okupant?*

<sup>115</sup> Fidler.

only to congratulate his friend on his election.<sup>116</sup> The truth of Koněv's involvement in intelligence gathering is disputed by Russian officials,<sup>117</sup> but his involvement, whether direct and knowingly complicit or indirect, was a significant contributing factor to recent calls for the removal of Koněv's statue in Prague 6. Shortly after Koněv's visit in 1968, Warsaw Pact troops invaded the Czech Republic to repress the Prague Spring, followed by a period of Normalization.<sup>118</sup> While Koněv's liberation of Prague was undoubtedly a victory over Nazism, it was a victory that ultimately failed to bring freedom to the Eastern half of Europe, plunging into a period of Soviet occupation.<sup>119</sup> Associations of Koněv as a historical figure with Soviet suppression and control (eg. in Hungary, Berlin, and Prague) have extremely negative connotations for many Czechs in the present day. Koněv died in 1973, and his statue was not erected in Prague until 1980.

## 6. Monument Analysis

### 6.1 Koněv Monument History

On May 9, 1980, on the 35th anniversary of the liberation of Prague, a statue of Ivan Stepanovich Koněv was unveiled in Náměstí Interbrigády in Prague 6. This location was chosen because it is close to the Russian (formerly Soviet) Embassy, the

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<sup>116</sup> Fidler.

<sup>117</sup> iDNES.cz, "Ruské Velvyslanectví v Praze Popřelo Podíl Koněva Na Okupaci Československa," *IDNES.Cz*, May 30, 2018, [https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/domaci/konev-ruske-velvyslanectvi-okupace-1968.A180530\\_220342\\_domaci\\_evam](https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/domaci/konev-ruske-velvyslanectvi-okupace-1968.A180530_220342_domaci_evam).

<sup>118</sup> Fidler, *Konev: Osvoboditel, Nebo Okupant?*

<sup>119</sup> Mälksoo, "The Memory Politics of Becoming European."

International Hotel, and the Ministry of Defense.<sup>120</sup> The auspicious event was attended by state officials and representatives of the USSR. The monument was designed by architect Vratislav Růžička and created by sculptor Zdeněk Krybus.<sup>121</sup>

Images 1: Koněv monument



Photo by Milan Malíček

The monument portrayed a life-sized bronze Koněv on top of a large stone structure standing with one hand raised in greeting and the other holding a bouquet of flowers, referencing the gifts from grateful Prague citizens at the moment of Prague's liberation. The visual representation depicts Koněv as a powerful heroic figure, but also a purveyor of peace and friendship.

<sup>120</sup> Petr Blažek, "Podrobná Historie Pražského Pomníku Maršála Koněva - Novinky.Cz," *Novinky.Cz*, May 7, 2022, [https://www.novinky.cz/historie/clanek/podrobna-historie-prazskeho-pomniku-marsala-koneva-40396192#dop\\_ab\\_variant=0&dop\\_source\\_zone\\_name=novinky.sznhp.box&dop\\_req\\_id=7S5eCmapLbI-202205070601&dop\\_id=40396192&source=hp&seq\\_no=3&utm\\_campaign=&utm\\_medium=z-boxiku&utm\\_source=www.seznam.cz](https://www.novinky.cz/historie/clanek/podrobna-historie-prazskeho-pomniku-marsala-koneva-40396192#dop_ab_variant=0&dop_source_zone_name=novinky.sznhp.box&dop_req_id=7S5eCmapLbI-202205070601&dop_id=40396192&source=hp&seq_no=3&utm_campaign=&utm_medium=z-boxiku&utm_source=www.seznam.cz).

<sup>121</sup> Česká televize, "Zpátky v Čase. Koněvův Pomník Odhalili v Roce 1980. Dnes Budí Kontroverze," *ČT24 - Nejdůvěryhodnější Zpravodajský Web v ČR - Česká Televize*, 2019, <https://ct24.ceskatelevize.cz/2910446-zpatky-v-case-konevuv-pomnik-odhalili-v-roce-1980-dnes-budi-kontroverze>.

Video footage from the ceremony includes children's groups, military members, and many local citizens. The accompanying speech at the monument's unveiling emphasized the heroism of Koněv in the Soviet fight against fascism.<sup>122</sup> Originally, the monument was accompanied by a plaque with text written by Jaroslav Vegner, an employee of the Military History Institute.<sup>123</sup> The plaque's text read in Czech:

“Významný vojevůdce maršál Sovětského svazu Ivan Stěpanovič Koněv dvojnásobný Hrdina Sovětského svazu a Hrdina Československé socialistické republiky velitel vojsk 1. ukrajinského frontu, která zachránila 9. května 1945 Prahu před zničením.”<sup>124125</sup>

The plaque's text underscored Koněv's heroism as a savior and referred to him as a “double hero” of the Soviet and Czech socialist republics. It also unequivocally asserted that Koněv and his troops saved Prague from destruction. This description aligned with Soviet narratives of history and reinforced a collective memory of liberation and aid by Russia during World War II with the logical narrative extension that those feelings of sympathy, companionship, and help would continue throughout the Soviet period. However, the plaque's contents do not align with the current memory narrative of the present Czech democratic government and modern Czech historians. Since the 1990s, the monument and the wording of the plaque have been contested frequently, leading to incidents of vandalism and controversy.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Dokumenty a zajímavosti, *Odhalení Pomníku Maršála Koňeva v Praze 1980, 2020*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RUIv1pie4e8>.

<sup>123</sup> Blažek, “Podrobná Historie Pražského Pomníku Maršála Koněva - Novinky.Cz.”

<sup>124</sup> English translation: “The outstanding military leader Marshal of the Soviet Union Ivan Stepanovich Koněv, twice Hero of the Soviet Union and Hero of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, commander of the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front, which saved Prague from destruction on 9 May 1945.”

<sup>125</sup> Krybus and Růžička, *I. S. Koněva*.

<sup>126</sup> Stulík, “Russian Battles Over Historical Narratives: The Case of Prague's Konev Statue.”

According to Halbwachs “the past is not preserved but is reconstructed on the basis of the present”<sup>127</sup> and Confino also asks the question “Why do people prefer one image of the past over another?”<sup>128</sup> In 1980, when the Koněv monument was erected, official narratives of the past reflected the socio-political landscape of the time – encouraging positive Czech-Soviet relations. As such, the Marshal Koněv monument as it stood from its erection in 1980 until its removal portrayed a historical narrative of Soviet heroism. This image was interpreted and renegotiated through various social, political, personal, and cultural mediators over time. For Russia today, “claiming credit for the decisive significance of the Soviet army in the course of World War II”<sup>129</sup> through sustained commemoration of the end of WWII on May 9<sup>th</sup> (including Koněv’s victory in Prague) makes use of the past for the purposes of the present. However, in recent years, as the Czech Republic forges new mnemonic-historic narratives separate from those of their Soviet oppressors, Soviet portrayals of the past have been actively and vocally rejected by many – political elites, private individuals, news sources, etc. It is clear that many people do not prefer the historical narratives they believe the Koněv monument represents. Why this preference, or even aversion, has been so strongly expressed and how this reflects current cultural and historical norms and changing constructs of collective memory surrounding Czech nationalism and history, and its entanglement and interaction with a Soviet past can be seen through the multiple discourses surrounding Koněv’s removal. Vukov writes that the role of monuments is not only as “instances of 'sustaining' and 'representing' memory but also as contested sites of remembrance, where relationships between memory and forgetting, continuity and change are put on

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<sup>127</sup> Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*.

<sup>128</sup> Confino, “Collective Memory and Cultural History.”

<sup>129</sup> Mälksoo, “The Memory Politics of Becoming European.”

display.”<sup>130</sup> The contestation not only of the Koněv site as a site of remembrance or forgetting, but as a symbolic representation of competing and contesting narratives of collective political and social memory can be seen through the site itself, the discourses surrounding the site, and counter-monuments that actively reconstruct and disrupt collective memory narratives, bringing the previously unmemorable to the forefront.

## **6.2 Monument Vandalism**

Incidences of graffiti on the Koněv monument have occurred several times since 1989, with each incident inciting escalated controversy and media attention surrounding the monument. In 2014, the monument was vandalized for the first time when the bottom of the monument was doused in pink paint. This incident marked a catalyst moment when the Koněv statue decisively became a highly contested symbolic representation for memory politics surrounding Communist commemoration and Soviet historical narratives and collective memory in the Czech Republic. In a later November 2017 incident, vandals spray-painted the dates 1956, 1961, 1968, and 2017 onto the statue, with obvious references to the Hungarian Uprising, the Berlin Wall, and the Prague Uprising.<sup>131</sup> Other incidents, such as the 2014 and 2018 vandalisms notably included pink paint. The use of pink paint is undoubtedly a reference to David Černý’s iconic pink tank.

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<sup>130</sup> Vukov, “Cities, Memorial Sites, Memory.”

<sup>131</sup> Stulík, “Russian Battles Over Historical Narratives: The Case of Prague’s Konev Statue.”

Images 2&amp;3: Monument Vandalism



Photos by: Jan Zatorsky

In 1991, artist David Černý painted a monument in Prague’s Kinsky Square, a tank supposedly used during the liberation of Prague during World War II, pink.<sup>132</sup> The tank, like the Koněv statue a few decades later, symbolized the Soviet occupation of the Czech Republic. Černý’s symbolic painting of the tank was both an artistic and political act of criticism of the controversial Soviet legacy following the Velvet Revolution. Interestingly, Koněv himself was at the ceremonial dedication of the original tank monument in 1945.<sup>133</sup> Though the monument was later entirely removed, frequent references to Černý’s addition remain in popular culture, collective memory, and other monuments and public artworks around Prague today. Blacker argues “alternative visions of the past appear in commemorative happenings or temporary installations...While these can intervene in the public space, sometimes indirectly or temporarily, they generally cannot leave a lasting impression without the endorsement

<sup>132</sup> Pavla Horáková, “The Complicated History of Prague’s Tank No. 23,” *Radio Prague International*, May 8, 2005, <https://english.radio.cz/complicated-history-pragues-tank-no-23-8098701>.

<sup>133</sup> Jan Hammer, “StoletíDNES: Zelená, růžová, zelená, růžová. Smíchovský tank 23 měnil barvy,” *iDNES.cz*, November 26, 2018, [https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/stoletidnes/stoletidnes-serial-tank.A181124\\_113604\\_stoletidnes\\_hm1](https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/stoletidnes/stoletidnes-serial-tank.A181124_113604_stoletidnes_hm1).

of the authorities.”<sup>134</sup> As a renowned artist, David Černý’s work has often been endorsed by some authorities, but just as frequently face opposition from others. Because of this, Černý’s works have been moved, removed, and reinstalled at various times. In 2018 Černý installed another related art piece, entitled “Tank Torso” in Kinsky Square. The art installation consists of a partial tank that appears to be mostly submerged or buried in the ground. Tank Torso was painted green rather than pink, but following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the tank was repainted blue and yellow in support of Ukraine.<sup>135</sup> The choice of pink for the Koněv statue’s vandalism through references to Černý’s pink tank counter-monument implicitly creates a link of continuity to a memory narrative of subversion and protest against Soviet oppression.

Furthermore, the use of pink nods to other acts of monument vandalism incorporating pink paint, such as the painting of a Soviet Army monument in Sofia (a so-called apology to Prague, again referencing Černý) in 2013<sup>136</sup> or the pink painting of the statue of the founder of residential schools in Canada, Egerton Ryerson, during the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020.<sup>137</sup> This propensity for pink in Koněv’s case and others may be a dilution or transformation of the vibrant Soviet-associated red with white, indicating an ideological shift away from Soviet influence toward democracy. Additionally, the feminine-coded pink may be a symbolic emasculation of the traditionally masculine accomplishments of Koněv as a military figure. Through graffiti

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<sup>134</sup> Blacker, “Spatial Dialogues and Holocaust Memory in Contemporary Polish Art.”

<sup>135</sup> Jason Pirodsky, “David Černý’s Iconic Soviet Tank Painted Blue and Yellow in Support of Ukraine,” *Expats.Cz*, March 6, 2022, sec. Culture, Daily News, <https://www.expats.cz/czech-news/article/david-cerny-s-iconic-soviet-tank-painted-blue-and-yellow-to-support-ukraine>.

<sup>136</sup> “Bulgarian Red Army Monument Painted Pink in Prague Spring Apology,” *Reuters*, August 21, 2013, sec. Lifestyle, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-bulgaria-monument-czech-idUSBRE97K0G520130821>.

<sup>137</sup> “Three Arrested after Demonstrators Splash Paint on Statues of John A. Macdonald and Egerton Ryerson,” *The Toronto Star*, July 18, 2020, sec. GTA, <https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2020/07/18/demonstrators-splash-paint-on-toronto-statues-of-john-a-macdonald-and-egerton-ryerson.html>.

and pink paint, the dominant narrative of liberation and solidarity that the Koněv statue originally portrayed is actively countered, directly forcing the officially “unmemorable”<sup>138</sup> into the public consciousness.

Following the numerous vandalism incidents to the Koněv statue, and within the context of other decisions to remove Soviet monuments in Europe, alongside discussions of monuments and historical narrative featuring heavily in the American context in worldwide media, several groups of activists and individuals called for the removal of the Marshal Koněv statue. However, some staunchly defended its legacy and the importance of the monument as a historical document, citing its possible removal as an erasure of history and even as an offense to the victims of the Holocaust.<sup>139</sup> Initially, the municipality of Prague 6 did not plan to remove the statue, but after numerous incidents of vandalism and the costly requirements to clean the monument, the Prague 6 council voted to modify the existing plaque near the statue to further reflect the historical context of Koněv’s military and political career.<sup>140</sup> In a letter from the Russian Ministry of Foreign affairs, officials argued that the issue was too important and politically sensitive to be handled by a local administration and the decision regarding the plaque should be made at a state level.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Vukov, “The ‘Unmemorable’ and the ‘Unforgettable.’”

<sup>139</sup> Roman Šafhauser, “Starosta Prahy 6 Kolář Má Policejní Ochranu. Vyhrožují Mu Kvůli Koněvovi,” *IDNES.Cz*, August 30, 2019, [https://www.idnes.cz/praha/zpravy/pomnik-marsala-koneva-v-praze-6-zakryla-plachta-ruska-ambasada.A190830\\_103310\\_praha-zpravy\\_rsr](https://www.idnes.cz/praha/zpravy/pomnik-marsala-koneva-v-praze-6-zakryla-plachta-ruska-ambasada.A190830_103310_praha-zpravy_rsr).

<sup>140</sup> Ondřej Šrámek, spokesman, “ZASTUPITELSTVO PRAHY 6 PŘIJALO USNESENÍ K POMNÍKU MARŠÁLA KONĚVA,” § RMČ Praha 6 (2017), <https://www.praha6.cz/media?zprava=194>.

<sup>141</sup> Eva Mošpanová, “Pražskou Sochu Maršála Koněva Řeší Velvyslanci i Ruské Ministerstvo. Česká Strana Neskrývá Překvapení,” *IROZHLAS*, January 4, 2018, [https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-domov/socha-marsala-koneva-tabulky-rusko-velvyslanectvi-ministerstvo\\_1801041200\\_mos](https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-domov/socha-marsala-koneva-tabulky-rusko-velvyslanectvi-ministerstvo_1801041200_mos).

### 6.3 Modified Plaque

In August 2018, following the agreement by the Prague 6 City Council, a modified plaque with text written by military historian Eduard Stehlík was added to the monument in Czech, Russian and English.<sup>142</sup> The plaque was added ostensibly to help prevent further vandalism at the site according to the mayor of Prague 6 at the time, Ondřej Kolář.<sup>143</sup> As such, the political motivation of the added plaque appeared to be to satisfy both detractors and defenders of the monument as a site of collective memory.

The English version read:

Marshal Ivan Stepanovich Koněv commanded the 1st Ukrainian Front, whose forces made the final advances on Berlin, and who liberated Northern, Central, and Eastern Bohemia. They were the first to enter Prague on 9 May, 1945. In Autumn 1956, he commanded the Soviet ground forces, which suppressed the Hungarian Uprising. As the commander of the Soviet forces in Berlin, he participated in the construction of the Berlin Wall as a solution to the so-called Berlin crisis of 1961. In 1968 he personally backed the intelligence surveillance preceding the invasion of the armed forces of the Warsaw Pact into Czechoslovakia.

The monument was built in 1980. Municipal district of Prague 6 – 2018<sup>144</sup><sup>145</sup>

This brief description adds some historical context without delving too deeply into the political and historical implications of these added pieces of history. However, the inclusion of these references at all is inherently political. In contrast with later iterations of mnemonic context at the site, the description seems relatively neutral, but official

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<sup>142</sup> Blažek, “Podrobná Historie Pražského Pomníku Maršála Koněva - Novinky.Cz.”

<sup>143</sup> Ivo Spisar, “Koněv, Policejní Ochrana a Kritika Magistrátu. Starostou Už Nebudu, Říká Ondřej Kolář z Prahy 6,” *Pražská Drbna - Zprávy z Prahy*, October 16, 2021, <https://prazska.drba.cz/z-kraje/praha-6/7385-konev-policejni-ochrana-a-kritika-magistratu-starostou-uz-nebudu-rika-ondrej-kolar-z-prahy-6.html>.

<sup>144</sup> Czech translation: Maršál Ivan Stěpanovič Koněv velel 1. ukrajinskému frontu, jehož jednotky byly nasazeny k závěrečnému útoku na Berlín a osvobodily severní, střední a východní Čechy a jako první vstoupily 9. května 1945 do Prahy. Na podzim 1956 řídil potlačení Maďarského povstání sovětskou armádou a jako velitel Skupiny sovětských vojsk v Berlíně se v roce 1961 podílel na řešení tzv. druhé berlínské krize výstavbou Berlínské zdi. V roce 1968 osobně zaštitil zpravodajský průzkum před vpádem vojsk Varšavské smlouvy do ČSSR.

<sup>145</sup> *I. S. Koněva.*

Russian reactions toward the addition were decidedly negative. In a letter from the Russian embassy in Prague, issue was taken with the last sentence of the plaque regarding Koněv's involvement in the invasion of Prague in 1968. The letter denies any historical evidence or archival data to support Koněv's participation in preparation for the invasion, claiming that he was already retired at the time.<sup>146</sup> The plaque was not modified to change this sentence, however, as Czech historians argued that Koněv's visit to Prague covered up inspection and reconnaissance by Soviet intelligence, something that Koněv would certainly have been aware of.<sup>147</sup> A year after the monument was removed, in 2021, a similarly phrased explanatory plaque was added under the Koněvova street sign in Prague 3, which has had the name since 1947.<sup>148,149</sup>

## 6.4 Removal

Though plans for the removal of the Koněv statue were first proposed by Prague 6 authorities in 2015, it was not until late 2019 that the council in Prague 6 officially decided to remove the monument. This was followed by intense criticism from the Russian Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who argued that the statue's removal was a violation of the 1993 Treaty on Friendly Relations and

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<sup>146</sup> iDNES.cz, "Ruské Velvyslanectví v Praze Popřelo Podíl Koněva Na Okupaci Československa."

<sup>147</sup> Robert Oppelt, "Maršál Koněv Přijel v Roce 1968 Do Prahy Slavit. Přitom Přípravoval Invazi," *IDNES.Cz*, May 6, 2018, [https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/domaci/pomnik-koneva-invaze-osvobozeni-1968-rusove-protestuji-praha-6.A180531\\_221409\\_domaci\\_lre](https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/domaci/pomnik-koneva-invaze-osvobozeni-1968-rusove-protestuji-praha-6.A180531_221409_domaci_lre).

<sup>148</sup> "One of the most famous Soviet commanders in World War II. Marshal of the Soviet Union, commander of the 1st Ukrainian Front, whose troops were the first to enter Prague on May 9, 1945. In the autumn of 1956, he directed the suppression of the Hungarian uprising by the Soviet army. In 1961, at the time of the so-called Second Berlin Crisis, ending with the construction of the Berlin Wall, he headed the Group of Soviet Troops in Germany. In the spring of 1968, he led a military delegation whose members conducted intelligence reconnaissance in Czechoslovakia before the August invasion by Warsaw Pact troops. Older names of the street were Díeňská, Poděbradova, Brněnská. It has been named Koněva since 1947."

<sup>149</sup> Raymond Johnston, "Žižkov Street Honoring Controversial Soviet Marshal Won't Be Renamed," *Expats.Cz*, June 22, 2021, sec. Daily News, <https://www.expats.cz/czech-news/article/controversial-soviet-marshal-konev-gets-explanatory-plaque-on-konevova-street>.

Cooperation between Russia and the Czech Republic.<sup>150</sup> Articles 18 and 21 of the 1993 treaty state that historical, cultural, and military monuments should be preserved and protected and that both parties (Czech and Russian) should be allowed access to them.<sup>151</sup> Despite these arguments, the removal plans continued and the monument was officially removed on April 3, 2020, near the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic.<sup>152</sup> At the time, Prague 6 mayor Ondřej Kolář jokingly stated that the statue was removed because Koněv's likeness was not wearing a mask, and the mask mandate applied to everyone.<sup>153</sup>

Following the statue's removal, Czech- Russian political relations quickly began to deteriorate as Russian and Czech statements by the respective Ministries of Foreign Affairs continuously condemned the actions and reactions of the other. Two days after the statue's removal on April 5th, the Czech Embassy in Moscow was attacked and vandalized as a direct response to the statue's removal.<sup>154</sup> A few days later, Russia opened a criminal case against the removal as a violation of Russian law.<sup>155</sup> The Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs responded by condemning the confrontational actions of the Russian MFA and rejected Czech violations of any laws or the 1993 Treaty, arguing

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<sup>150</sup> "Prague To Remove Statue Of WWII Soviet Marshal, Sparking Moscow's Ire," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 06:26:48Z, sec. Russia, <https://www.rferl.org/a/prague-to-remove-statue-of-wwii-soviet-marshal-sparking-moscow-s-ire/30161806.html>.

<sup>151</sup> "99/1996 Sb. Smlouva o Přátelských Vztazích a Spolupráci Mezi Českou Republikou a Ruskou Federací," accessed April 8, 2022, [https://www.zakonyprolidi.cz/cs/1996-99?fbclid=IwAR08chS0v1kuEb84fQqEOMkiBvOBWeeG0WT\\_PmtP71WFVRDyPjEkW2ySR3A](https://www.zakonyprolidi.cz/cs/1996-99?fbclid=IwAR08chS0v1kuEb84fQqEOMkiBvOBWeeG0WT_PmtP71WFVRDyPjEkW2ySR3A).

<sup>152</sup> Stulík, "Russian Battles Over Historical Narratives: The Case of Prague's Konev Statue."

<sup>153</sup> Agata Tatarenko, "Removal of the Statue of Marshal Ivan Konev in Prague: A Crisis in Czech-Russian Relations (Agata Tatarenko) | Institute of Central Europe," April 14, 2020, <https://ies.lublin.pl/en/comments/removal-of-the-statue-of-marshal-ivan-konev-in-prague-a-crisis-in-czech-russian-relations-agata-tatarenko/>.

<sup>154</sup> "Czech Embassy In Moscow Attacked After Prague Removes Soviet Commander's Statue," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 11:58:54Z, sec. Russia, <https://www.rferl.org/a/czech-embassy-in-moscow-attacked-after-prague-removes-soviet-commander-s-statue/30535440.html>.

<sup>155</sup> Dominik Tesár, "Rusko Chce Po Obráně Odstraněnou Sochu Maršála Koněva. ,Není Naše, Brání Se Ministerstvo," *IROZHLAS*, April 10, 2020, [https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-domov/socha-konev-praha-rusko-lubomir-metnar-ministerstvo-obrany-praha-6\\_2004100958\\_kro](https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-domov/socha-konev-praha-rusko-lubomir-metnar-ministerstvo-obrany-praha-6_2004100958_kro).

that these actions by Russia signaled a lack of interest in continuing to develop positive relations.<sup>156</sup> At a meeting of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe following the removal, Russian Ambassador Alexander Lukashevich claimed that “The instigators appear to have exploited the coronavirus epidemic to carry out this barbarous act,” citing the many commendable actions of Koněv and the disapproval of the statue’s removal by current Czech president Miloš Zeman and former president Václav Klaus, and maligning the character of Prague 6 mayor Ondřej Kolář. Lukashevich further claimed that the act was an example of “aggressive nationalism and neo-Nazism”, claiming it violated provisions of the Document of the Cracow Symposium on the Cultural Heritage of the CSCE participating States as well as the 1993 Russian-Czech agreement.<sup>157</sup>

Subsequent academic research in Russia, such as a publication from Polesky State University<sup>158</sup> and another from Moscow State Institute of International Relations<sup>159</sup> corroborate narratives of historical revisionism and anti-Russian sentiment. In a journal article regarding Czech-Russian historical memory and national security, the author refers to Czechs as “former allies but ongoing enemies” and argues that the removal, or as they refer to it, demolition of the Koněv monument was obviously “conducted by forces close to the US embassy”.<sup>160</sup> Certainly, the shift away from Soviet iconography in favor of Western values (or, according to these sources, American values) presents a

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<sup>156</sup> Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí České republiky, “Prohlášení MZV k Vyjádřením Ruské Federace,” April 10, 2020,

[https://www.mzv.cz/moscow/cz/vzajemne\\_vztahy/prohlaseni\\_mzv\\_k\\_vyjadrenim\\_ruske.html](https://www.mzv.cz/moscow/cz/vzajemne_vztahy/prohlaseni_mzv_k_vyjadrenim_ruske.html).

<sup>157</sup> Alexander Lukashevich, “Statement by the Delegation of the Russian Federation on Dismantling of a Monument to Marshal Ivan Konev in Prague,” § Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (2020), <https://www.osce.org/permanent-council/451708>.

<sup>158</sup> Brichkov, Nikonorov, and Pertsev, “The geopolitical context of events in Czechoslovakia.”

<sup>159</sup> Permyakov and Antonenko, “Attempt to save Friendship, or What the Liberator of Prague Did in Czechoslovakia in May 1968.”

<sup>160</sup> Brichkov, Nikonorov, and Pertsev, “The geopolitical context of events in Czechoslovakia.”

threat to Russian geopolitical influence. Interestingly, as illustrated previously, publications in both English and Russian from Russian news and academic sources often use the word “demolition” to describe the removal of the monument although the Koněv statue was removed fully intact. However, the use of the term “demolition” implies increased aggression toward Soviet and Russian historical identity and acts as an impetus for increased righteous indignation by those who view Koněv’s removal as historical revisionism or erasure. While Koněv’s statue remains, albeit hidden from view, the destruction of the statue pedestal and the symbolic destruction of Koněv as a respected figure within Czech collective memory narratives comprise their own demolition of sorts. Thus, the continued preservation of the statue is effectively inconsequential in the Russian media narrative where the significance lies with the challenge the statue’s removal poses to Soviet historical narratives rather than in the fate of the physical statue itself.

At the end of April, the situation escalated further, when allegedly a Russian man working for Russian intelligence entered the Czech Republic with the poison ricin with the intent to target the mayor of Prague Zdeněk Hřib, mayor of Prague 6 Ondřej Kolář, and the mayor of Prague’s Řeporyje district Pavel Novotný, who were subsequently given police protection.<sup>161</sup> Both the Russian Embassy and the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs denied the attempted assassinations, saying the claims were slanderous fake news.<sup>162</sup> The mayors were not harmed, and it was assumed that the poison plot was at least partially fabricated; still, two Russian diplomats were expelled from Prague as a

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<sup>161</sup> Ondřej Kundra, “Muž s Ricinem,” *Respekt*, April 26, 2020, <https://www.respekt.cz/tydenik/2020/18/muz-s-ricinem>.

<sup>162</sup> “Prague District Mayor Says Russian Agent Sent To ‘Liquidate Me,’” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, April 29, 2020, sec. Russia, <https://www.rferl.org/a/prague-district-mayor-says-russian-sent-here-to-liquidate-me-/30583018.html>.

result,<sup>163</sup> triggering the retaliatory expulsion of two Czech diplomats in Moscow.<sup>164</sup> The swift erosion of Czech-Russian relations prompted various other retaliatory symbolic renamings of cultural sites and condemnatory statements on both sides. Relations deteriorated even further after 2021 allegations of Russian involvement in the 2014 Vrbětice warehouse explosions.<sup>165</sup>

In Maria Mälksoo's assessment of May 9<sup>th</sup> as an important day commemorating the end of WWII throughout Europe, she argues that it is a particularly sacred national holiday for Russians that is integral to Russia's history, positioning Russia on the "good" side of history as victors over Nazi evils.<sup>166</sup> Victory Day is therefore an important part of Russian collective memory and the creation of a modern Russian master narrative of identity. As such, the Czech decision to question, modify and reexamine Czech mnemonic narratives surrounding Soviet involvement in WWII, ultimately resulting in the removal of Koněv's monument (a clear mnemonic representation of Russia's heroic defeat of Nazism and liberation of Prague on May 9<sup>th</sup>) directly threatens current Russian mnemonic narratives. With this in mind, the swift and intense response from Russian official, news, and academic sources was undoubtedly deemed necessary from a Russian mnemo-political perspective.

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<sup>163</sup> Shaun Walker, Shaun Walker Central, and eastern Europe correspondent, "Czechs Expel Two Russian Diplomats over Fake Poisoning Plot," *The Guardian*, May 5, 2020, sec. World news, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jun/05/czechs-expel-two-russian-diplomats-over-fake-poisoning-plot>.

<sup>164</sup> Brian Kenety, "Moscow Expels Two Czech Diplomats in Retaliation over Bogus Poison Plot," *Radio Prague International*, June 15, 2020, <https://english.radio.cz/moscow-summons-czech-ambassador-over-expelling-diplomats-due-bogus-poison-plot-8683678>.

<sup>165</sup> Ondřej Kundra and Jaroslav Spurný, "Za Výbuchem Muničního Skladu ve Vrbětících Stojí Ruští Agenti, Kteří Se Pokusili Zabit Skripala," *Týdeník Respekt*, April 17, 2021, <https://www.respekt.cz/agenda/za-vybuchem-municniho-skladu-ve-vrbeticich-stoji-rusti-agenti-kteri-se-pokusili-zabit-skripala>.

<sup>166</sup> Mälksoo, "The Memory Politics of Becoming European."

Following the statue's removal, the monument was acquired by the Twentieth Century Memorial Museum.<sup>167</sup> The museum claims that the monument will be displayed in an exhibition where it will be presented within the contextual framework of rigorous historical background. The museum also presented a series of video debates surrounding Koněv and the statue featuring Czech historians, entitled “Who Really Liberated Prague,” “Marshal Koněv in the 20th Century,” and “Marshal Koněv in Art and Propaganda.”<sup>168</sup> The museum does not currently have a permanent exhibition space, but the statue may have a permanent exhibit at the museum's new location when acquired.

### **6.5 New Exhibition**

In May 2021, a temporary exhibition was erected at the former site of the Koněv monument. The exhibition, organized by Paměť Národa (Memory of Nations), is a project created by the Czech non-profit organization Post Bellum. The primary focus of Memory of Nations as a project is to provide an open and accessible online database of testimonials from survivors of the Nazi and Communist regimes.<sup>169</sup> Accordingly, the focus of the new exhibition at the former Koněv site centered around personal accounts of the liberation of Prague in 1945 and life under Communism, taken from the organization's existing database.

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<sup>167</sup> “Prohlášení k převzetí sochy maršála Koněva,” Muzeum paměti XX. století, accessed March 28, 2022, <https://www.muzeum20stoleti.cz/prohlaseni-k-prevzeti-sochy-marsala-koneva/>.

<sup>168</sup> “Prohlášení k převzetí sochy maršála Koněva.”

<sup>169</sup> “About Project | Memory of Nations,” Memory of Nations, accessed March 28, 2022, <https://www.memoryofnations.eu/en/about-project>.

Images 4,5&amp;6: Memory of Nations Exhibit



Photo by the author, 2021

The physical structure of the exhibition, lasting from May 2021 to February 2022, consisted of a tall concrete rectangle at the location where the Koněv statue once stood, with small windows at eye level. Through the windows, viewers could watch projected video testimonials from the Memory of Nations archives. In front of the exhibition and adjacent to the street, several poster boards displayed quotes from testimonials, a historical description of the monument and Koněv as a historical figure, and a description of the exhibition.<sup>170</sup> Externally, the aesthetics of the exhibition depict concrete modernism, evoking stark gray modernist elements that evoke simplicity, isolation, and even desolation. However, this bleak simplistic aesthetic is juxtaposed with the mixed-media audio-visual content inside the structure, which questions and complicates by simultaneously presenting a multiplicity of personal narratives including both positive and negative stories.

<sup>170</sup> “Nikогда ně zabuděm! Sochu maršála Koněva vystřídala výstava pamětnických příběhů,” *Post Bellum*, May 8, 2021, <https://www.postbellum.cz/2021/05/nikogda-ne-zabudem-sochu-marsala-koneva-vystridala-vystava-pametnickych-pribehu/>.

The physical exhibition at the Koněv site was accompanied by a webpage with additional information and further testimonials from forty witnesses. The testimonials were translated into Czech, English, and Russian. The site also included a historical explanation of Koněv by Czech historian Jiří Fidler.<sup>171</sup> In the webpage's explanatory text about the exhibit, the lukewarm reception of the monument's unveiling in 1980 was discussed, highlighting the conflicting memories of Soviet liberation in 1945 with Soviet suppression in 1968. The motivations for the monument's removal from the site are not explicitly stated anywhere in the project, but it is implied that opposing narratives of the Soviets as liberators and oppressors were a significant factor both in its removal and in the "strong passions" aroused by it. The page states "The one-sided myth of the liberation of our country by the Soviet army, long nurtured by communist propaganda, has taken deep root in the minds and hearts of some people."<sup>172</sup> As Blacker argues referencing Alan Young, traditional monuments can "cover the complexities of past events... with layers of nationalist mythology."<sup>173</sup> Through the Memory of Nations exhibition, the layers of history regarding Koněv's participation in the liberation of Prague and later events are re-complicated. Koněv is quite literally removed from his pedestal as a Soviet liberator-hero and re-examined through many lenses of mnemonic re-contextualization.

In contrast to the original monument, which depicted Koněv in isolation – a larger than life historical figure to be idolized and admired uncritically – the varied representations of history and memory presented through the combination of oral history archive,

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<sup>171</sup> "Nikogda ně zabuděm," accessed March 28, 2022, <https://konev.pametnaroda.cz>.

<sup>172</sup> "Nikogda ně zabuděm: About the Exhibition," accessed March 29, 2022, <https://konev.pametnaroda.cz>.

<sup>173</sup> Blacker, "Spatial Dialogues and Holocaust Memory in Contemporary Polish Art."

written text, and audio-visual presentation add significant complexity to the site as a site of collective memory. As Jaromír Mrňka states, “there are two cultures of remembrance of the Second World War” and the Czech and Russian narratives are not in agreement. In the Russian case, the Soviet narrative of liberation from fascism has been maintained, whereas, in the Czech context, significant debate has arisen since the 1990s regarding events and opinions that had previously been obscured under Communism.<sup>174</sup> This debate raises the question: If the representations of Konev in the past were insufficient, how should he be represented in the present and future to better reflect the memory narratives of today? The exhibition website states:

“In light of current research by historians and the memories of thousands of survivors, we can conclude more than 75 years since the end of the Second World War: The Soviet Union was undoubtedly instrumental in the defeat of Nazi Germany, but it did not bring us freedom. It liberated us from the Nazis, but it did not liberate us for freedom.”<sup>175</sup>

This section highlights the importance of both historical knowledge and personal memories in the establishment of a Czech national mnemonic narrative in the post-Soviet era. The distinction between liberation and freedom emphasized in the text is further explored in many of the included testimonies which chronicled experiences from Czechs and Russians in Prague’s 1945 liberation, in 1968 during the Prague Spring, and in 1989 from prominent activists, singers, actors, and private citizens. Rather than simply regurgitating official ideological narratives, the exhibition website seeks some measure of historical objectivity by heavily relying on personal accounts from people of varying backgrounds with differing experiences and political opinions. One witness, Jaromír Ulč, describes the benefits he gained during the Soviet period such as security,

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<sup>174</sup> Kateřina Součková, “Historie Se Podle Více Než Poloviny Čechů Začíná Falšovat. Vadí Jim Také Rušení i Stavění Památníků,” *IROZHLAS*, January 3, 2020, [https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-domov/pruzkum-historie-konev-vlasovci-pavel-novotny\\_2001030600\\_pj](https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-domov/pruzkum-historie-konev-vlasovci-pavel-novotny_2001030600_pj).

<sup>175</sup> “Nikogda ně zabuděm: About the Exhibition.”

housing, and consistent pay, saying "...I was more or less not bound by anything, that I could do whatever I wanted, even if not completely."<sup>176</sup> Ulč's position as a counter-intelligence operative afforded him many benefits, but he still acknowledges that he was not completely free. In another testimonial, Richard Praus recollects the liberation of his hometown, Písek, by American troops. However, after 1948 only Soviet liberators were recognized and the dominant official mnemonic narrative was directly at odds with his individual experiences, creating significant personal mnemonic dissonance. In 2000, Praus helped erect a monument to the "true liberators" in Písek, saying at the opening ceremony "after fifty-five years, the injustice has finally been righted."<sup>177</sup> Reconciling personal memories with historical narratives of liberation was, for Praus, an important symbol of truth and freedom.

Each witness's page incorporates quotes and historical background and is divided into two sections: the first includes a personal history of the witness regarding their experiences during World War II and their experiences under Communism; and the second provides historical context entitled: "liberation, departure, surveillance, invasion, etc." The testimonials are paired with a page entitled "The Historians View," which presents a historical account (written by Fidler) of Marshal Koněv's life. Fidler chronicles Koněv's rise to the position of Marshal and his military engagement in World War II, including his aid in liberating Prague on May 9th, 1945. Fidler describes Koněv's military career following Prague's liberation, including his involvement in "crushing" the Hungarian uprising in 1956, and "[solving] the Berlin crisis by building

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<sup>176</sup> "Nikogda ně zabuděm," accessed March 28, 2022, <https://konev.pametnaroda.cz>.

<sup>177</sup> "Nikogda ně zabuděm."

the Wall there...”<sup>178</sup> Here, the subjectivity of historical narrative becomes more apparent. Fidler further remarks that in May 1968 Koněv “was *perhaps unwittingly* involved in the preparations for the August occupation,”<sup>179</sup> (italics added by the author) though the further description of his involvement is not explained. This phrasing, using the terminology “perhaps unwittingly” takes a much less antagonistic stance in comparison to the text of the 2018 plaque, which firmly asserted that Koněv “personally backed intelligence surveillance.”<sup>180</sup> This semantic change was almost certainly made as a conciliatory response to the vehement objections by the Russian embassy in Prague to the original phrasing of the plaque, despite the evidence against the likelihood that Koněv would have in actuality been an unwitting participant, as Fidler himself writes in his book on the history of Koněv.<sup>181</sup> However, the inclusion of these lines, even if slightly more conciliatory, still maintains a historical positionality in which Koněv is not a beloved heroic savior, but even if “perhaps unwittingly,” an aggressor and oppressor.

In her discussion of memorial sites commemorating the victims of Communist regimes, Anna Kaminsky argues that monuments commemorating victims often replace previously existing Soviet monuments and that a key task of these monuments is to provide or elicit information through displays of physical objects, names of victims, etc.<sup>182</sup> The former monument site and the exhibit’s accompanying website are not explicitly a monument to the victims of Communism, and plans for a new monument at

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<sup>178</sup> Jiří Fidler, “Nikогда ně забудěm: The Historians View,” accessed March 29, 2022, <https://konev.pametnaroda.cz/biography/>.

<sup>179</sup> Fidler.

<sup>180</sup> *I. S. Koněva*.

<sup>181</sup> Fidler, *Koněv: Osvoboditel, Nebo Okupant?*

<sup>182</sup> Kaminsky, “Visible Memories – Memorial Sites Commemorating the Victims of Communist Regimes in Central Europe.”

the former Koněv site propose a general monument to the liberation of Prague in 1945<sup>183</sup> rather than a direct monument to victims. However, the testimonials on the exhibit website are taken from the Memory of Nations archive, which includes testimonials from “witnesses...who survived the two totalitarian regimes - nazism and communism.”<sup>184</sup> While witnessing implies a separation from the categories of perpetrators and victims, survival heavily implies that the so-called witnesses were victims as well. Additionally, the title of the project webpage is “Nikogda Ně Zabuběm!” or “We Will Never Forget!,” a reference to a well-known anti-occupation song by Czech singer Karel Kryl. The song mocks the gratitude Czechs should feel toward the “brother-occupiers” who oppressed and murdered Czechs and even directly references the lilacs given to Russian troops after Prague’s liberation in 1945.<sup>185</sup> Incorporating this folk-song reference is a strong statement against Koněv’s legacy, implying that “we will never forget” the damage that Koněv brought to Czechs nor the oppressive regime he heralded in. Koněv may have been portrayed as a brotherly savior figure in official mnemonic narratives of the past, but Czechs today will never and have never forgotten Koněv’s negative influence and refuse to show unfaltering gratitude through the memorialization of such a figure.

In essence, the work of the “Nikogda Ně Zabuběm!” project is to bring vernacular and personal mnemonic narratives into the official – incorporating oral history narratives and formerly “unmemorable” lived experiences into the memory space of a monument that was once a static and one-sided representation of official Soviet memory. While

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<sup>183</sup> ČTK, “Socha Koněva bude nahrazena památníkem osvobození Prahy, maršál se bude stěhovat na jiné důstojné místo | Domov,” *Lidovky.cz*, September 12, 2019, [https://www.lidovky.cz/domov/pred-radnici-demonstruji-priznivci-sochy-koneva-praha-6-je-na-strane-chuliganu-reaguje-rusky-ministr.A190912\\_103633\\_in\\_domov\\_ele](https://www.lidovky.cz/domov/pred-radnici-demonstruji-priznivci-sochy-koneva-praha-6-je-na-strane-chuliganu-reaguje-rusky-ministr.A190912_103633_in_domov_ele).

<sup>184</sup> “About Project | Memory of Nations.”

<sup>185</sup> *Karel Kryl - Tak Vás Tu Máme (1969)*, 1969, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nLIetWiFziQ>.

varied experiences of Prague's liberation and Soviet legacy are included to provide a rich and full historical context, the mnemonic narrative of the project strongly repudiates the hero narrative of the original statue. Instead, the project leans toward a narrative that encourages a critical interrogation into the negative repercussions of Koněv's historical influence. Accordingly, criticisms of the removal and exhibition view both as an attack on Koněv's character. Still, to establish historical and mnemonic reconciliation between historic events, their representation, and the lived experiences and after-effects on those they influenced, a critical interrogation of historic individuals is necessary. The exhibition maps competing memories of oppression, victimhood, liberation, and gratitude – gratitude toward Soviet liberation from the Nazis in 1945, fear and suffering under the Communist regime – onto Koněv as a symbolic representation of both Soviet occupation and Soviet liberation. The project is truly a co-mingling of representation, interpretation, and contestation as Confino proposes, incorporating the political and the personal into one site.

## ***6.6 Post Ukraine Invasion***

The website for the exhibition at the former Koněv monument site lists the Memory of Nations temporary exhibition as lasting from May 2021 to January 2022. However, the exhibition remained at the site until February 2022. Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in late February 2022, the structure itself and the explanatory poster boards in front of it were covered with blue and yellow paint. Inside the structure, text displays from the Czech news site iRozhlas were projected with up-to-date information regarding the current situation in Ukraine. While the original information at the site was entirely presented in Czech, the modified poster boards included information in Czech and English. The poster information in English began with "Ukraine is facing an

unprecedented invasion by Russian Federation Troops...” and appealed to readers to donate items or money to the collection and fundraiser. The post included a QR code link to a fundraiser on darujme.cz, a Czech online donation platform entitled “Help for Ukraine with Memory of Nations.”<sup>186</sup> The fundraiser was primarily raising funds for military equipment (bulletproof vests and helmets) and medical supplies for the Ukrainian army. The English posters also included a large banner with the words “Hands off Ukraine, Putin.” Further information included an appeal to the Czech government to provide additional support, stating “In light of our own country’s bitter past experiences, we consider it a moral obligation to provide Ukraine with as much effective support as we can.” Lastly, the informational panels mention the work of Memory of Nations in Ukraine, which opened a branch in 2020 and has been recording and cataloging interviews regarding the Second World War and the years of communist oppression in Ukraine.



<sup>186</sup> “Help for Ukraine with Memory of Nations,” Darujme.cz, accessed March 28, 2022, <https://www.darujme.cz/projekt/1205934?locale=en>.

As Said suggests, memory is often employed for “urgent”<sup>187</sup> present purposes. The divergence from the original exhibition to a call for national support for Ukraine politicizes the significance of the site beyond ideological and historiographic disagreements between the Russian and Czech Ministries of Foreign Affairs. The challenging yet diplomatic depiction of Russian liberation during WWII from multiple lenses with a focus on exploring the complexity of memory surrounding Russian intervention in WWII and later communist control is replaced with a clear denouncement of Russia’s *current* invasive actions as an urgent wartime measure. Incorporating support for Ukraine and condemnation of Russia’s actions at a significant site of contested memory regarding Soviet/Czech and Russian/Czech relations shows a significant shift in Czech collective memory and complex changing expressions of current socio-political relations. The official collective memory narrative is decidedly repositioned away from narratives of Soviet liberation toward narratives of Soviet oppression. Here, the memory of Koněv as a representative of Communist oppression is used to elicit feelings of sympathy and support for Ukraine, a nation also a victim of the same Soviet control.

Following the invasion, discussions about the possible renaming of Koněvova Street in Prague’s Žižkov neighborhood were renewed and the renaming was approved by the

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<sup>187</sup> Said, “Invention, Memory, and Place.”

Prague 3 district.<sup>188</sup> Additionally, discussion about the removal of Marshal Koněv's honorary Prague citizenship increased, and ultimately his citizenship was revoked.<sup>189</sup>

## 7. Extended Mnemonic Site

### 7.1 Counter-monuments

Counter-monuments function as spaces that interpret and present memory differently. As Young describes, counter-monuments work "against the traditionally didactic fiction of monuments, against their tendency to displace the past they would have us contemplate -- and finally, against the authoritarian propensity in all art that reduces viewers to passive spectators."<sup>190</sup> Traditional monuments often oppose active remembering, as the monument structures themselves become invisible in the everyday landscape of cities. They simplify rather than complicate historical events and interpretations, lacking subtlety, critical analysis, or historical context. Especially in cases of histories muddled with political, emotional, nationalistic, and ethnic complications, traditional monuments are often not complex enough to fully represent collective narratives of memory. Counter-monuments complicate official narratives of memory and monument, especially where full reconciliation and restorative justice are impossible through innovative monument practices that incorporate temporal and social influences into memory sites, inviting viewers to think more critically and seek out more complex narratives. There are several artistic responses to the Koněv monument

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<sup>188</sup> Raymond Johnston, "Petition Wants Prague Street Named for Soviet Marshal Renamed for Comic Genius," *Expats.Cz*, April 20, 2022, sec. Culture, Daily News, <https://www.expats.cz/czech-news/article/petition-rename-prague-s-konevova-street-after-jara-cimrman>.

<sup>189</sup> Prague Morning, "Prague Wants to Strip Soviet Commander Konev of Honorary Citizenship," *Prague Morning*, May 7, 2022, <https://www.praguemorning.cz/prague-wants-to-strip-soviet-commander-konev-of-honorary-citizenship/>.

<sup>190</sup> Young, "The Counter-Monument."

that can be considered counter-monuments created by memory consumers “...tak[ing] on the role of memory makers.”<sup>191</sup> As Blacker argues “publicly articulated memory does not have to be the result of top-down monologue, but can rather be the product of polyphony.”<sup>192</sup> These counter-monument counter-Koněv artistic endeavors reflect this polyphony.

### 7.1.1 Vlasov Monument

The first direct artistic counter-monument response to the perceived narrowness of the official historical narrative surrounding Koněv is a recently erected monument in the Prague suburb of Řeporyje. The monument, installed on April 30th, 2020, commemorates the Vlasov Russian Liberation Army troops for their assistance in the liberation of Prague in 1945.<sup>193</sup> The Russian Liberation Army (ROA) consisted of Soviet prisoners of war and Nazi collaborators who were viewed as traitors to the Soviet government. However, near the end of World War II, a large division of the ROA changed allegiances and assisted the Czechs during the Prague Uprising and Prague’s subsequent liberation.<sup>194</sup> In a testimonial from the Memory of Nations project website, one witness, Ivan Keislinger (1928-2020) described his participation in Prague’s liberation as a member of the Scouts. He describes:

“...the so-called Vlasovists – Red Army prisoners who had previously been fighting on the side of Nazi Germany – were already approaching Prague. At the end of the war, they decided to side with the Prague rebels against the Germans.

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<sup>191</sup> Kansteiner, “Finding Meaning in Memory.”

<sup>192</sup> Blacker, “Spatial Dialogues and Holocaust Memory in Contemporary Polish Art.”

<sup>193</sup> Černý, *Vlasovci*.

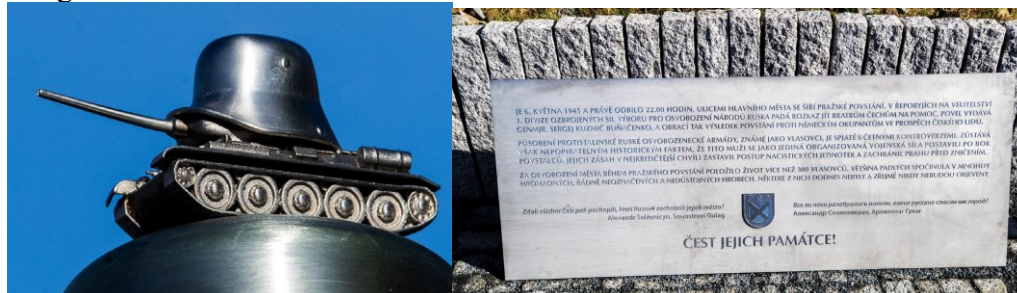
<sup>194</sup> Tom McEnchroe, “Řeporyje to Build Memorial Honouring ‘Vlasov’ Troops Who Helped in Liberation of Prague,” *Radio Prague International*, December 11, 2019, <https://english.radio.cz/repyrje-build-memorial-honouring-vlasov-troops-who-helped-liberation-prague-8113168>.

The German garrison in Motol surrendered, and the Vlasovists seized their machine guns and taught the young scouts how to use them.”<sup>195</sup>

Another witness stated: “The Vlasovists helped Prague a lot and saved my life.”<sup>196</sup>

Personal memories such as these express not only gratitude to the Soviet army as liberators, but to the Vlasov troops as liberators as well. Participation by former Nazi collaborators and Soviet traitors in the liberation of Prague further complicates the depiction of Koněv as the sole representation of Prague’s liberation, adding nuance and shades of gray to the black and white liberator/victim portrayal. Honoring the Vlasov involvement in Prague’s liberation underscores the social milieu of dissatisfaction toward the Koněv monument as a primary representation of the memory of the liberation of Prague in 1945.

Images 9&10: Vlasov Monument



Photos from iDNES, 2020

The Vlasov monument in Řeporyje consists of a metal pole topped with a small tank covered by a Nazi helmet along with a memorial plaque explaining the Russian Liberation Army’s role at the end of World War II and including a quote by Alexander Solzhenitsyn. The use of a tank is perhaps another reference to Černý’s pink tank. The monument plaque reads:

<sup>195</sup> “Nikogda ně zabuděm.”

<sup>196</sup> “Nikogda ně zabuděm.”

“Působení protistalinské ruské osvobozené armády, známe jako vlasovci, je spjaté s četnými kontroverzemi. Zůstává však nepopíratelným historickým faktem, že tito muži se jako jediná organizovaná vojenská síla postavili po bok povstalců. Jejich zásah v nejkritičtější chvíli zastavil postup nacistických jednotek a zachránil Prahu před zničením.”<sup>197198</sup>

The installation of this monument and plaque in the spring of 2020, following closely after the removal of the Koněv monument and disapproval by Russian officials, was a direct politically motivated artistic response to the original Koněv monument. It is surely not a coincidence that the last line of the plaque mirrors exactly the last line of the original plaque on the Koněv monument, which references “saving Prague from destruction.” The plaque alludes to controversies surrounding the Vlasovists, vaguely nodding to a condemnation of the collaboration of the ROA with the Nazis. More significantly, however, it praises the role the army played in Prague’s liberation, complicating the narratives of savior (Koněv), and saved (Czechs), oppressor (Nazism), and defender (Bolshevism). Codifying and celebrating the purported value of the ROA’s contribution to Prague’s liberation *could* be seen as an endorsement of Nazism, as indicated by the Jewish- American media outlet *The Forward*’s inclusion of the monument in a list of ‘Nazi collaborator monuments in the Czech Republic.’<sup>199</sup> However, it also provides a criticism of Koněv as a historical figure and a direct challenge to the current memory politics of Russia.

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<sup>197</sup> English translation: “The activities of the anti-Stalinist Russian Liberation Army, known as the Vlasovists, are associated with numerous controversies. However, it remains an undeniable historical fact that these men, as the only organized military force, sided with the insurgents. Their intervention at the most critical moment stopped the advance of Nazi troops and saved Prague from destruction.”

<sup>198</sup> Roman Šafhauser, “Vlasovci už mají pamětní desku z nerezu, v Řeporyjích bude viset za týden,” *iDNES.cz*, April 2, 2020, [https://www.idnes.cz/praha/zpravy/pametni-deska-vlasovcu-v-reporyjih-starosta-novotny.A200402\\_085244\\_praha-zpravy\\_rsr](https://www.idnes.cz/praha/zpravy/pametni-deska-vlasovcu-v-reporyjih-starosta-novotny.A200402_085244_praha-zpravy_rsr).

<sup>199</sup> Lev Golinkin, “Nazi Collaborator Monuments around the World,” *The Forward*, accessed March 29, 2022, <https://forward.com/news/481399/nazi-collaborator-monuments-in-czech-republic/>.

Czech newspaper iDNES has speculated that the artist behind the monument is David Černý himself,<sup>200</sup> but the sponsors for the work and its creators have remained anonymous. The head of the Russian Foreign Ministry's Third European Department was quoted as saying "On the eve of the 75th anniversary of the Victory [in World War II], we regard this as a mockery of the memory of those tens of thousands of Red Army soldiers, who gave their lives in the name of peace on Czech soil,"<sup>201</sup> according to an article in *Meduza*, a Russian-English online newspaper. The timing of the installation, close to Victory Day, where the commemoration and ceremonies are "one of the main reservoirs of modern Russian collective memory,"<sup>202</sup> certainly reflects a further challenge to Russian narratives of memory within the Czech socio-political mnemonic space. The monument acts as a critical foil for the mnemonic narrative of the original Koněv monument – of Soviet liberation and friendship – by applauding the actions of so-called Soviet traitors. This mnemonic narrative directly counters the memory policy of Soviet history as well as narratives presented by present-day Russia, inviting viewers to question and think critically about both.

### 7.1.2 Koněvmen

In June 2020, another counter-monument response to the Koněv monument appeared. A group of young artists installed twelve miniature Koněv statues around Prague's Žižkov neighborhood as part of the annual Landscape Festival.<sup>203</sup> The original Koněv statue was modified to display Koněv raising a fist (symbolizing strength or aggression) rather

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<sup>200</sup> Šafhauser, "Vlasovci už mají pamětní desku z nerezu, v Řeporyjích bude viset za týden."

<sup>201</sup> Pavel Merzlikin, "'A Mockery of Memory' Prague Erects Monument to Nazi Collaborationist Army, despite Protests from Russia's Foreign Ministry," *Meduza*, May 5, 2020, <https://meduza.io/en/feature/2020/05/05/a-mockery-of-memory>.

<sup>202</sup> Mälksoo, "The Memory Politics of Becoming European."

<sup>203</sup> Vrána, Minařík, and Pavelková, *Koněvmen*.

than the original open waving hand (symbolizing peace and friendship). The miniature statues were painted to look like superheroes, villains, and even Hitler. One statue depicted Koněv raising a red fist, another Koněv with a long concrete shadow behind him.

Images 11, 12 &13: Koněvmen



Photo from Reflex magazine, 2020

The use of superheroes to humorize Soviet monuments is once again a multi-textual reference to previous counter-monument practices, especially the numerous vandalism incidences against the Monument to the Soviet Army in Sofia. As referenced previously, the Sofia monument was painted pink in 2013 on the 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Prague Spring uprising as an apology to Czechs for Bulgarian support of Soviet troops.<sup>204</sup> Earlier, in 2011, the Sofia monument statues were painted to represent comic-book characters as a metaphor for tensions between the Soviet Union and American-

<sup>204</sup> “Bulgarian Red Army Monument Painted Pink in Prague Spring Apology.”

influenced Western capitalism.<sup>205</sup> As such, the counter-monument practices regarding the Koněv monument in Prague and the Monument to the Soviet Army in Sofia are constantly in mnemonic dialogue, referencing and re-referencing one another through concurrent artistic challenges to Soviet historical narratives. Černý's 1991 pink tank in Prague, the superhero monument painting in Sofia in 2011, the 2013 pink painting in Sofia referencing the Prague Spring, the 2014 and 2018 pink paintings of Koněv, and the 2020 paintings of Koněvmen as superheroes all reiterate tensions within changing vernacular and official post-Soviet collective memories.

The varied depictions of Koněv through the Koněvmen art installation suggest the long and tumultuous legacy of Koněv and the regime he represents, reflecting the polyphony of collective memory Blacker references.<sup>206</sup> One of the three artists responsible for the work jokingly said of the project that the artists wanted to restore the glory of Ivan Stepanovich Koněv as a response to his monument's removal and to create copies to continue to give people joy,<sup>207</sup> further saying that the project was a way of miniaturizing Koněv and disseminating him to every household more effectively. The modified statues clearly poke fun at the controversy surrounding the monument's removal, Koněv as a historical figure, and the Soviet regime he represents. These statues functioned as a critical counter-monument to the original statue and an extension of the site's mnemonic space, leading viewers to question the role of the monument and what exactly it should or does represent. The absurdism of the superheroes and fictional characters parallel the

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<sup>205</sup> Boiko Penchev, "The Superheroes of Soviet Sofia - VoxEurop," *Https://Voxeurop.Eu/En/*, sec. Culture, accessed June 2, 2022, <https://voxeurop.eu/en/the-superheroes-of-soviet-sofia/>.

<sup>206</sup> Uilleam Blacker, "Spatial Dialogues and Holocaust Memory in Contemporary Polish Art: Yael Bartana, Rafał Betlejewski and Joanna Rajkowska," *Open Arts Journal*, no. 3 (2014), <https://openartsjournal.org/issue-3/2014s32ub/>.

<sup>207</sup> Landscape Festival, "Instalace | Landscape festival," Landscape Festival, June 2020, <https://www.landscape-festival.cz/cz/instalace>.

absurdity of the media spectacle surrounding Koněv's removal but also hint at something more underlyingly serious -- the precariousness and permeability of Koněv's identity within Czech collective memory. The artistic work leads viewers to wonder: What is Koněv's identity in historical representation today? Is he a hero? A villain? A liberator? A joke? It is left up to the witness to interpret the art, and as such, Koněv himself.

## **7.2 Media Discourses**

Pierre Nora argues that in the modern-day, a move away from spontaneous and immediate memory production has meant that the "materialization of memory has been... multiplied, decentralized, democratized."<sup>208</sup> This subjective mediation of memory sites can be seen in the multiple and varied representations of the Koněv sites in artistic, personal, and discursive spaces. Scholars Levy and Sznajder argue that, as a result of increased globalization, "In global times, the media... becomes a mediator of moral affairs."<sup>209</sup> While Levy and Sznajder's arguments for the media as moral mediators were directly linked to collective and transnational memories of the Holocaust, media can serve as a mediator of morality in other spheres as well.

Recently, calls for monument removals that represent uncomfortable or questionably moral pasts have been increasingly present in social discourses, and as such, in the media. Whether discussing the removal of statues of Confederate generals in the US or Communist "heroes" in post-Soviet countries, the moral responsibility of nations and

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<sup>208</sup> Nora, "Between Memory and History."

<sup>209</sup> Daniel Levy and Natan Sznajder, "Memory Unbound: The Holocaust and the Formation of Cosmopolitan Memory," *European Journal of Social Theory* 5, no. 1 (February 1, 2002): 87–106, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368431002005001002>.

local governments to revise the figures that are being venerated through immortalized concretions of historical and memorial dignity has become increasingly prevalent. As these issues dominate media discourses, it is important to consider that “media of memory... neither simply reflect nor determine collective memory but are inextricably involved in its construction and evolution.”<sup>210</sup> Media coverage of statues or monuments that might otherwise have remained forgotten or ignored brings to the fore the symbolic significance of these monuments as representations of collective memory narratives that now align with out-of-date values. Often, these discontinuities result in the removal of such monuments, where the removal itself is symbolically representative of the shift in narrative historical and mnemonic values and where the revision and adaptation of the visual collective memory space reflect the changing social and cultural atmosphere. Inevitably, concurrent with these removals arise criticisms of historical revisionism on the part of the removers – arguments that the removals are destroying or attempting to erase history.

The removal of the Marshal Koněv statue in Prague 6 was authorized as a response to the increased vandalism of the site, in itself a reflection of changing social and emotional connections to Koněv’s symbolic value and mnemonic representation. The vandalism, plans for removal, and removal itself all garnered intense and expansive media coverage, accompanied by extensive public criticism on both sides. Coverage occurred heavily in the Czech media, but also in the Russian media, where Russian newspapers and Russian representatives argued that the historical revisionism seemingly inherent in the monument’s removal was damaging not only to Czech history but to Russian history as well.

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<sup>210</sup> Kansteiner, “Finding Meaning in Memory.”

### 7.2.1 Russian Media

According to David Berliner, “‘Memory’ refers to the past as it is lived by social agents.”<sup>211</sup> These social agents can be institutional and explicitly convey the past through official modes of communication or they can be informal and communicate on a smaller local or community scale. News sources can represent both and can be either officially or locally and informally sponsored and produced. Largely, Russian news regarding the removal of the Marshal Koněv monument aligned with the narrative supported by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other official modes of communications. As Maria Mälksoo argues “when Russia encounters interpretations of history that diverge from its own, the propaganda war for getting across its own version of the past events usually follows,”<sup>212</sup> and as Anne Applebaum further states “in Soviet historiography, the last phase of the war is always portrayed unambiguously as a series of liberations.... triumph followed triumph, the fascists were destroyed, the population rejoiced, and freedom was restored.”<sup>213</sup> The previously mentioned modes of mnemonic and historic portrayals are clearly identifiable in news media coverage of the monument’s removal in Russia.

The Russian newspaper *Izvestiya*, closely tied to the Russian government, reported extensively on Koněv’s removal. In an article titled (in translation) “What is behind the Demolition of the Monument to Koněv in Prague?,”<sup>214</sup> the newspaper argued that the removal of Koněv’s monument violated Czech laws as well as Czech-Russian treaties,

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<sup>211</sup> David Berliner, “The Abuses of Memory: Reflections on the Memory Boom in Anthropology,” *Anthropological Quarterly* 78 (December 1, 2005): 197–211, <https://doi.org/10.1353/anq.2005.0001>.

<sup>212</sup> Mälksoo, “The Memory Politics of Becoming European.”

<sup>213</sup> Anne Applebaum, *Iron Curtain: The Crushing of Eastern Europe 1944-1956* (Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2012).

<sup>214</sup> Шурыгин and Крецул, “Маршалский Жест: Что Стоит За Сносом Памятника Коневу в Праге.”

citing multiple Czech laws that were allegedly broken by the removal (or “demolition”). The author further argues that the monument was the property of the city of Prague, making it unlawful for the administration of Prague 6 to remove it. Previous arguments by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs that the removal of the monument also violated the 1993 Treaty on Friendly Relations and Cooperation between Russia and the Czech Republic are repeated along with further claims that, without Koněv, Prague would have become a “second Stalingrad.”<sup>215</sup> As mentioned earlier, this interpretation directly contradicts analysis by Czech historians who argue that Prague could likely have been liberated by American troops who were discouraged from entering Prague by the Russians.<sup>216</sup> Additionally, negotiations regarding retreat had already taken place between the Prague insurgents and Nazi troops in Prague.<sup>217</sup> Later, the article repeats oft-cited claims that Koněv could not have had any involvement in 1968, as he was already retired. Throughout, the article consistently frames the removal of the monument as a negative rewriting of history. Aligning with this perspective, Koněv’s involvement in Hungary is not commented upon,<sup>218</sup> and his legacy is characterized as an indisputable hero-liberator.

In another article, published by the Russian newspaper *Argumenty i Fакты*, an attempt by Marshal Koněv’s daughter, Natalya Koněva, to petition for the monument to be brought to Moscow is detailed. In her petition, Koněva argues that the decision to remove the monument was made by people who believed that the role of the Red Army

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<sup>215</sup> Шурыгин and Крецул.

<sup>216</sup> Vít Pohanka, “The US Army and the Liberation of Czechoslovakia in 1945,” *Radio Prague International*, May 5, 2018, <https://english.radio.cz/us-army-and-liberation-czechoslovakia-1945-8161936>.

<sup>217</sup> Prague Morning, “Prague Wants to Strip Soviet Commander Konev of Honorary Citizenship.”

<sup>218</sup> Шурыгин and Крецул, “Маршальский Жест: Что Стоит За Сносом Памятника Конева в Праге.”

should be erased from history.<sup>219</sup> Later in the article, while describing Koněv’s historical influence, the author states that (in English translation) “it could not have occurred to anyone then that this role [as liberator] could be called into question” and that Koněv’s contribution helped avoid mass civilian death and the destruction of Prague. The article identifies Prague 6 major Ondřej Kolář as the main initiator of the statue’s removal in addition to maligning Koněv’s reputation through the added information to the plaque in 2018.<sup>220</sup> This and other similar articles on the news site portray Kolář as having a personal vendetta against the statue, making it the mission of his time as mayor to remove the monument despite opposition from President Miloš Zeman and “local residents.”<sup>221</sup> Portrayals such as these depict proponents for the statue’s removal as lone vindictive actors working against the wishes of the majority of Czech citizens. However, according to polling data, Czech public opinion regarding the removal of Soviet monuments remains mixed.<sup>222</sup>

## 7.2.2 Czech Media

Though Russian official and media responses were decidedly negative, Czech public and media responses were mixed, with public demonstrations taking place both for and against the removal of the Koněv monument. Some Czechs were opposed to the symbolism of the removal of a historic figure, while others believed it was justified.

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<sup>219</sup> Андрей Сидорчик, “Вернем Маршала Домой!» Памятник Ивану Коневу Переедет Из Праги в Москву?,” *Argumenty i Fauty (Аргументы и Факты)*, September 4, 2020, [https://aif.ru/politics/world/vernem\\_marshalla\\_domoy\\_pamyatnik\\_ivanu\\_konevu\\_pereedet\\_iz\\_pragi\\_v\\_moskvu](https://aif.ru/politics/world/vernem_marshalla_domoy_pamyatnik_ivanu_konevu_pereedet_iz_pragi_v_moskvu).

<sup>220</sup> Сидорчик.

<sup>221</sup> Андрей Сидорчик, “Герои Фашистского Труда. О Чем Напомнил Снос Памятника Маршалу Коневу,” *Argumenty i Fauty (Аргументы и Факты)*, June 4, 2020, [https://aif.ru/politics/world/geroi\\_fashistskogo\\_truda\\_o\\_chem\\_napomnil\\_snos\\_pamyatnika\\_marshallu\\_konevu](https://aif.ru/politics/world/geroi_fashistskogo_truda_o_chem_napomnil_snos_pamyatnika_marshallu_konevu).

<sup>222</sup> Součková, “Historie Se Podle Více Než Poloviny Čechů Začíná Falšovat. Vádí Jim Také Rušení i Stavění Památníků.”

Critics of the removal argued that quarantine restrictions associated with Covid-19 were used to “mask” the statue’s removal, but Czech officials stated that the removal took place according to previous plans and timelines.<sup>223</sup> In a survey conducted by the polling company Median that was widely covered in the media, more than half of Czech respondents disagreed with the removal of monuments in general and with the replacement of these monuments with new monuments that align with current views of history. Additionally, more than half of the respondents believed that modern history was being distorted.<sup>224</sup> In an earlier poll from a Czech Radio article about the Koněv monument’s removal in August 2019, 44% of respondents said they thought that Koněv should stay while 56% said they did not want it to be there. The poll had almost 23,000 responses.<sup>225</sup> The tension inherent in these results suggests a discontinuity between mnemonic narratives, where, after a break with previous narratives of brotherly heroism, the concretion of a unified collective memory narrative regarding Marshal Koněv has yet to take place.

### **7.3 Facebook Opposition**

In addition to media coverage, another notable informal space for interpreted communicated narratives of memory surrounding Koněv that aligns with Bodnar’s definition of *vernacular memory*<sup>226,227</sup> is the Facebook page “Proti zakrytí sochy maršála

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<sup>223</sup> Petr Vnouček and Luboš Jirsa, “Praha 6 Přesouvá Koněva, Skončí v Muzeu Paměti 20. Století. Zeman Mluví o Zneužití Krizového St,” *Lidovky.Cz*, March 4, 2020, [https://www.lidovky.cz/domov/praha-6-presouva-sochu-marsala-koneva-skonci-v-muzeu-pameti-20-stoleti-nemel-rousku-komentuje-stars.A200403\\_085326\\_in\\_domov\\_pev](https://www.lidovky.cz/domov/praha-6-presouva-sochu-marsala-koneva-skonci-v-muzeu-pameti-20-stoleti-nemel-rousku-komentuje-stars.A200403_085326_in_domov_pev).

<sup>224</sup> Součková, “Historie Se Podle Více Než Poloviny Čechů Začíná Falšovat. Vadí jim Také Rušení i Stavění Památníků.”

<sup>225</sup> “HLASUJTE: Má zůstat pomník maršála Koněva na svém místě v Praze 6, nebo ne?,” *Czech Radio*, August 26, 2019, sec. Domáci, <https://plus.rozhlas.cz/hlasujte-ma-zustat-pomnik-marsala-koneva-na-svem-miste-v-praze-6-nebo-ne-8042526>.

<sup>226</sup> “The lived or shared experience of small groups”

<sup>227</sup> Bodnar, *Remaking America*.

Koněva” or “Against the Covering of the Statue of Marshal Koněv.”<sup>228</sup> The page has around 1,500 followers and facilitated a widely attended event against the covering and removal of the statue on September 2, 2019. The event garnered around three hundred attendees and eight hundred “interested,” according to the Facebook event page. The page was created by Jana Volfova, a politician associated with the Czech anti- EU party “Volny Blok.”<sup>229</sup> The first post on the page in 2019 refers to the rewriting of history that the statue’s removal would facilitate.<sup>230</sup> Many other reviewers and commenters on the page further reference the “rewriting of history” that the monument’s removal would enable,<sup>231</sup> arguing that Koněv’s contribution to Czech history was significant and echoing arguments by Russian news and officials. However, a few reviewers of the page were critical, referring to Koněv as a monster with blood on his hands.<sup>232</sup> After the monument’s covering with plywood and later removal, an update from the page criticized the timing of the removal (during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown), again reasserting the “rewriting of history.”<sup>233</sup> These overwhelming concerns about the preservation of history envision a static “true” form of history that does not account for national historical narratives that change to reflect fluid collective memories and where, as Halbwachs states “society represents the past to itself in

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<sup>228</sup> Jana Volfova, “Proti Zakrytí Sochy Maršála Koněva | Facebook,” Facebook, accessed April 12, 2022, <https://www.facebook.com/Proti-zakryt%C3%AD-sochy-mar%C5%A1%C3%A1la-Kon%C4%9Bva-102431584471684>.

<sup>229</sup> Tol Tol, “Transitions Online\_Society: Marshal Konev Statue Poised to Retreat? – 3 October,” *Transitions Online*, no. 10/08 (2019): 7–9.

<sup>230</sup> “Odmítáme zakrytí sochy maršála Koněva na Praze 6. Historii přepisovat nedovolíme.” August 30, 2019

<sup>231</sup> “Nesouhlasíme s přepisováním historie” August 30 2019; “Přepisování historie, je to strašná prasarna” August 31, 2019; “Je vidět, že přepisování historie nám všem prostě vadí.” August 31, 2019; “Nechci, aby se přepisovala historie, jsem pro to, aby socha maršála Koněva zůstala na svém místě. Vděčíme Rudé armádě za osvobození.” Sept 4, 2019

<sup>232</sup> “At si ho vezmou Rusaci na dvorek pred jejich krasnou ambasadou. Takova zruda, co ma na rukou krev tolika lidi (Madarsko) a organizovala okupaci, nema ve verejnym prostoru co delat.” August 31, 2019

<sup>233</sup> “V této nelehké době se rozhodl starosta odstranit sochu Koněva. Místo starostí o své občany se stará o přepisování dějin. Je to lidská zrůda.” April 3, 2020

different ways: it modifies its conventions.”<sup>234</sup> One commenter on the page’s first post identifies this narrow perspective, arguing that the rewriters of history were more likely the Communist elites who erected the monument in 1980,<sup>235</sup> but this opinion is largely in the minority within the group. Evidently, for most who engage with the page, the monument’s removal has clear political motivations and significant mnemonic implications. However, a wider examination of the socio-political and mnemonic context of the site and Koněv as a figure was not taken.

As of 2022, new posts on the page include extraordinarily little content regarding Koněv and have primarily shifted to promotional posts for Volny Blok and posts against Covid-19 regulations. Discussions about the current site (either the exhibition or Ukraine aid) or the future fate of the Koněv monument are notably absent. Within the users interacting with the page, there is a clear correlation between the protest of Koněv’s removal and far-right populist and anti-Covid regulation sentiments. The rise in these concurrent socio-political sentiments and the connections between them would be an interesting topic for further research. As Kansteiner aptly links the concomitance of “crises of memory” and “crises of identity,”<sup>236</sup> manifestations of identity politics and memory politics are distinctly related in this instance.

## **7.4 Community Survey**

According to Blacker “space, especially urban space, is a highly resonant medium of memory.”<sup>237</sup> The Koněv monument’s *lieux de mémoire* extends beyond the statue site

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<sup>234</sup> Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*.

<sup>235</sup> “Historii s oblibou přepisovali hlavně ti, kdo tam ten pomník v roce 1980 umístili...” August 30, 2019

<sup>236</sup> Kansteiner, “Finding Meaning in Memory.”

<sup>237</sup> Blacker, “Spatial Dialogues and Holocaust Memory in Contemporary Polish Art.”

to include counter-monuments, media, and social media discourses where the importance of the Koněv site as a site of collective memory is evident. However, the influence of the monument on the urban mnemonic landscape of Prague 6, the neighborhood surrounding the monument site is not as frequently discussed in public discourses surrounding it. In March 2022, members of the Facebook groups “Praha 6 - Sousedská parta”<sup>238</sup> and “Dejvická parta”<sup>239</sup> with 4,500 and 21,000 members, respectively, were asked to complete a questionnaire with questions about the Koněv site as a site of memory and respondents' personal opinions about the political and historical implications of the monument and its removal. These two groups were chosen because they represent the neighborhood of Prague directly surrounding the Koněv monument, with the methodological aim of gaining further perspective on the collective memory surrounding the site from residents of Prague who likely interacted with the monument as part of their urban mnemonic landscape. The questionnaire was offered in both Czech and English, but all respondents chose to answer in Czech. In total, fifteen responses were gathered from nine men and six women with ages ranging from 27 to 69. All the respondents currently live in Prague.<sup>240</sup> Although it can be assumed that the majority of Facebook users (and all respondents of this survey) are too young to have experienced the events of WWII or Prague's liberation personally, this investigation attempts to interrogate a Post-Soviet rather than post-WWII mnemonic framework, meaning that the collective memory surrounding the statue is not limited to an older respondent demographic. Additionally, previously discussed first-hand testimonials

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<sup>238</sup> “Praha 6 - Sousedská Parta | Facebook,” Facebook, accessed April 19, 2022, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/praha6aktualne/>.

<sup>239</sup> “Dejvická Parta | Facebook,” accessed April 19, 2022, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/DejvickaParta/>.

<sup>240</sup> It is important to note that this survey was administered after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, when negative sentiments toward Russians and Russian and Soviet symbolism increased drastically.

provided by the Memory of Nations project supply supplementary perspectives from older memory makers and consumers.

Because the Koněv monument was erected relatively late in the normalization period (1980) rather than closer to the time of Prague's liberation during World War II, the vast majority of questionnaire respondents had few childhood or personal memories at the site of the monument or the park surrounding it. It is clear that very few, if any, Prague residents have nostalgic associations with the Koněv monument as a representation of the Communist past according to Svetlana Boym's definition of nostalgia in a post-Communist context as "a sense of loss or displacement"<sup>241</sup> where vicarious nostalgia can be developed by the memory industry through the production of monuments, holidays, memoirs, etc.<sup>242</sup> Those who did have memories or associations with the monument usually expressed mild to strong negative feelings toward it including disgust and hatred, such as one respondent who claimed "I hate all Commie statues."<sup>243</sup> Another respondent replied that his child learned to read the plaque, while he remembered peeing on the monument after nights at the pub,<sup>244</sup> indicating disdain or perhaps disrespect for the mnemonic importance of the site. These responses overwhelmingly reflected a perceived link among respondents between the political memory or the political/historical *agenda* of the monument and the Normalization period or the Soviet era more generally, rather than reflecting personal memories at the site. Thus, through these responses, the Koněv monument as a site of memory seems to symbolically implicate a larger mnemonic landscape of Soviet iconography and history

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<sup>241</sup> Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (Basic Books, 2001).

<sup>242</sup> Manuela, "Between Memory and Nostalgia."

<sup>243</sup> "Nesnáším všechny komoušské sochy, komoušské podmínky, nasnáším všechny symboly tehdejšího režimu, které propagovaly zvrhlý systém."

<sup>244</sup> "Moje dítě se na ní učilo číst a já na ní po cestě z hospody močil"

rather than simply an isolated site of commemoration of Koněv as a historical figure within the limited temporal context of WWII.

When asked about the cultural or historical significance of the statue, one respondent said that while Koněv was a liberator in the Czech Republic, he was murdered in Hungary.<sup>245</sup> In this comment, the respondent addresses issues of differing national narratives of history, reflecting a perspective often discussed in Czech news coverage of the monument removal and reasserting the hero/perpetrator dichotomy present in mnemo-historic representations of Koněv. Another respondent said that it would have been a shame to destroy it if it had been built in 1946.<sup>246</sup> This remark again highlights the association in many respondents' minds of the statue with political motives rather than unbiased historical preservation or commemoration, specifically because of the year of the statue's erection. Other responses repeated this sentiment with comments frequently mentioning that the statue was built "under normalization"<sup>247</sup> or "25 years after the war."<sup>248</sup> In these statements, there is an implied indication that the Koněv monument would have contained greater historical significance and value if it had been erected in temporal conjunction with the liberation, rather than several years later. Though it is frequently the case that monuments are erected to commemorate events or figures long after they take place, in this case, the time difference was associated with a feeling of inauthenticity and manipulation of historical events for political gains. While collective memory inherently employs the past for use in the present, the temporal delay more plainly indicates the use of history for current political ends. Because of this,

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<sup>245</sup> "U nás to byl "osvoboditel "v Maďarsku vrah."

<sup>246</sup> "Kdyby ji instalovala v roce 1946, pak by bylo hanba ji strhnout."

<sup>247</sup> "kulturní význam neměl žádný, protože vznikl za normalizace"

<sup>248</sup> "Pamatnil byl vybudovan v letech normalizace cca 25 let po skončení války."

many respondents believed that the monument was unnecessary, not of particular historical value, and that its removal was justified.

Conversely, another respondent argued that the monument was a reflection of a certain period of Czech history (the period it was erected rather than the period it commemorated), but did not indicate that they believed this fact to be inherently positive or negative, instead seeing the monument as somewhat of an archive of the past.<sup>249</sup> The respondent admitted that Koněv played a negative role in history, but that that was “just history” and that the removal of the statue was also somewhat problematic as it indicated an additional official attempt to change the past. Furthermore, the removal also eliminated a source of shade for people and a resting place for pigeons. Despite expressing a belief that the removal would represent some form of historical revisionism, this respondent viewed the monument as having a low level of mnemonic importance, with more significance as a feature of the urban landscape than as a symbol of collective memory or history. However, even when respondents believed the monument was not historically significant, they viewed the removal of the monument to be a politically motivated. While the respondent may not find the statue important, clearly it was removed for political reasons, meaning that the statue and its removal *became* mnemonically significant for these respondents because of its removal. Other respondents similarly indicated that they thought the removal was *slightly* unnecessary because it served as a “memento” that provided historical context as part of Czech history.<sup>250</sup> Some even commented that with further historical context (like the explanatory plaque), the monument’s removal was doubly unnecessary. For

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<sup>249</sup> “Sochy se nemají ničit. Je to jako záznam v archívu...něco co proběhlo.. Jejím odstraněním se někteří snaží změnit minulost. Koněv určitě sehrál také velmi negativní roli, během okupace, ale to je prostě historie. Sebrali holubům místo na sezení a lidem stín.”

<sup>250</sup> “zachován, pro správné pochopení historických souvislostí, jako memento”

many, the symbolic and mnemonic representational value of the monument (as a representation of Soviet oppression, for example) was not great enough to justify its costly and controversial removal.

However, criticisms of Koněv's participation in the Hungarian uprising and the necessity of further historical context were central to many respondents' arguments for why they believed the monument ultimately *should* have been removed. When asked about the removal, those who agreed with the removal remarked that it should never have been built<sup>251</sup> or that Koněv didn't contribute anything positive to Prague 6.<sup>252</sup> Another respondent remarked that Koněv committed a crime (which crime they are referring to is unspecified) and that his liberation of Prague shouldn't excuse this, especially since the liberation would have happened without him,<sup>253</sup> further emphasizing the belief that Koněv as a representation of Russian liberation was a misguided and overly simplistic assessment of the historical situation. Yet another commented that the monument should have been removed because it is not a memorial to fallen soldiers,<sup>254</sup> indicating that memorializing the Soviet liberator/hero rather than the victims of WWII indicated misplaced commemorative priorities. While some agreed with the removal as long as it was treated with dignity<sup>255</sup> and placed outside of public space but not destroyed altogether, others had stronger views, hoping that the monument would be reduced to rubble<sup>256</sup> or buried underground like the tank at Švandovo

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<sup>251</sup> "Neměl tu být nikdy postaven"

<sup>252</sup> "určitě odstraněn a již dávno. Koněv nepřinesl Praze 6 nic dobrého"

<sup>253</sup> "Odstraněn, dopustil se zločinu na našem území, předchozí osvobození by jej nemělo omlouvat, došlo by k němu i bez něj."

<sup>254</sup> "Odstraněn, není to památka padlých vojáků"

<sup>255</sup> "Souhlasím s jednáním MČ P6 - socha byla odstraněna z veřejného prostranství, není však zničená a bylo s ní nakládáno důstojně."

<sup>256</sup> "Měl být exemplárně roztřískán, jeho suť měli naházet před velvyslanectví Pekla v Bubenči."

Divadlo.<sup>257</sup> Another respondent believed that the Russian protests against the additional plaque were a deciding factor in the decision of Prague 6 authorities to remove the statue altogether rather than leaving it with the explanatory information.<sup>258</sup> For these respondents, the mnemonic symbolism of the monument differed from current mnemonic narratives of the past significantly enough that the removal was justified.

When asked if respondents had visited the exhibition at the site, many said that they were aware of the exhibit but had not visited it, while others had visited the site and enjoyed it. Those who did visit and enjoy the exhibit believed it to be more educational than the statue, though one respondent declared it to be tendentious.<sup>259</sup> Only one respondent said that they had visited the accompanying Memory of Nation website. No respondents commented on the modifications to the exhibition following Russia's invasion of Ukraine and it is unclear whether any had recently visited the modified site. While many respondents remarked that extended contextualization was important, fewer had deeply personally engaged with the contextualization provided in the exhibition, indicating that the availability of historical context was deemed more important than actual engagement with it.

Regarding the controversy surrounding the monument in the media's coverage of the event, a great majority of respondents said that they did not view the removal to be controversial, with one even remarking that the Prague 6 district acted in accordance

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<sup>257</sup> “Zakopal bych ho do půlky těla pod zem, stejně jako tank u Švandova divadla.”

<sup>258</sup> “Odstraněn byl z více důvodů. Kvůli sílící ruské agresi, kvůli neochotě ruské strany jednat o její budoucnosti i kvůli hlasitým ruským protestům proti dodatkovým tabulím s dopřesněnými historickými fakty.”

<sup>259</sup> “Velmi tendenční - škoda”

with today's interpretation of history.<sup>260</sup> This response is noteworthy because it takes a neutral attitude toward the fluidity of collective memory as a reflection of current social values and the use of history by official institutions for the present. Usually, this fluidity holds negative connotations for those afraid of historical revisionism, as illustrated by the numerous arguments against history manipulation or “rewriting of history” present in other responses and the “Proti zakrytí sochy maršála Koněva” Facebook page. For most respondents, the media coverage appeared fairly impartial, indicating the media’s perspective is generally representative of the opinions of most Czech individuals. One respondent pointed out that the media coverage may have provided useful historical information about Koněv to the public<sup>261</sup> who may not have known his historical background, though they thought that overall, the media coverage was overblown. This observation highlights the role of media coverage in mediating memory structures by bringing Koněv as a historical figure to the fore in issues of current political and social relations and the widespread attention of the public, thus further contributing to the construction and reconstruction of collective memory surrounding the site. It is clear that both social and political pressures influenced the monument as a site of collective memory and continued memory reconstruction for respondents in the neighborhood. Those who agreed with the removal overwhelmingly agreed because the mnemonic narrative of the monument was at odds with their own interpretations of memory and history regarding the Soviet era, while those who disagreed usually had an ideological opposition to monument removal in general, believing it to be a revisionary practice, even if they did not personally agree with the narrative of Soviet heroism the monument presented. Full responses to the survey questions are provided in Appendix 2.

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<sup>260</sup> “Pro mne toto není kontroverzní téma, MČ P6 jednala v souladu s dnešním výkladem historie.”

<sup>261</sup> “Informovala poněkud moc, nicméně pro řadu lidí to asi byl významný zdroj informací o tom, kdo Koněv skutečně byl”

## 8. Conclusion

Before the 1990s, memories of WWII were “frozen” according to “officially mandated Soviet interpretations.”<sup>262</sup> As Maria Mälksoo states within the context of WWII memories in the Baltics and Poland “..the initial state of the public defrosting of the post-socialist countries' memories meant engaging with former taboo subjects and revealing the falsifications and distortions of the past...”<sup>263</sup> In the 21st century, current geopolitical relations between Russia and the Czech Republic have changed significantly, and the memory of Marshal Koněv has changed along with it. As stated by Thelan “The struggle for possession and interpretation of memory is rooted in the conflict and interplay among social, political, and cultural interests...”<sup>264</sup> The interplay between struggles for possessions of memory is clearly articulated in the varying responses and iterations of the Koněv site through official responses and replacements, responses from Russian media and officials, contesting art installations, and receptions through media, social media, and community responses.

Halbwachs posits that “we can understand how we can recapture the past only by understanding how it is, in effect, preserved by our physical surroundings.” While monuments are erected as assertions of commemoration (often as a way of realigning the priorities of historical narratives) how much do these monuments impact the memory consciousness of individuals who observe them? Without active commemoration do they become nearly invisible – part of the unnoticed background of

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<sup>262</sup> Maria Mälksoo, “The Memory Politics of Becoming European: The East European Subalterns and the Collective Memory of Europe,” *European Journal of International Relations* 15, no. 4 (December 1, 2009): 653–80, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066109345049>.

<sup>263</sup> Mälksoo.

<sup>264</sup> David Thelen, “Memory and American History,” *The Journal of American History* 75, no. 4 (1989): 1117–29, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1908632>.

daily life? From 2018 to 2022, the physical preservation of memory at the Marshal Koněv monument site rapidly and frequently changed and the discursive focus on the monument was far from invisible.

Investigating the interaction between memory construction, representation, contestation, and interpretation within the Czech post-Soviet context, this research concludes that the changing and varied representations of the Marshal Koněv monument mnemonic site(s) reflect a shift in socio-political interactions within the Czech mnemonic space regarding the history of Marshal Koněv and Soviet participation at the end of WWII. Changing representations at the monument site itself, sanctioned and organized by the local government of Prague 6, initially added historical contextualization of the site through the added plaque and the historical exhibition at the site after the monument was removed. Later, in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the site became a space for more obvious politically motivated narratives of resistance and ideological support, where the mnemonic narrative tension between old Soviet narratives and new Czech national narratives of memory is supplanted and simplified due to current political action and expediency. Beginning as a site of commemoration to a Soviet hero, the site has transformed into a space for mnemo-political dialogue and, ultimately, a political and cultural statement against Soviet/Russian aggression. The changing official memories at the site reveal how the site of memory is represented and how representations of Czech shared mnemonic self-image are reframed and reinterpreted to align with present socio-political interests. Through other counter-monument responses across Prague, the issue is further problematized, and feelings of disillusionment are further expressed. In the media discursive sphere, Czech media generally upholds memory narratives that promote a multiplicity of historical

experiences, where Koněv can be both a liberator and an oppressor, whereas Russian narratives tend to uphold previous Soviet narratives of liberation. In social media and personal community responses, the tension within Czech collective memory modes of representation becomes more apparent. Many worry that removing the monument was an erasure of history, while others believe that the monument represented a version of history that no longer aligns with current values.

Through representations in media, art, historical interpretations, and public and individual opinion, the collective mnemonic narrative surrounding Koněv as a representative of the Czech Republic's Soviet past is not singular. As Blacker states, sites of memory are “not static *sites* of memory that showcase singular and unquestionable memory narratives, but are rather tense *knots* of memory that reveal complexity, interconnectedness, and a lack of resolution...”<sup>265</sup> The Marshal Koněv site of memory physically and intangibly substantiates complexly interwoven and mutable mnemonic narratives in Prague that change to reflect oppositional, concurrent, and affiliated political and social demands surrounding Soviet commemoration in Prague, weaving together a mnemonic knot of memory and socio-cultural meaning. As Soviet heroes like Koněv are removed and recontextualized, the collective memory surrounding these figures reflects unresolved tension when reconciling historical events with modern-day historical memory narratives. In Prague, the Koněv monument has become a symbol of Soviet memory narratives of the past and its removal has symbolized the mnemonic shift toward political and social opposition toward those past narratives. Koněv as a historical figure may be reflected significantly differently in official and unofficial memory narratives of the future, and, as of yet, there is no clear

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<sup>265</sup> Blacker, “Spatial Dialogues and Holocaust Memory in Contemporary Polish Art.”

consensus as to what the collective memory surrounding Koněv should or does represent, indicated by the frequent changes to the site, the social pressures that influenced those changes, and the controversial reactions and artistic responses to those changes. However, it is clear that these tense heterogeneous contestations of a formerly unified official mnemonic representation reflect the plurality of memories surrounding the Koněv site and indicate a clear shift in the Czech collective mnemonic framework away from the Soviet-influenced political memory of the past.

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## **List of appendices**

**Appendix 1: Community Survey Interview Questions**

**Appendix 2: Community Survey Responses**

## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Community Survey Interview Questions

In April 2020, the statue of Marshal Ivan Koněv in Prague 6 was removed, surrounded by significant controversy. The main goal of this questionnaire is to gain knowledge from the community surrounding the statue as a site of memory.

In this study, you will answer several questions. This study is carried out by graduate student researchers at Charles University, Czech Republic. It takes approximately 10-15 minutes to complete this study. The questionnaire is available in both English and Czech.

Any adult (18 years and older) can participate in this study. Participation in this study is voluntary. If you do not want to answer a particular question, please respond “I do not want to answer” and continue to the next question.

We will collect no personal or otherwise sensitive data and no information that can identify participants.

If you have further questions about this study, send us a message at:

**By proceeding to the next question, you acknowledge that you have read this information and that you want to participate in this study.**

What kind of memories (if any) does the Marshal Koněv statue recall for you? Any distant or fresh memories?

What do you think about the monument’s cultural/historical significance? Why do you think it was removed?

Do you think the monument should have been removed or maintained? Or something else? Why?

Did you follow the media coverage surrounding the removal of the Marshal Koněv statue? What is your opinion about the controversy and the removal?

### Appendix 2: Community Survey Responses