

# UKRAINE

## The Destruction of the Soviet Heritage

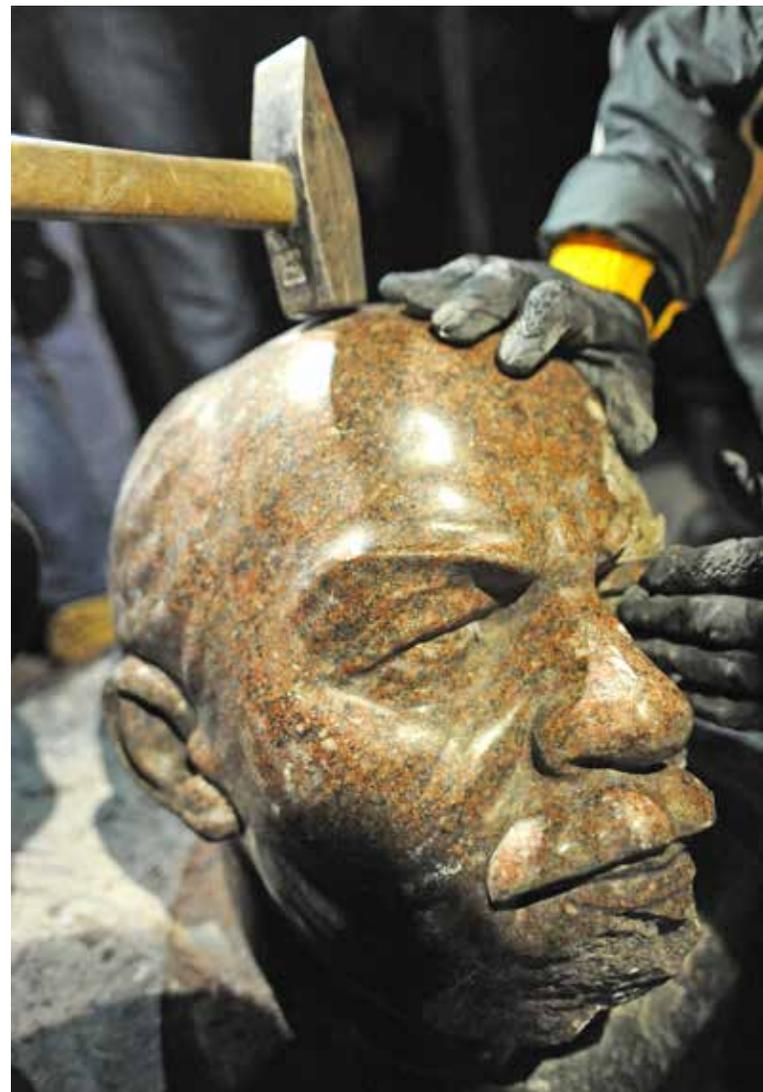
Alarming information has come to the attention of ICOMOS from Ukrainian citizens concerning widespread destruction of the Soviet heritage in the Ukraine. An analysis of Ukrainian internet publications confirms the following facts. This process started illegally and spontaneously as part of the “Euromaidan” protests in Kiev at the end of 2013 and involved the destruction of memorials to Soviet leaders and also to Soviet symbols on buildings. One of the first statues to be destroyed by protesters was the Lenin statue in Kiev. As the news agency Interfax-Ukraine reported,

less than a day after it was demolished, parts of the statue were offered for sale on the internet.

Monuments then began to be destroyed in the same way across the country: the removal of statues was usually done at night by groups of aggressive people with hammers. If the municipal authorities took part in this process, it was often done carelessly, causing severe damage to the sculptures, as in the cities of Zaporizhzhia and Dniprodzerjynsk (now Kamenskoe). At that time, many of those objects were still officially considered as heritage items of local or national significance, because they were usually created by talented Ukrainian sculptors and had historical or artistic value.



The Lenin statue in Kiev, May 2009  
(photo Alexey Nechay, Wikimedia)



Protesters are about to smash the head of the overthrown V. I. Lenin monument in Kiev, December 8, 2013 (photo Mstyslav Chernov, Wikimedia)



The plinth of the demolished Lenin statue in Kiev, 2014 (photo V. Koragin)



The plinth of the demolished statue of Lenin in Kharkiv, 2014 (photo S. Smolenska)



Former Metalworkers' Palace of Culture in Dnipro, condition in 2011 (photo S. Smolenska)

It also needs to be pointed out that in some cases local citizens did not support the destruction. For instance, in early 2014 people in Kharkiv protested against the demolition and removal of the Lenin monument in the city centre. They erected tents and were on duty near the monument in order to save it from destruction. Nonetheless, the monument was taken down.

In April 2015, the Ukrainian Parliament legitimised the process and the President signed the new “Law on the Condemnation of the Communist and National Socialist (Nazi) Regimes, and Prohibition of Propaganda of their Symbols” (9 April 2015, No. 317-VIII; see also the English version under <http://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-REF%282015%29045-e>). The Law does not provide for the scientific substantiation of demolition or preservation of monuments, or for the definition of the artistic, architectural, historical or urban values of objects. Public opinion is not taken into consideration when making such a decision about which monuments should be destroyed and which preserved. Therefore, most Soviet monuments have been destroyed by now. In addition, all localities and place names of the Soviet period have been renamed. The

photos show some typical examples of monuments being dismantled and destroyed.

It should be added that the present condition of architectural and urban monuments of the 20th century in the Ukraine is also disastrous. The revival of private business in the past 20 years has created a situation where the individual occupiers renting or buying several rooms or floors in a house change them to their taste, often so drastically that the original is no longer recognisable: e.g. by adding new, disfiguring façade elements – windows, entrances, balconies, etc. This results in a loss of integrity and authenticity of the heritage, but authorities leave such cases unpunished.

Even the most outstanding buildings are in poor condition. In the city of Dnipro (formerly Dnipropetrovsk) there is one of the first major club buildings of early modernism (1920s) in the Ukraine: the former Metalworkers’ Palace of Culture (architect Krasnoselsky). It has not been in use for many years, has fallen into decay and is gradually being destroyed by the ravages of time. Repair works of the last decade on the facades of the eminent Gosprom (1925–28) in Kharkiv have ignored the use of authentic decoration materials.

At the request of ICOMOS prepared by Svitlana Smolenska on the basis of information of Ukrainian websites and letters from Ukrainian citizens