



Contested Memory and Re-configured Master Narratives: Museum Institution in Totalitarian Regimes

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Abstract

This paper starts with the conceptualization of museum as an institution of memory, in order to investigate how national museums have handled difficult pasts, conflicting stories or contested objects. It will take a closer look at the institutional experience of Estonian museums under the conditions of repressive political regimes in the 1940s and 1950s, with a longer discussion of the Stalinist period and the constraints of the Soviet museum system. This paper looks at institutions and the fate of collections in order to provide a survey on how collections were transformed in the course of these decades. The institutions introduced here are the Estonian History Museum, the Art Museum of Estonia, and the Estonian National Museum. The profound reorganizations, destructions and redistributions that occurred have determined the collections, as they exist today while defining the fate of particular museums. The other focus is on the interpretation of the Second World War and its representations under transformative socio-political conditions and in the period of post-Soviet transition.

Introduction

This paper addresses the issue of uses of the past via contested representations in national museums under the conditions of a totalitarian regime and occupation. The narratives presented in museums unavoidably go through certain ideological manipulation in such situations of violent political rupture that impacts both the narratives presented but also the collections of objects testifying to different narratives as well as on the professional staff taking care of and managing these depositories or constructing displays. In order to investigate how national museums have handled difficult pasts, conflicting stories or contested objects, this paper proposes to focus on the conceptualization of museum as an institution of memory and then look at the institutional experience under the conditions of repressive political regimes. The timeframe under more detailed analysis here covers the decades of the 1940s and 1950s, particularly the Stalinist regime and the constraints of the Soviet museum system. This paper looks at institutions and the fate of collections in order to provide a survey on how collections were transformed in the course of these decades. This historical perspective is all the more important as these profound reorganizations, destructions and redistributions have determined the collections as they exist today and help to understand the fate of particular museums. The other focus is on the interpretation of the Second World War and its representations in the period of post-Soviet transition.

Memory

National museums have constructed and manipulated the past for particular ends. However, as the result of situations of war and conflict, shifts of state authority and changes of political regime foreground substantial problems related to ownership and restitution, contested master-narratives, and targeted manipulations of the representation of national memory. A museum conceptualised as a 'site of memory' (cf. Nora 1989) works with the perceived and transformative power of objects that have been extracted from their original environment and re-inscribed into a symbolic landscape. Politics of memory relate in an ambivalent way to the museum institution, capable of presenting a packaged form of memory and history to tell a particular story of the past. The theorist of social memory, Paul Connerton claims among other seminal statements that societies deliberately choose to encode memory with the support of material culture (Connerton 1989), and this explains the proliferation of museums that are based on the intricate relationship of 'the past in the present'. Maurice Bloch contends in turn that all narratives of the past have to be understood in terms of the nature of the society in which they are told (Bloch 1992).

Remembering – particularly as a collective endeavour – of national history depends on regimes of power, being dependent on the narratives allowed or accepted in the public imaginary. Modern perceptions of memory emerged from the awareness of the conflicting representations of the past and the effort of different groups to claim their version of it for anchoring identity politics (cf. Gillis 1994: 8). Memories are actively produced as representations that are “open to struggle and dispute” (Radstone 2000: 7), being an eternal battleground, subject of tensions between the individual and collective, the public and private. Memories, though, are a product of selection that is based on an interaction between opposing terms: disappearance (i.e. forgetting)

and preservation, both being defined and controlled by positions of authority (see Todorov 2001).

As public institutions the role of museums is to contain representations that provide a narrative of national memory. They acquire, however, a paradoxical position in the representation of controversial historical experience, or conflicting narratives of the past under the pressures of a totalitarian regime. In their capacity to define and preserve prescribed knowledge, museums are designated with particular significance in reference to national memory. Museographical representations engage the potential of temporal collapse when they implement the intentional inversion of time and place that gives the story being told a political purpose - to create a celebrative, coherent 'narrative' that is a foundational premise for teleological national memory.

The general setting

The founding of an independent state of Estonia in 1918, the forced annexation with the Soviet Union and its aftermath in the post-Second-World-War period, as well as the regained independence in 1991 frames three distinct phases in the creations of new master narratives that each depended on the contestation of the previous ones. In this study of how the museum institution re-positioned itself we can differentiate the transitions according to three distinct historical periods: the first Soviet occupation (June 1940 to July 1941); Nazi-German occupation (August 1940 to September 1944); the second Soviet occupation (October 1944–1991). One should add that in Estonia the Second World War continues to be a seminal 'site of memory' that still produces contradictory representations (Kõresaar 2011: 10). The final part of this paper takes a look at its representation in the museum display under transformative socio-political conditions, while the first part of this paper discusses the destructions, manipulations and suppressions that took place in Estonian museums in the decades of the 1940s and 50s. The cases used here are the History Museum and the Art Museum in Tallinn (the capital on the north coast) and the Estonian National Museum in Tartu (second largest city and intellectual hub in south-central Estonia).

They will be used to show how the establishment of the Soviet museum system reorganized, redistributed and repressed across national collections, buildings, and museum personnel, whereas the Nazi-German occupation denoted a re-shifting of political positions, but also additional repressions and loss both from personal and institutional perspectives. While museum representation was deemed quite marginal first for the new regime and then due the difficult conditions of wartime, the second Soviet occupation took up a profound re-writing of history and used the representative significance of museum display as part of targeted ideological propaganda. The general circumstance can be observed by tracing how collections were transformed in the course of these decades, a process that in a distorted way has also defined the makeup of certain museum collections today and conditioned where those museums stand in the current social imaginary. It could be argued that the concept of 'permanent display' got rather reversed or distorted, as due to those tragic decades nothing remained in its previous state or location. The same applies also to the personal histories of museum personnel.

These transformations and the tragic events related to them could, however, be publicly told and discussed or even revealed only recently, in the past decades. This has been a part of a process of reclaiming national history, which has characterized public re-configuration of national

experience. At the same time this new narrative (or even the old one, for that matter) did not manage to extend to minority positions, whose representation appears to have been relatively excluded from the re-writings of the period. Thus the re-writing of a particular experience in European history, i.e. the narrative concerning the Second World War, has not occurred in the Estonian museum setting in a critical and detailed manner yet¹.

First re-configurations

The Molotov–Ribbentrop pact of 1938 led to the *Umsiedlung* of the Baltic Germans, that is to say the exodus of nearly the entire ethnic group to Germany. Baltic Germans were the once ruling landowning and administrative minority, whose property and museum collections had played a significant role in cultural heritage. Amongst those who left the country, was most of the personnel of the *Provintsiiaalmuuseum*, the predecessor of the Estonian History Museum (see Kuldna 2002). However, this relocation, selling and abandonment of Baltic German heritage, as well as the subsequent establishment of Soviet military bases implied a contradictory consequence for the collections of the museum institution in general as these painful changes brought about numerous additions in ethnographic, art and cultural artefacts to museum collections.

In 1940, the manipulation of the accession of Estonia to the Soviet state denoted that all private ownership was abolished and the museums were appropriated by the state. Institutions were closed, redistributed and reorganized: private bodies or foundations governed by respective societies were nationalized while thirteen museums (out of the total of thirty-nine) whose scope did not match the Soviet ideology were liquidated (Kukk 2009: 692; Raisma 2009a: 790). From three former national museums (run as foundations) the new regime created four so-called ‘central state museums’ that would correspond to the all-Soviet model: revolution museum, history museum, ethnographic museum, and museum of figurative art (Kukk 2009: 694). The Soviet museum system was meant to erase or censor the previous historical (and particularly national) narratives, purge collections of ‘suspicious’ material, introduce a centralized system of museum governing and management (including ideological monitoring), in order to introduce a new, Soviet narrative of state and nation where the guiding role was that of the Russian nation. This was particularly obvious in history museums, making them thus into specialized propaganda institutions in the Soviet cultural and academic sphere. These institutions were considered to be the ‘outposts’ of the ideological front whose displays had to promote the Communist Party, present historical events through the prism of class struggle, advance cultural revolution, as well as give evidence of the supremacy of the Soviet system over the capitalist past. The focal point of social development was fixed on the Russian revolution while the Estonian historical experience had to be merged into and governed by this master narrative (cf. Raisma 2009b).

In 1940 and 1941 museum collections were rather substantially re-distributed between the central museums (with little regard to museum professionals or local interests), which testified to the aim of destroying the previous museum system, as well as of eradicating the national narrative of independent Estonia. The newly established **State History Museum of the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic** (with an annex of a Revolution Museum) partly received the collections of the ideologically detrimental Museum of the War of Independence, the Estonian Police Museum, and the Estonian Postal Museum, all closed down (Rosenberg 1961: 52; Raisma 2009a: 790).

Substantial parts of the History Museum's previous collections were divided between other museums, in order to build up the Soviet system of thematic museums. For example, the *Provintsiaalmuuseum* collections of sculptures and paintings were taken over by the State Art Museum, while the impressive Natural Science collections were transformed into a separate **State Museum of Natural Sciences** (cf. Kukk 2009: 698–699). On the other hand, the History Museum received artefacts of cultural history (deemed non-representative from the point of view of Estonian ethnology) from the Estonian National Museum.

Following the decision of the Education Council of People's Commissars, the Soviet regime also nationalized the Estonian National Museum that had been inherently intertwined with the narrative of Estonian nation-building and state-making. It was divided into two new distinct institutions: the State Ethnographic Museum that was profiled more narrowly for the preservation and research of material culture, and the State Literary Museum, to house the sub-units focusing on collecting verbal lore, written documents and books. Also the Art Museum of Estonia was transformed into Soviet state property and thus renamed in 1940. Members of the museum staff remained in their positions and were not affected too much at first, aside from the History Museum whose Baltic German specialized and professional museum personnel had left before the Soviet invasion. The year 1941, however, saw the beginning of political purges that brought with it many personal tragedies and suffering. Two consecutive directors of the Art Museum were arrested and deported to Siberia, one of them incriminated as a spy (Kukk 2009: 695). In the Estonian National Museum, the whole institution was gravely devastated when the Museum director was imprisoned, presumably due to his professional position, and eventually killed in a Soviet prison camp in 1942 (Viires 1993: 6).

Inhibitions of occupation and warfare

The German occupation seems to have brought about a return to the previous national narrative (first, with the restitution of the former names of the institutions), which nevertheless had to demonstrate the dominant presence of Germans in Estonian history, while the ideological focus was profoundly transformed (e.g. at History Museum was organised an exhibition titled 'The Combat of Germany with the East'). On the other hand, the issue of property ownership concerning the Baltic German heritage was raised when works of art and buildings were reclaimed. The ruling regime and the conditions of the war brought about additional hardship with the requirement to accommodate military troops, particularly at the magnificent mansion of the Estonian National Museum (cf. Astel 2009: 200). In general, however, the museums as ideological institutions do not seem to have been a priority for the German administration, let alone the museum personnel. In the Estonian National Museum, researchers turned the situation to their advantage when they continued carrying out fieldwork, collecting items, and claiming new geographic territories for ethnographic study by following to the east, into the Finno-Ugric regions the advancing German troops that had as former parts of Russia been inaccessible in the previous decades (Laid 1997: 237; Viires 1993: 6–7).

Things began to change radically when the battlefront turned into a retreat of the defeated German troops and active warfare swept once again across the territory of Estonia, including heavy bombing of the cities of Tallinn and Tartu. In the course of 1943 and 1944, Estonian museum personnel risked their lives for nearly a year by transporting museum collections into

safety, mostly to heated manor house cellars of central and western Estonia, but also when trying to protect the valuables (artworks and precious metal, as well as weapons) from German soldiers who were hunting for them (Astel 2009: 195–202).

Based on the difficult conditions and violent shifts of political power, the whole idea of ‘national heritage as property’ became physically problematic. To boot, practically all of the three museums lost their facilities. The Raadi Manor housing the Estonian National Museum in Tartu was destroyed during the war, though the collections that had been evacuated from the military zone remained largely intact. Aside from the vast museum facilities, the Estonian National Museum lost the majority of its qualified staff who fled Estonia out of fear of the persecution of the re-established Soviet regime (Viires 1993: 7). During the Soviet bombing of Tallinn in 1944 the Art Museum facilities were burnt down with a substantial part of the applied art collections and museum library, whereas most of the painting collections were saved, apart from those that had been taken to Germany (Kirme 2007: 25–26).

Stalinist re-configurations

The transformation of the museum landscape was thus a physical one. The Museum of Natural Sciences was established in the former premises of the History Museum, which was housed and exhibited in temporary facilities after the war. Finally in 1952 the museum move to its present location in Great Guild Hall of the medieval old town of Tallinn where the first permanent display was opened only in 1956.

After the destruction of its previous premises, the Estonian National Museum moved in 1945 to the first floor of the former courthouse in the Tartu city centre with extremely limited display facilities, whilst the ruins of Raadi were turned into a military base and subsequently an airfield. This museum appeared too suspiciously and inherently linked to the pre-Second World War independent Estonian Republic, and therefore the related memory needed to be erased. Under the Soviet rule, the museum that had lost its collections of art, political history and books became mutilated into an ethnographic museum-cum-archive with very limited display facilities in the process, with the name changed into Ethnographic Museum in 1952.

After the war, the Art Museum reopened in an apartment until it hit what seems a jackpot in comparison with the other two institutions: after being reorganized into the Tallinn State Art Museum, it was able to move to the Kadriorg Palace which had served as the seat of administrative power (Estonian, Soviet and Nazi-German). But first the Museum had to share the building with the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of Estonian SSR, including the removal of displays for government receptions (five times in 1946, seven in 1947, and eleven in 1948). In addition, the wings of the Palace were divided into apartments, which left less space for the growing collections. This situation ended only gradually around the turn of the 1960s. (cf. Teder 2008).

The alternating Soviet–German–Soviet occupations meant substantial changes and a re-writing of the master narrative of representation with each transition, but the most profound transformations were brought about in 1945 when the Soviet regime set about promulgating its positions. Perceived by the new rule to be important ideological institutions, all central museums were ordered to open their doors (even in the substitute facilities) to the public with new displays by November 1945, to celebrate the anniversary of the Great Socialist October

Revolution. In 1946 the History Museum and the National Museum were incorporated into the system of the Academy of Sciences of the Estonian SSR, which followed the Soviet model of centralized research, museum and archival institutions. Museums were under the control of the central government and financed by the state through the Academy of Sciences.

The previous redistribution of museum collections was continued with the return of the Soviet rule. It also brought about a selective 'purge' of the historical collections: items and artefacts to be forbidden from the Soviet perspective were removed, while documents and books considered politically suspicious had to be deposited in a restricted and censored archive. Specific elements of national memory had to be erased; others needed to be rearranged and retold. The museum personnel tried to adopt the demands of Soviet ideology in their museum displays. Nevertheless, in 1945 and 1946 the whole administrative and scholarly staff of the History Museum was arrested and repressed by the Soviet regime: eight men and seven women were interrogated and indicted for planning an armed revolt, based on the weapons and literature assembled (See Annist 2002.). The irony in this tragedy was related to the fact that these artefacts were part of the prepared exhibit of the heroic defeats of the Soviet army. The men were sentenced to ten, and women to eight years of prison camp in Siberia. This incident was part of the larger repression of Estonian intelligentsia, during which the acting director of the National Museum was arrested and held in prison for a year (Viires 1993: 8). For the Estonian National Museum, the Stalinist period of persecution and oppression meant the loss of the building, as well as the decimation of the museum's personnel: those who did not flee were forced to resign, particularly in the 1950 political purge campaign, following the 1949 mass deportations and in connection with the forced collectivization of farms and rural private property. The status and quality of academic ethnographic studies was reduced and narrowed in general considerably due to its being labelled a 'nationalist' field. The topics Estonian ethnographers focused on during this period included farm architecture, agricultural tools, and traditional costumes celebrating the past peasant society. Their historical perspective on material objects provided also a more comfortable level of evolutionistic descriptive approach, which provided an opportunity to avoid ideological manipulation, related to social contextualization in the Soviet present. The positions of the museum directors and researchers became heavily politicized and censored until the second half of the 1950s. (See Astel 2009.)

After the mass deportation of about twenty thousand people to Siberia in 1949, which was followed by forced collectivisation of rural property, the next blow targeted again particularly intellectuals in 1950/51 causing additional political repression of museum personnel (imprisonment, deportation, loss of jobs). Purges took place in the History Museum of politically sensitive objects, which included documents and items that referred to independent statehood, as well as items deemed insignificant, i.e. without relevant historical or artistic value according to the Stalinist ideological or aesthetic norm. For example, 185 paintings, 307 graphic sheets and 46 plaster sculptures were destroyed, and more than 400 kilograms of artefacts made of precious metal were melted in 1951, and in 1953 more than 14 kilograms of photographic negatives were destroyed (Peets 2005; Raisma 2009a: 789–790). Also the document archives were newly systematized and censored, so that by 1960 more than 111,500 items had been handed over to the State Central Archive (Rosenberg 1961: 53). Thus the memory deposit of the Museum was changed drastically, mostly in relation to the Estonian national narrative concerning the first half

of the twentieth century. The displays reflected the interpretation of history in concurrence with the ideological issues highlighted by the Communist Party (who guided the ideological interpretations by the state). In the fifties and sixties the permanent exhibitions set the main emphasis on the Great Socialist October Revolution and its guiding force for the following decades.

In the Art Museum, the best part of Estonian art from the first half of the twentieth century was firmly shut up in reserves. The first exhibitions after the war could still present national elements, but since the early 1950s, the onset of Stalinist repressions meant that the emphasis of museum display was laid on Estonian art preceding the October Revolution (for example, limited to a few artists who had studied in St. Petersburg), and the works of art in the so-called Socialist Realist style, i.e. pertaining to works created already in Soviet Estonia. In this period, applied (decorative) art began to thrive because of the possibility of focusing the artistic skills and expression solely on the aesthetic; at the same time the style of the thirties inspired by folk art was reintroduced. From the end of the fifties and through the following political thaw of the early sixties, Estonian art developed its 'protective mechanism' via applied art (attributed with the lowest rank in the hierarchy of art ideology) against the trends of Sovietization of the Socialist Realism (Helme & Kangilaski 1999: 141).

The described re-configurations of the national narrative in Estonia during the Stalinist regime in the forties and fifties brought about a total reorganization of the museum system according to ideological regulations and agenda administered according to the model established by Moscow, where everything 'national' was substituted by 'state' (nation and state were not considered an equivalent). This meant a complete 're-writing' of the master narrative in museum representation, alongside with transformations and relocations of museum collections. Starting from 1946, all decrees and regulations concerning museums were sent down from Moscow (Jeeser 2009: 26). In the Soviet framework, museums became institutions of ideology, instruments in memory manipulation of what to present and how it should correspond to the Soviet master narrative in the clearly hierarchical and highly centralized cultural policy system². The displays presented to the public were controlled by the central Soviet government: the exhibits had to be checked and approved by *Glavlit*, whose very last regulative instruction was issued and adopted in Estonia in the year 1988 (Raisma 2009b: 72)³.

Under Soviet rule, the museum was transformed into a propaganda institution that was called upon to present history from the reworked Soviet Marxist-Leninist perspective of the communist socio-political progress. History was perceived as a didactic space where the narrative of economic and military domination prevailed, with a firm focus on events and impersonal numerical data deemed politically correct. In the Soviet master narrative personal experience or memories did not exist or matter. This ideological frame caused the development of a permanent exhibition inherently focused on the presumed progress of the means of production, positioning economic history and (inequalities of) social class as a central issue (Raisma 2009b: 89–90), but also communist revolution and the presentation of the victorious Great Patriotic War from the Soviet perspective. The nearly total neglect of cultural history and rather exclusive focus on previous economic strife and particular representation of class struggles with in addition Soviet military heroism, was clearly a strategy intended to erase the memory of an independent Estonian Republic (relabelled as oppressive, capitalist, and bourgeois). It had to be replaced by the

promotion of a teleological narrative of the making of the ‘new Soviet nation’, guided by the idea of progress, leading to the communist future of the proletarian state. However, for major as well as other local museum institutions, the significance of ‘national’ became tacitly equivalent of ‘ethnic Estonian’, and their particular agenda of preservation and safeguarding continued regardless of the official requirement and constraints of public display. This meant the tacit preservation of contested memories. Such an oppositional transformation brings forth the dynamics of memory culture under suppressive regime.

Representations of the Second World War

The last part of this paper takes a closer look at contested master narratives in permanent museum display contexts lending opportunity for the consideration of particular representations of the periods under discussion in this report. This is based on the juxtaposition of two exhibits presenting relatively oppositional narratives of the Second World War at the History Museum. The displays introduced here were held consecutively but during very different stages of the socio-political rupture of the turn of the 1990s.

The situation of the Estonian History Museum was representative of the general state of museums when they shifted from a Soviet propaganda institution to the representation of historical experience in a drastic transformation: the last Soviet period permanent display opened in 1987, on the eve of revolutionary changes it was not yet able to reflect (Raisma 2009c: 107). On the other hand, the 1987 display thus concurs in essence with the prevalent Soviet-period presentation of the Second World War, or to provide a correct term of the time, of the Great Patriotic War where Estonian historical experience could be presented only as an immanent part of (and defined by) the established Soviet narrative of that war. The major themes displayed were military battles that could present victorious military operations by Soviet generals and memorialize the heroic deeds of the Red Army in the course of the Great Patriotic War. This representational narrative focused predominantly on the myth of the Soviet nation as the winner and the Soviet political stereotypes of warfare: the ‘us’ were the Soviet (Estonian) nation and the Red Army, ‘they’ – the radically demonised enemy of ‘the fascist Germany’ (Kõresaar 2011: 17). Representations of personal experience, war-time collaboration in occupied territories, or war criminals were nearly non-existent, being completely marginalized, which has been explained by the official ideological requirement to retain and present the grand narrative of the united spirit of the Soviet nation – no negative light was allowed to cast a shade over that image (ibid: 23). The same principle was applied in the representation of the Holocaust: it was not extracted from the fate of Soviet citizens in general, while the evil was ‘ex-territorialized’ as a phenomenon generated in the West and not on Soviet territory (cf. Onken 2004).

The 1987 exposition was the last permanent display opened under the political condition of the Estonian SSR where the museum professionals were obliged to follow the orders of the Estonian SSR Communist Party Propaganda and Agitation Department (Kõresaar 2011: 11). In 1990 the display was quickly changed to concur with the socio-political situation providing a public transformation of the representation of Estonian history, particularly the presentation of the Stalinist period, which was nevertheless inherently tied to the elaboration of the experience of the Second World War. The display did not, however, undergo a substantial transformation from a museological or museographic perspective, but limited itself to the alteration of the narrative

substance, to render a different story in a basically similar framework. Historians studying in detail the Baltic experience of the mid-twentieth-century conflicts and their aftermath have stated that the Second World War actually ended for the Baltic nations only after their liberation from the Soviet regime and the re-establishment of independence in 1991 (Onken 2004). Ene Kõresaar who has studied the change of the representation of the Second World War at the History Museum display has pointed out the following major features⁴. Her study on the transformation of memory culture during the transition years in Estonia and the treatment of the Second World War in the History Museum's permanent exhibitions in the late eighties and the early nineties indicate that these displays were both relatively conservative in essence: both departed from a linear temporal concept in presenting events according to chronological sequence and a closed narrative, which functioned as "a memorialisation" (Kõresaar 2011: 17). The new exhibit signals a major alteration, however, in its agenda of "a nationalization of war experience" (ibid.). The 'us' in this narrative were the Estonian nation and national sovereignty that were threatened by two enemies (the Red Russia and Nazi Germany); the central figures of the 'us' were those fighting for the freedom of Estonia, whereas the eventual end of the Second World War did not bring freedom but alternating occupations. One of the focal points of the display was to present material that could not even be collected before, and to tell another version of the war experience, where atrocities of war or criminal acts became blurred in relation to the agency and role of Estonians. The main victims caught in the wheels of this narrative were Estonian citizens; the destruction caused by German occupation was presented from the perspective of factual data with a rather laconic listing of numbers of losses and pointing out their form, and the victims' ethnic or national origin. The previous, relatively emotional, presentation was juxtaposed with a terse depiction of the "realities of an occupation" (ibid.: 27), whereas no distinct part of the display was attributed to the Holocaust in contrast to the specific and central role that it has been given in the European memory regime. The re-interpretation of the Second World War presented by the permanent display in Estonian History Museum in 1990 was initiated from another perspective: from the fate of the Estonian nation and the independent state, in a narrative that perceived Estonians either as victims of the Soviet occupation or fighters against the communist regime. It has been claimed that museum exhibition is a practice of commemoration, which mediates a specific picture of history that represents but also shapes the identity of a particular group (ibid.: 10). The early nineties were the period for reclaiming a narrative of national history that would turn the public focus on ethnic Estonian experience, as a rather exclusive master narrative from a particular nationalist perspective that was based on stories not told before, forgotten or stories whose display was forbidden, stories of silenced suffering, which in that transformative phase of restored national independence meant a relative incapacity of any form of more inclusive representation of a shared history with other groups or communities.

Notes

- ¹ E.g. the presentation of Holocaust derived from the Soviet propagandist anti-Nazi representation which did not particularly engage with the fate of the Estonian Jewish community.
- ² Cf. passages from the brochure on the basics of Soviet museology: “For a long time the central theoretical problem in Soviet museology has been the question of how to apply museum exposition better to propagate scientific and political knowledge with an aim of furthering the Marxist-Leninist worldview of the audience” (Luts 1979: 3–4); and “A museum display should lead the visitor to conclusions that would help to generate (or substantiate) the dialectic and Marxist worldview” (ibid: 17).
- ³ *Glawlit* = the Main Administration for the Protection of State Secrets in the Press under the USSR Council of Ministers. This last document was titled “Instructions for the procedure of preparing exposition materials for public display in museums and exhibits and presenting them for check-up to the USSR *Glawlit* organs” (Raisma 2009b: 72).
- ⁴ Kõresaar was able to carry out this research relatively recently, because the permanent exhibit remained basically the same between 1990 and 2007, when it was taken down for substantial renovation of the museum institution in general; the 1987 display had already been carefully documented by the museum personnel (cf. Kõresaar 2011: 12).

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