***HISTORICAL ETHNIC BIAS IN URBAN MEMORY: THE CASE OF CENTRAL EUROPEAN CITIES***
Maria Lewicka

Like people, cities remember and forget. They remember through the presence of urban reminders and memories of their inhabitants. They forget when architectural traces of their past are wiped out, like when wars destroy their buildings or when politicians decide to substitute the unwanted past by the more "progressive" presence that better fits the ruling ideology. Cities forget also when, as a consequence of war atrocities, their populations disappear or when, due to political turbulences, they become replaced by other populations. All these events took place in cities of Central and Eastern Europe – the European pot that witnessed war destructions, massive territorial and population changes, and ideological pressures at reinterpretations of history.

In 1918 the territories of Eastern Central Europe, for more than hundred years partitioned between three major empires, Austro-Hungarian, Russian, and Prussian, fell into the mosaic of independent states (Poland, Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Balcan states), most of them ethnically mixed, with strong ethnic minorities, including strong Jewish communities. Twenty years later the outbreak of the Second World War again transformed the European scene and the post-war treatises signed by members of the anti-Nazi coalition, first in Jalta, later in Postdam, changed the pre-war borders of several countries, annihilated some of them (the Baltic states were annexed to Soviet Union and offered the status of Soviet republics) and massively changed territories of others. Poland was the country that changed its territory the most. The country "shifted westward": about one third of its territories was annexed to the Soviet Union (and transformed into the Lithuanian, Belorussian and Ukrainian Soviet republics), while it in exchange obtained an equivalent in the form of the lands that previously were a part of the German state (East Prussia, parts of Pomerania, and Lower Silesia). *[1]*

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Gregor Thum

Obce miasto
Wrocław 1945
i potem

VIA NOVA
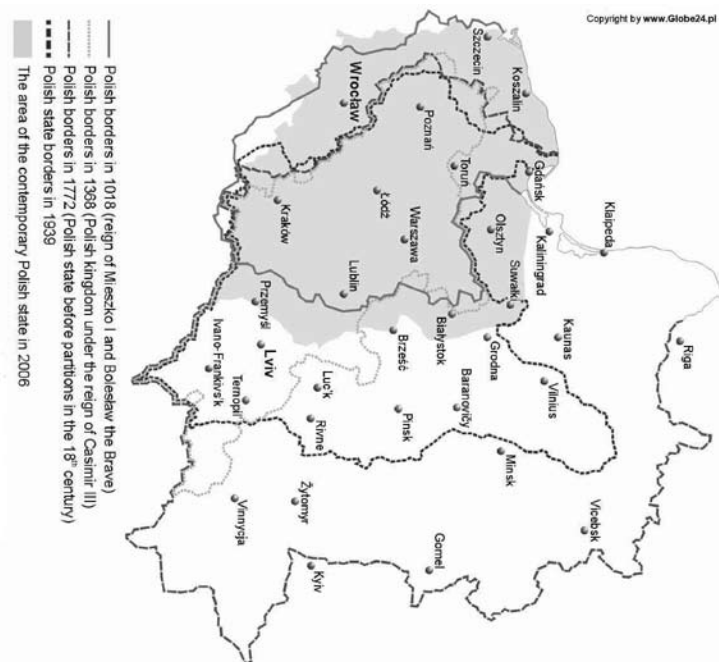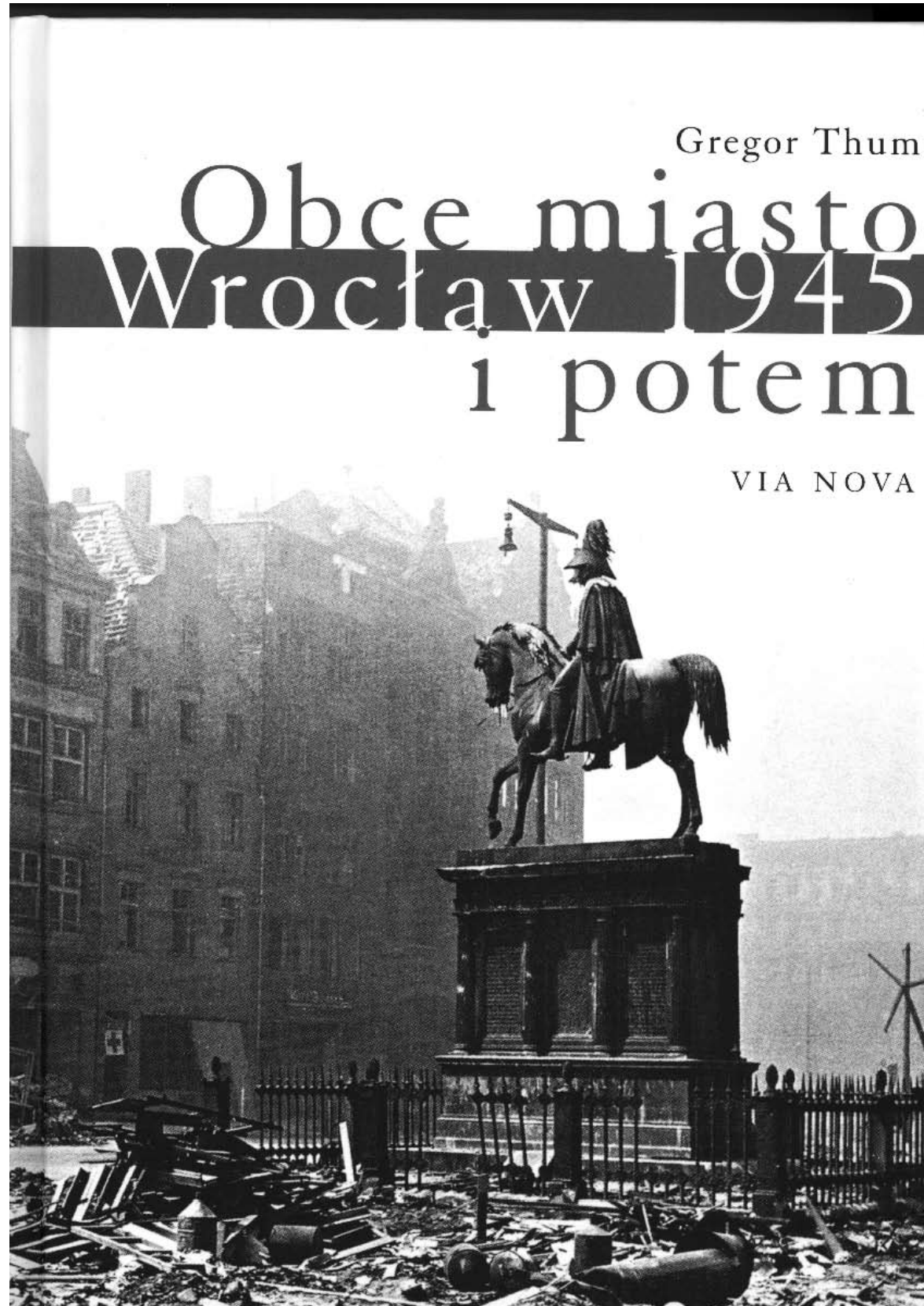
Wyśmienity przykład mądrej historyzacji tematu wypędzenia

This shift meant massive migrations of people evicted from their cities, towns and villages, which they inhabited for generations, and thus tragedies of millions of families forced to leave their "little fatherlands". Polish families relocated from the eastern regions of Poland, now parts of Soviet Union, traveled westward and settled down mostly in the newly annexed western and northern lands which at the same time were emptied by the relocated millions of German families. The "people's wanderings" also included Ukrainians whom the politically-steered inhuman "Action Vistula" forced to leave homes in south-eastern Poland and move either to the Ukrainian Soviet Republic or – along with Polish easterners - to the western and northern regions of Poland. The emptied cities and towns underwent a profound "blood transfusion" as new residents took over houses of their former inhabitants. Names of cities and towns changed. Lwów became Lviv, Allenstein - Olsztyn, Wilno - Vilnius, Breslau - Wrocław, Königsberg - Kaliningrad etc. One of the best descriptions of this period in the formerly German and now Polish city of Breslau/Wrocław can be found in the book written by a young German historian, Georg Thum, "Foreign city. Wrocław 1945 and after", recently translated into Polish. *[I]*

The ruling ideologists did their best to present the post-war changes as self-evident demonstrations of historical justice. The newly acquired western and northern lands were officially described as the "old lands of Piasts " (Piasts being the oldest dynasty of Polish kings), that were "finally recovered" by the Polish state, and territories annexed to the Soviet Union were presented to their citizens as "liberation from the feudal rules and from exploitation by Polish aristocrats".

In times of political transitions or revolutions, the first steps that the new leaders usually take is wiping out all reminders of the unwanted history. The aim of the ideologically-driven efforts after 1945 was on one hand, justification of the naturally Polish (or Ukrainian, Lithuanian etc.) character of the newly acquired places and, on the other, elimination of traces of the old political system. Monuments were destroyed and replaced by memorials of revolutionary leaders or national heroes, street names changed, even architecture was "adjusted" to the epoch, like when in Warsaw after 1945 the new leaders ordered the destruction of the too spectacular buildings and the removal from their facades all ornaments and decorations - traces of the bourgeois character of the pre-war city. In Lviv almost all coats-of-arms were removed from buildings – either because they were considered traces of Polish presence, or of the feudal character of the estates, or both. Particularly fierce were attempts to remove German traces in the newly acquired western and northern cities of Poland. Wall inscriptions were painted over, monuments and even cemeteries were irretrievably destroyed. These processes were somewhat weaker on the formerly Polish lands, for instance in Lviv one can still find traces of the pre-war Polish presence on city buildings *[II], [III]*, and a number of streets continue to carry names of famous Polish writers or painters. In the city downtown tourists can admire an impressive monument of Adam Mickiewicz, considered to be the greatest Polish romantic poet (3/2)

The fall of communism and of the Soviet Union in 1989-1991 brought new territorial changes. The Baltic states regained their independence, followed by Lithuania and Ukraine. State censorship was abolished in all countries of the former Soviet block and it seemed that the official versions of history could be finally straightened up. However, the repressed memories neither disappear nor accommodate to the changing world, but instead tend to stay in a petrified form. Abolishing censorship resurrected the suppressed old nationalistic myths and thus revealed new biases in historical memories. It was not enough, then, to get rid of the official Soviet version of history; much more challenging is combating the traditional views of national history, some of which date as far back as the 19th century. Until today Poles are struggling with the myth of Poland as a great martyr of Europe, with the nostalgic myth of the lost eastern territories, and with idealization of the interwar period. Analogous myths, although differing in content, prevail in countries of the former Soviet Union and - needless to say - they are greatly at variance with

the Polish views. The integration of these discrepant versions of history is thus badly needed.

The precious gift which the political transformations of 1989/1991 offered citizens of the former Soviet block was freedom of movement and thus encouragement to travel and enter informal contacts with people from neighboring countries. Paradoxically, when all these lands were parts of one Warsaw pact, visits to neighbors were limited to organized tours and summers spent in official holiday resorts (Crimea, Varna, Balaton lake etc.). Within the Soviet Union itself possibilities of free traveling were severely limited. The new times created new opportunities. One of the products of such opportunities are the studies presented here.
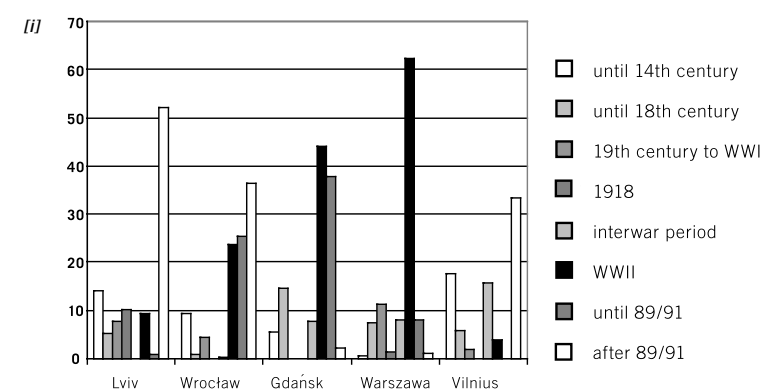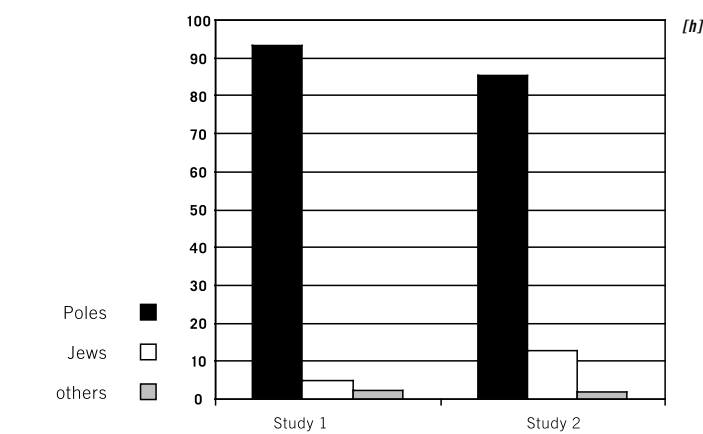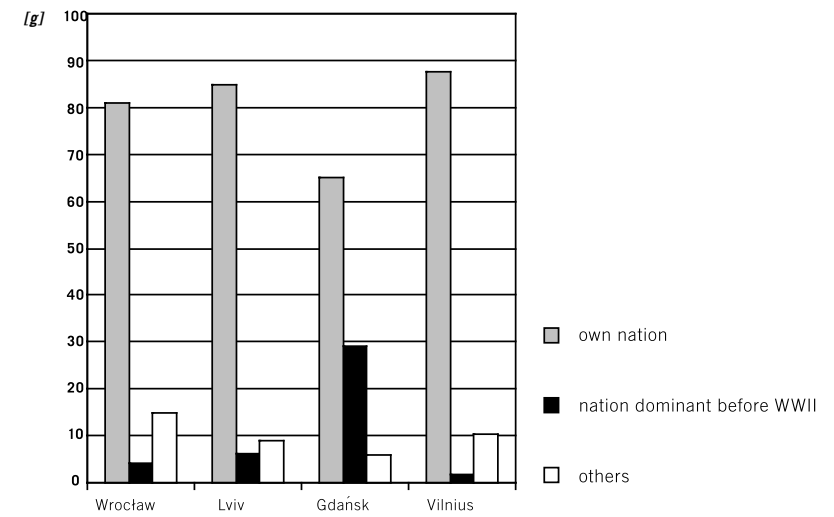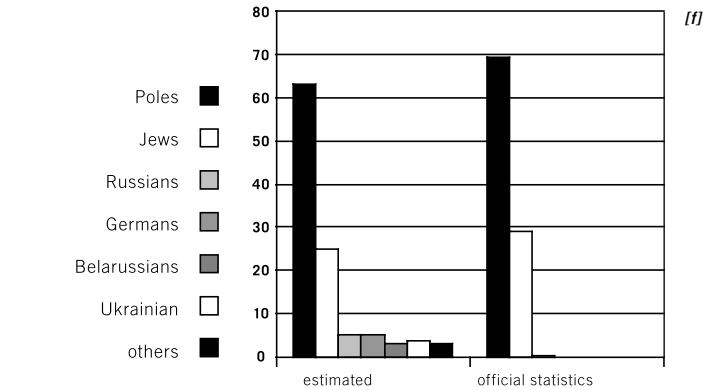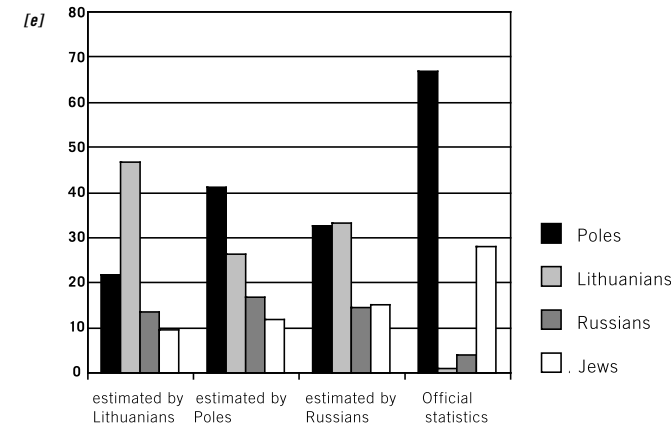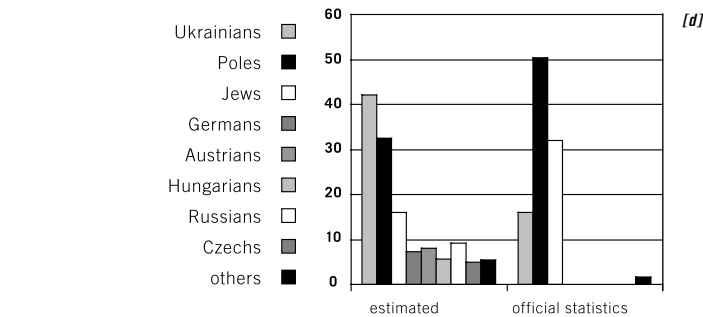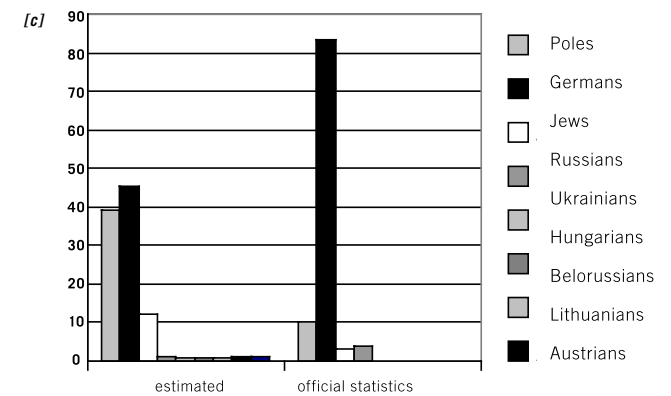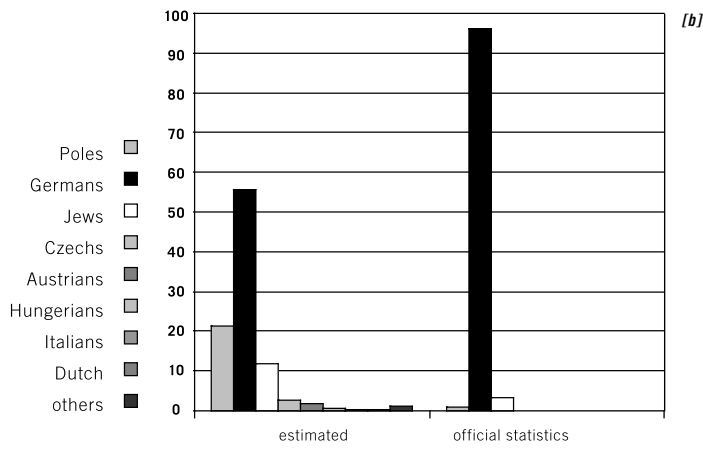
The results that I will briefly describe are part of a large research program on urban memory carried out at the Faculty of Psychology, University of Warsaw, in cooperation with several groups of students, both in Poland and abroad. The fact of being a descendant of Poles relocated from eastern territories (Lwów) made me often wonder whether the city of my forefathers, the way it was remembered by my parents, is also present in memories of its current inhabitants and – by analogy – whether cities remembered by the relocated Germans are also represented in memories of the Polish residents of Wrocław, Gdańsk, Szczecin or Olsztyn. These very private questions became the basis for the quickly developing research program, of which a few results I will report here.

We selected four cities that were deeply affected by the post-war transformations and that changed their state belonging after WWII: Wrocław/pre-war Breslau, Gdańsk/pre-war Danzig, Lviv/pre-war Lwów, and Vilnius/pre-war Wilno. The fifth city was Warszawa, included into the study because of the unprecedented war destructions and an almost total extermination of its 300,000 Jewish residents in Nazi camps. Our investigations were carried out in situ - residents of several districts in each city were interviewed at their homes. Three hundred residents were investigated in Wrocław, 200 in Lviv, 150 in Gdańsk, two studies were run in Warsaw, each with about 90 participants. Finally a pilot study with 51 participants was carried out in Vilnius.

We asked our participants several questions. The first question concerned an estimation of the national composition of the city just before the outbreak of the Second World War. In order to make the task easier, a list of ten different nationalities was provided that included the presently dominant ethnic group, the group dominant before WWII, and Jews. The names of several remaining ethnic groups were adjusted to the studied target city.

A question about the past national composition of a city is largely a projective question - very few people would know the correct answer. On the other hand, answers to this question may tell us a lot about the group attitude towards the place and towards its past. An ethnic group that wants to legitimize its unique rights to a place should emphasize its continuous presence in this place and thus overestimate both the group size and its historical significance throughout history, compared to the size and historical significance of other ethnic groups. This "historical ethnic bias" should be visible not only in overestimation of the relative group magnitude but also of its overall historical significance: important city persons enumerated should be from one's own ethnic group and important events in city history should commemorate the group presence in the city. For that reason the two other questions concerned significant figures and events in the city history.

Figures [b] to [d] present mean ratings of the pre-war national composition of three cities, Wrocław, Gdańsk and Lviv, compared to official statistics. As can easily be noticed, in all three cities the size of one's own group is greatly overestimated. According to participants from Wrocław, Poles constituted about 21 % of the pre-war city population, which is an overestimate by at least 20 percent. In Gdańsk the difference from official statistics was even higher and amounted to 29 percent which is far too much even compared to the most optimistic official demographics. In Lviv, the own (Ukrainian) group was overestimated by 26 percent and outnumbered the estimated size of the dominant group (Poles) which is in sharp contrast with reality [see Fig. d]. An interesting picture was provided by participants from Vilnius. Our investigation in Vilnius was a pilot study only but the obtained pattern of results is interesting enough to deserve place here. Vilnius is the only city among those studied that is still multicultural. Although Lithuanians now constitute the majority of the city population (57%), almost 19 percent of the present population are Poles and 14 percent are Russians. This is the reason why, by accident, the small sample also included a certain number of Poles and a few Russians. After having split the results between the three nationalities the following picture emerged [figure a,b,c,d,e] According to the official statistics, the pre-war Wilno was composed mainly of two nationalities: a Polish majority (over 60%) and a big Jewish minority (almost 30%). Lithuanians in the city were in an insignificant minority (the surrounding countryside was mostly Lithuanian, though). Figure 5 shows that Lithuanians perceived the pre-war Wilno as mostly Lithuanian, Poles as mostly Polish, and the few studied Russians gave both nations equal chances. Let us note, too, that - compared to official statistics – all three groups greatly overestimated the number of Lithuanians and that all of them

[b] Estimated national composition of Wrocław/Breslau before WWII, compared to official statistics

[c] Estimated national composition of Gdańsk/Danzig before WWII as compared to official statistics

[d] Estimated national composition of the pre-war Lviv/Lwów, compared to official statistics

[e] Estimated national composition of Vilnius/Wilno before WWII compared to official statistics

[f] Estimated national composition of Warsaw before WWII, compared to official statistics

[g] Famous citizens of four cities, as recalled by Poles (Wrocław & Gdańsk), Ukrainians (Lviv) and Lithuanians (Vilnius), according to their nationality

[h] Famous citizens of Warsaw according to nationality (two studies)

[i] Significant historical events in different time periods – comparison of five cities

[a]
Changing Polish borders

underestimated the number of Poles. Still, Lithuanians deviated from official statistics the most, while Poles were the most correct. Do Poles know better, then, or do they – like their Lithuanian co-citizens - display a similar, although reversed in direction, "historical ethnic bias"?.

No striking bias was obtained in Warsaw *[f]*. A slight deviation from the official statistics (underestimation of both Poles and Jews) was due to the false belief that Warsaw was more multiethnic than it was in reality, and thus to overestimation of the size of several other ethnic groups (Germans, Russians etc.).

A clear historical ethnic bias was revealed in recall of famous city persons *[g]*. By far the most important figures mentioned in the cities' history were of the same nationality as our respondents. The ethnically mixed group of Vilnius participants this time offered similar answers, although Adam Mickiewicz was relatively more often mentioned by Polish and Russian than by Lithuanian respondents. The classification of Mickiewicz, however, is extremely difficult: of Lithuanian origin but writing entirely in Polish about "Lithuania his fatherland", he is considered to be the greatest Polish romantic poet (although Polish children have severe problems understanding why they have to learn that "Lithuania is their country"), and he tends to be classified as Polish by Poles and as Lithuanian by Lithuanians. In our categorization system he was classified as "other".

The smallest historical ethnic bias in recall of city historical figures was observed in Gdańsk: the high bar that corresponds to the percent of mentioned German names is mostly due to a very high popularity of the writer Günter Grass on one hand, and Daniel Fahrenheit, on the other. In Wrocław the German names were largely scattered and none was mentioned more than a few times (the most popular was the architect, Max Berg). More popularity was gained by Wrocław Jews, both the pre-war German (Ferdinand Lasalle, Edith Stein) and the post-war Polish Jews (mathematician Hugo Steinhaus and microbiologist, Leopold Hirschfeld). In Lviv the second most popular category was "others" that was comprised mostly of Austrian writer Leopold von Sacher Masoch, and a few names of different nationalities (Russian, Italian, some Jews). The Polish presence was evidenced by names of several writers (e.g., Stanisław Lem, Alexander Fredro) and the mathematician Stefan Banach, and, needless to say, the number of mentioned Polish names underestimated the Polish contribution to the city history.

In Warsaw *[h]* the remembered famous Poles were in the majority and although this is not surprising considering the pre-war composition of the city and although almost all non-Polish names were Jewish, they were less frequently mentioned than expected. What clearly distinguishes answers of Warsaw respondents from those of other cities is a strong association of the most popular names with WWII. By far the highest rank in both studies was that of Stefan Starzyński, a heroic president of Warsaw during the German attack in September 1939, followed by heroes of the Warsaw uprising in 1944. The most popular Jewish names were leaders of uprising in ghetto in 1943 (Mordechaj Anielewicz, Marek Edelman). WWII is a stamp that entirely dominated the collective memory of Warsaw participants and this was further corroborated in their answers to the last question concerning significant events in city history.

In order to make the latter results comparable across cities, all mentioned events were categorized into historical periods *[i]*.

The period of WWII was obviously more significant for Polish than for Ukrainian or Lithuanian participants. In Wrocław the Second World War was a sort of a prelude to the "real history of the city". With the exception of the city origin and its first centuries marked with Polish rules (the Piast period), the representation of the history of Wrocław starts with Festung Breslau and with the incorporation of the city into Poland in 1945. The communist time is even better represented (Wrocław was indeed an important cultural site then), and the new post-communist epoch is filled with even more events.

In Gda sk the period between the 15th and the 18th century was relatively well remembered, which happens to be the time when Gdańsk belonged to the Polish Kingdom. The most important time period, though, was the Second World War (along with the later incorporation of Gdańsk into Poland). Next in significance was the post-war communist period (revolt of shipyard's workers in 1970, strikes and signing of agreements with the party representatives in the 80s, the Solidarity movement). In comparison, the post-communist years were of almost no importance.

As could be expected, the memory of Warsaw history was loaded entirely with WWII (unsuccessful defense in 1939, years of occupation, War-

saw uprising in 1944, uprising in the Jewish ghetto, systematic bombing of the city, etc.). An identical pattern of results was obtained in both studies carried out in Warsaw.

In contrast to the Polish cities, neither in Lviv nor in Vilnius was WWII given much attention and in several cases it was even commented on in a slightly positive tone. Memories of participants in both cities were first of all filled with events that happened after the two countries gained independence in 1991 (including the proclamation of independence itself). The second most often mentioned events were foundation of the cities and their location (historical periods associated with rules of Ruthenian or Lithuanian dukes). Soviet times were totally ignored in both cities, as were the interwar Polish times (in Vilnius the time was described as "the Polish occupation", in Lviv altogether ignored). The remaining events in Lviv were mostly related to the Ukrainian national awakening in the 19th century. In Vilnius a relatively often mentioned event was the politically neutral launching of the Vilnius University by the Polish-Lithuanian king, Stefan Batory.

CONCLUSION. Processes of globalization attract attention to local issues. People migrate and travel but this only makes them more attached to their permanent residence places and stimulates their interest in the place history. People throughout the world express more and more interest in their roots, and websites devoted to genealogical inquires flourish. Lost histories are recovered.

During the last 15 years, attempts to retrieve the forgotten past of the Central European cities were undertaken in many countries of this region. In Lviv the publishing house "Center of Europe" publishes books, guides, collections of old postcards and historical photographs of the city. In Wrocław local authorities sponsor publications on city history, including the monumental city monograph "Microcosm: A Portrait of a Central European City" by Norman Davis and Roger Moorhouse (2002), published simultaneously in three languages in three countries (Poland, Germany, and Great Britain). The Wroclaw author Marek Krajewski gained enormous popularity with his series of detective novels whose plots take place in the interwar Breslau and which picturesquely depict the climate of the pre-war city. In Gdańsk books on the city history appear, including a book written and published by the Polish present prime minister, Donald Tusk ("My Gdańsk"), whose multiethnic family history (Polish-Kashubian-German) gave him unique right to it. Conferences are organized that are entirely devoted to the multicultural past of the Central European cities (e.g. the international academies "The history takes place" organized by the German Zeit Stiftung Ebelin and Gerard Bucerius).

History is a politically sensitive and an easily manipulated subject. Most probably a fully integrated European history will never be written, but this does not mean that attempts should not be undertaken. The results that I tried to briefly present in this paper demonstrate how much is left to be done. Personally I believe that at least some integration of discrepant versions of history is possible. I therefore agree with James Fentress and Chris Wickham, two sociologists interested in issues of social memory, who wrote: "Social memory is, in fact, often selective, distorted, and inaccurate. None the less, it is important to recognize that it is not necessarily any of these; it can be extremely exact....the possibility of such accuracy shows that what distorts memory is not some inherent defect in the process of mental recall, but rather a series of external constraints, usually imposed by society – the constraints are the issue here, not the accuracy. Indeed the transmission of "true" information is only one of the many social functions that memory can, in different circumstances, perform" (Social memory, 1992, p. xi-xii).

APPENDIX: Wrocław (pre-war Breslau). The city, originally inhabited by Slavic ethnic groups (Polish and Czech), from the 13th century becomes multiethnic and then gradually germanized. Changes its state belonging several times, is a part of the Polish state until the 14th century, later Czech Kingdom, Hapsburg monarchy, Prussia, Germany, finally Poland (1945 – now). Its population just before WWII is almost homogeneously German with a small Polish minority (not more than 1%), and a small Jewish minority. The second German city after Berlin, an important university center before WWII (eight Nobel prize winners were associated with Breslau). During WWII converted into Festung Breslau and destroyed in high percentage due to war combats. One of the main >>

places of immigration of relocated Poles from Lwów and surrounding villages. After 1945 Wrocław accepted major Lwów institutions (University, Technical University, Ossolineum Library etc.). A city particularly subject to post-war ideological pressures, presented as a symbol of the "old lands of Piasts". A big Congress of Intellectuals was organized in 1948 in Wrocław to this purpose. Now a dynamically developing European city, with a strong and vibrant cultural and scientific life.

GDAŃSK (PRE-WAR DANZIG). Founded in 997 by the Polish Duke Mieszko I. Capital of the province of Pomerania. Since the 13th century, an increasingly important trading and fishing port on the Baltic sea. Conflictual area between Poland and the German principality of Brandenburg. Winding political history with a complex ethnic composition of the city and surroundings (German, Polish, Kashubian). From the 14th to the 15th century, property of Teutonic Order, until the second partition of Poland in 1793 part of Polish Kingdom, afterwards of Prussia, in 1920 proclaimed the Free City of Danzig (under League of Nations). Mostly German population of the city, varied statistics show 3 to 16 percent of Poles within the city population. In 1939 the WWII war started with the German army attacking the nearby Westerplatte after an unsuccessful claim to incorporate Danzig. Heavily destroyed during the war. After 1945 annexed together with the whole of Pomerania to Poland. Strong centre of shipyard industry. In 1970 place of the revolt against communism and in 1980 the agreements between the communist party leaders and the striking workers were signed here that legalized the independent trade union Solidarity, the first in the communist system.

WARSZAWA. Capital of Poland since 1596, before it a meeting place of local parliaments and elections of kings. Three times destroyed by Swedish armies in 17th century, followed by times of prosperity, cultural and urban development. During partitions of Poland (1772 – 1918) a part of the Russian empire, after Vienna Congress in 1815 a capital of the so called Polish Kingdom associated with Russia, since 1864 with less and less independence from Russia. After 1918 a fast developing capital of Poland. One third of the pre-war city population were Jews. German occupation during WWII was particularly hard in Warsaw. Warsaw Jews were almost totally exterminated, and after the Warsaw uprising in 1944 the city was systematically bombed. The postwar efforts went first of all into rebuilding the city, including the restoration of the original shape of the Old Town.

LVIV/PRE-WAR LWÓW. Capital of western Ukraine, founded in 1253, until the 14th century ruled by Ukrainian (Ruthenian) dukes, a part of the Polish kingdom since the 14th century. In 1772, after the first partition of Poland, incorporated into the Austrian monarchy. In 1867 under the name of Lemberg, becomes a capital of an autonomous province of Galicia within the Austro-Hungarian empire. In the 19th century a flourishing center of Polish culture and science (the famous Lwów-Warsaw logical-mathematical school originated here) and also an important center of national awakening among Ukrainians. A strong center of Jewish culture. In 1918 battles between Poles and Ukrainians over the future political status of the city end with Lwów becoming a part of the independent Poland. In the interwar period Poles constituted over 50% of the population, Jews over 30%, Ukrainians – 16%. During WWII Lwów mostly escaped material destructions but totally changed its population. The city's Jews were exterminated and in 1944-1946

Poles left the city. According to the treaty in Jalta Lwów was included into the Ukrainian Republic of Soviet Union, and since 1991 is a part of the independent Ukraine. At present the city has an almost entirely homogenous Ukrainian population.

VILNIUS/PRE-WAR WILNO. Founded in 1323 by the Lithuanian duke Gedyminas, and ruled by Lithuanian dukes. Since the 15th centuries the history of Poland and Lithuania become intertwined when the king of Poland becomes simultaneously the Great Duke of Lithuania. In 1569 the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth is created. Since the 16th century Vilnius/Wilno is a fast developing multicultural city with an increasing proportion of Poles. In 1578 the second oldest Polish university is founded here. After the third partition of Poland in 1795 Wilno becomes part of Russian empire and struggles with russification. An important university and cultural center. Mickiewicz studied and lived here. Big Jewish minority and important Jewish center of talmudism, known as "Jerusalem of the north". After WWI the conflict between Poles and Lithuanians over the future status of Vilnius (Polish or Lithuanian) led Poles to seize Wilno in 1920 and incorporate it into Poland. In the interwar period strong Polish and Jewish center, the two nations constitute the majority of the city population. After 1945 incorporated into the Soviet Union as capital of the Lithuanian Republic. In 1991 the heroic defense of the TV tower against Soviet attack after proclamation of independence by the Supreme Council of Lithuanian Soviet Republic. Since 1991 a fast developing capital of independent Lithuania. ☜