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MASS URBAN FESTIVALS IN UKRAINE (1950s to 1980s). RITUALS, LOCI AND ACTORS

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Rezumat

Sărbătorile în masă în orașele din Ucraina (anii 1950–1980). Ritualuri, locații și actori

Dacă subiectul ritualismului urban sovietic ca parte centrală a proiectului ideologic în istoriografie este reprezentat de multe lucrări științifice, atunci cultura rituală a locuitorilor orașelor ucrainene din perioada sovietică din anii 1950–1980 este încă puțin studiată. Acest articol, bazat pe analiza literaturii de cercetare, introducerea în circuitul științific și interpretarea surselor de arhivă, materialele de presă și mărturiile respondenților, examinează eforturile autorităților menite să creeze o atmosferă festivă pe străzile orașelor ucrainene. Autorul își propune să privească sărbătorile populare prin prisma abordării antropologice, evidențiind principalele ritualuri, locații, personaje. Pentru atingerea scopurilor studiului au fost utilizate metode științifice de interpretare analitică a surselor, analiză istorică comparativă, reconstrucție istorică și studii de caz. Concluziile subliniază existența în perioada studiată a unei atitudini contradictorii față de participarea la ritualurile sovietice ale cetățenilor, deoarece în același timp au înțeles caracterul coercitiv al sărbătorilor, dar au primit și unele oportunități de recreere în condițiile vieții cotidiene de rutină ale erei sovietice.

Cuvinte-cheie: sărbători sovietice, istoria Ucrainei, obiceiuri, cultura urbană, rituri, istoria URSS.

Резюме

Массовые городские праздники в Украине 1950–1980). Ритуалы, локусы, акторы

Если тематика советской городской ритуальности как центральной части идеологического проекта в историографии представлена во многих научных работах, то собственно обрядовая культура жителей украинских городов советского периода 1950–1980-х гг. все еще изучена недостаточно. В данной статье на основе анализа исследовательской литературы, введения в научный оборот и интерпретации архивных источников, а также материалов прессы и свидетельств респондентов рассматриваются усилия власти, направленные на создание праздничной атмосферы на улицах украинского города. Автор предлагает посмотреть на гражданские праздники сквозь призму антропологического подхода, выделяя основные ритуалы, локусы, действующих лиц. Для реализации поставленных задач использованы научные методы аналитической интерпретации источников, сравнительно-исторического анализа, исторической реконструкции и кейс-исследований. В выводах подчеркнута существование в исследуемый период противоречивого отношения к участию в советских ритуалах граждан, поскольку те понимали принудительность характера празднований, но и одновременно получали некоторые возможности отдыха в условиях рутинной повседневности советского времени.

Ключевые слова: советские праздники, история

Украины, обряды, городская культура, ритуалы, история СССР.

Summary

Mass urban festivals in Ukraine (1950s to 1980s). Rituals, loci and actors

If the subject of Soviet urban ritualistic as the central part of the ideological project in historiography is represented by many scientific works, then the ritual culture of the inhabitants of Ukrainian cities of the Soviet period of the 1950–1980s is still insufficiently studied. This article, based on the analysis of research literature, the introduction into scientific circulation and interpretation of archival sources, as well as press materials and testimonies of respondents, examines the efforts of the authorities aimed at creating a festive atmosphere on the streets of the Ukrainian city. The author proposes to look at the civil holidays through the prism of the anthropological approach, highlighting the main rituals, loci, and characters. To achieve the objectives of the research, scientific methods of analytical interpretation of sources, comparative historical analysis, historical reconstruction and case studies were used. The conclusions emphasize the existence in the specified period of a contradictory attitude towards citizens' participation in Soviet rituals, since they simultaneously understood the coercive nature of the celebrations, but also received some opportunities for recreation in the conditions of routine everyday life of the Soviet era.

Key words: Soviet holidays, history of Ukraine, ceremonies, urban culture, rituals, history of the USSR.

The purpose of the article is to analyze the nature, scenarios, methods of organization and composition of participants of Soviet holiday events that took place in the cities of Ukraine in the 1950s–1980s through the prism of an anthropological approach. In order to study the transformations of the locative-action aspects of mass city celebrations in the specified chronological period, the author made some retrospective comparisons with the phenomena that arose during the period of formation and the establishment of Soviet ritualism (20s–40s of the XX century).

Achieving the stated goal requires solving the following scientific tasks: consideration of historiography, characteristics of the source base, study on this factual basis of locations, forms and course of mass Soviet holidays in Ukrainian cities in the 1950s–1980s, scientific generalization and outline of prospects for further researches on the topic. The article is written using methods of analytical inter-

pretation of sources, comparative-historical analysis, historical reconstruction and case studies.

The research is based on the interpretation of archival sources introduced into scientific circulation. The main array of data is contained in the files of the former archive of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine, which are now stored in the Central State Archives of Public Organizations of Ukraine (further – CSAPO of Ukraine). Since the top leadership of the country was extremely careful about holding celebrations, the analyzed documents reflect plans for holding demonstrations, as well as reports from local branches of the party. Valuable facts about the features of Soviet holidays in different cities of Ukraine can also be found in the funds of the Central State Archives of Supreme Authorities and Governments of Ukraine (further – CSASAG of Ukraine). The work also used press reports that described the celebration process in sufficient detail. In particular, the corresponding content of the newspaper “Evening Kyiv” of that time was characterized. It should be noted that in recent years, based on the author’s questionnaire, 100 interviews were recorded on this topic, which are stored in the archive of the Department of Ethnology and Local Lore of Taras Shevchenko Kyiv National University. The informational potential of these ethnographic sources is quite significant and will be considered in detail by the author in a separate publication. The testimonies of respondents included in this article are given to additionally outline some trends of Soviet city celebrations from the standpoint of direct participants of these mass events.

Although the general features of Soviet mass celebrations are quite widely reflected in historiography, the specifics of such actions in Ukrainian cities during the 1950s and 1980s have not been studied enough, which updates the need for a special paper. Let’s outline the basic scientific works on the topic. First of all, one should mention Malte Rolf’s monograph *Soviet Mass Festivals*, which is probably the most frequently cited work on this issue. This is one of the first investigations to examine the genesis of festive ritualism in the USSR (Рольф 2009). The author first identified the syncretism of Soviet rites, their connection with the folk fair culture, state imperial ceremonies and the early XX-century festive culture. A similar conclusion is reached by the Russian researcher V. Glebkin, who also connects Soviet rituals with ecclesiastical or folk tradition (Глебкин 1998). In general, many

other modern authors (Курочкін 2021; Киридон 2017; Тарапон 2016) also emphasize that the latest holidays in the XX century have replaced banned religious rituals. However, treating Soviet ritualism as a form of political religion in modern science is questionable. In particular, it is worth mentioning the article by Eric van Ree, who accentuates that it was public and mass rituals that distinguished the Stalinist culture from a religious system (Van Ree 2016). One should agree with the author that the existence of rituals similar to religious ones does not automatically mean the existence of a new religion.

Practices of ritual dialogue between the authorities and the people in the last years of the Stalinist regime were studied by S. Yekelchuk (Єкельчук 2018). Generally, scholars see in the ritual culture of Stalinism a way of communication between the power and the population. For example, C. Lane believes that for all the variety of Soviet holidays (many of which were simply modified traditional festivals), they all share common values (Lane 1984: 208). The author sees this common sense in strengthening the legitimacy of both the Soviet political and social system, and the place of the elite in this system. A similar sentence can be also found in O. Barysheva’s PhD thesis, who studies Soviet festive rituals as a channel for transmitting key messages aimed at broad sections of population in order to further consolidate them (Барышева 2020). In particular, V. Somov points out the ideological influence on the young generation as the key to the formation of the so-called “Soviet man” (Сомов 2015).

In the historiography of the 1980s and 1990s, there was a rather original attempt to link the newest festivals to the human agrarian calendar, as these newest festivals often coincide in time with ancient traditional holidays (Rihtman-Augustin 1990: 104).

If the formation of Soviet rituals in the 1920s and 1930s has been studied thoroughly, there are very few works dedicated to the late Soviet era. O. Penkova’s thesis are one of the earliest studies of Soviet rituals in modern Ukrainian historiography (Пенькова 2006). The author has been collecting material for a long time, having in her work several dozen interesting ethnographic records, which reveal people’s attitudes to the holidays of that time. An article by C. Kelly and S. Sirotinina (Келли, Сиротинина 2008) also embraces considerable ethnographic material.

Ukrainian historians used to consider mainly

the formation of the Soviet calendar as a tool in fighting against the population's religiosity, while my task is instead considering Soviet holidays in the context of the culture itself and determining their function and significance for the very urban residents.

Revolutionary festivals of the modern time have much in common with modern ceremonies and influenced the entire ceremonial urban culture of the XX century and their echoes can be found in many state holidays in modernity. For the first time, we observe a purposeful man-made creation of a special hierarchical space intended for holding festive ceremonies and combining civil, military, and spiritual (ideological) power, which acts as a joint representative of the national state, as well as visualizing symbols of this state and their exploitation during holidays, and forming a whole layer of a new musical-singing culture, based on popular folkloric motifs. It was this type of new state (secular) holiday that was formed in the XIX century. On such a day, amnesty decrees were issued, the best citizens were awarded, distinguished figures of the state appeared on honorary rostra, symbolizing thus unity with people. Festive ceremonies according to the same scenario took place in republican capitals and on their periphery, while the decoration (i.e., demonstrations, parades, illuminations) of a state holiday was based on secular art and deprived of religious accents (Жигульский 1985: 145).

The authorities tried to create the most large-scale picture of the celebration, since the involvement of the giant masses of people in festive ceremonies was to show sincere mass support for the regime among the population. At the same time, the involvement of a huge number of people required from the organizers of a holiday an incredible effort to ensure that the festive action took place precisely as planned. According to the famous Ukrainian ethnologist O. Kurochkin, all measures were thoroughly prepared and planned and the scenarios approved by the party authorities that ruled out any initiative (Курочкін 2021: 72).

On the eve of any celebration, the party authorities prepared a *sermon's* text, which corresponded to current political tasks and was verified and checked dozens of times. Upon making the text conforming to the utmost, it was printed in a party typography with a large press-run and sent throughout the republic (CSAPO of Ukraine, F. 1, inv. 70, d. 2206, f. 3). Afterwards, a few days before the ritual date, *solemn services* were held. On

military ships, in factories, schools, and institutions throughout the country, absolutely identical readings of the same text took place. The agitators specially trained by district and regional committees were sent to all institutions, where they had to read the text related to celebrations of May 1 or November 7. For example, in 1952, during the celebration of the October coup's anniversary, party bodies had to assign 2,778 trained agitators that were obliged to read this *sacred* text in a solemn atmosphere (CSAPO of Ukraine, F. 1, inv. 30, d. 2756, f. 162). No own interpretation of the text was welcomed, a lecturer could only provide answers to the listeners' questions and, that only within the written text.

Simultaneously with official ceremonies, rituals were held that supported the initiative of broad masses and attracted many people as participants or spectators. In contrast to the bureaucratic procedures that took place in special buildings, the festivals spilled along the streets, parks and public gardens. Quite often, unofficial measures turned into urban carnivals, which are a customary attribute of urban leisure. Disguises and masquerade define a festive action in many countries and cultures. In Soviet mass culture, the theatrical elements were very important. The largest carnival surge was recorded during the 1927 celebration of the October coup's 10th anniversary in Kyiv.

At that time, there was a reproduction of revolutionary events with the imitation of horse attack and shooting in downtown. Together with the reconstruction of hostilities, which were still fresh in the memory of many Kyivans, there was also a costume parade, in which all the *evildoers* and *forces of evil* (*bourgeois, priests, policemen, imperialists, etc.*) were involved, which had to make Soviet average people simultaneously afraid and laugh.

In the post-war period, burlesque elements disappeared out of festive demonstrations and theatrical events occurred only during the 1967 great celebration of the October coup's 50th anniversary. However, mass celebrations with disguises and theatrical actions did not disappear, but shifted in space and time. In the 1960s, various entertaining, theatrical events that took place outdoors in the summer became popular. It was the summer when most of the corporate and citywide holidays held on the banks of rivers, lakes, in parks and public gardens took place. It was during the celebration of festival holidays (Aviation Day, Navy Day, etc.), which took place mainly on the banks of reservoirs, or somewhere in parks and public gardens, there

were quite many elements of carnival and laughing culture. For example, during the celebration of the Navy Day in Kyiv in 1959, there were a lot of amusing attractions on the banks of the Dnipro River, namely gymnastics on the rings, synchronized swimming, comic diving into water, carnival, concert and even salute (CSASAG of Ukraine, F. 1, inv. 31, d. 1222, f. 89).

Most of these actions which were attempted to be introduced in the lives of the USSR people at that time look ridiculous and naive nowadays as well. Fair events required applying certain symbols that the Soviet propaganda had selected and formed in previous years. Most of these symbols had political origin and were sacred for power and therefore using them in the farcical actions was inadmissible. Satirical images of the *military communism* era have long lost their relevance for a post-war generation. Thus, a certain symbolic vacuum was formed, which in the 1960s characters from popular culture began to fill out. In the mid-1960s, the political component of a holiday gradually departed into the background, but its entertainment component became more important (Келли, Сиротинина 2008: 270). It was at this time that Soviet holidays covered a much larger audience than in the 1930s and thus given the further differentiation of festive culture (Рольф 2009: 346). Festivals grew in number, and more people were attracted to celebrate. Even the Soviet guards of cultural changes were to admit that more and more *red-letter days* were related not to any political events, but with: *the nature of workers' activities and create the calendar of a city's life* (Орлов 1981: 52). The new festive calendar often rotated around events that contributed to the formation of local identity and had a citywide or corporate character. Respondents often mention that during this period in their towns there appeared holidays, which were especially respected by townspeople. In Donetsk, where many miners lived, the Miner's Day was widely celebrated, while the Navy Day – in Odesa and other port cities.

New urban holidays grew in popularity among townsfolk. One can describe how these holidays occurred. During the opening of a reservoir in Maryinka (Donetsk Region), an interesting performance was held. The first part of the festival was filled with ritual Soviet actions – proclaiming speeches, writing telegrams to leaders of the party and government, greetings and delivery of awards and diplomas, while the second one has turned into a real theatre of absurd: *From boats and motor-launches*

approaching the dam come The Watery (suited as Neptune), Mermaid-Princess (in an elegant suit with kokoshnik), field and water mermaids, as well as girls in national Ukrainian costumes with willow branches and flowers... The Mermaid-Princess in a verse form congratulates collective farmers and wants them to achieve high yields and to get rid of drought forever. In the hands of the Watery, there is a symbolic key from the "Maryinka Sea", which he hands to its owners. Kupala songs are resounded, wreaths are thrown into the water, and multicoloured balloons and rockets fly into the sky (CSAPO of Ukraine, F. 1, inv. 70, d. 2553, f. 51-52).

A similar history with the celebration of the Ivana-Kupala Feast was described by Yu. Kahanov as well. Soviet cultural workers have mingled girls-mermaids with Komsomol members, mixed the Kupala tree, which is a pagan symbol of festival calendar holidays, with a red flag, participants of the celebration simultaneously sang the *Song about Shchors* and Kupaylo Songs. Soviet culture managers could use in one rite the traditional ancient pre-Christian symbols (viburnum, willow branch, periwinkle, embroidered towel) along with a red flag, red star, Grandpa Frost and Snow Maiden (Карапов 2019: 318).

As noted by L. Lebedeva, in the first years of Soviet power, there was no family and household component in new holidays; they were positioned as public events (Лебедева 2015: 1785). Consequently, the circle of participants could not be great either, as to involve a large number of people in these celebrations was difficult. In the 1920s, many workers worked in private enterprises, their dependence on the party apparatus was minimal, and participation in such events could really be voluntary. And the percentage of proletariat among the urban population was not so great. For most townspeople, numerous street actions, which often occurred in the same scenario, were foreign and caused just an ordinary interest or even irritation. The Ukrainian scholar S. Yefremov, who had not any sentiments to Bolshevik experiments repeatedly emphasized in his diaries the formal character of celebrations in the 1920s: *Yesterday's demonstrations were reportedly pale, sluggish and manifested nothing but fatigue* (Єфремов 1997: 689).

In the 1950s, the authorities could use a lot of means to mobilize the maximum number of participants. Engaging in a festive procession was the manifestation of loyalty, as the duty to celebrate

directly originates from belonging to a group and recognition as both the idea of holiday and the form of celebration (Жигульский 1985: 103). It was at this time that the party elite formed the basic concept of holidays whose basis was mass character. Since 1951, columns of demonstrators had begun to form on a territorial basis. Each urban district received a task of collecting approximately the same number of participants. Sometimes residents of distant areas, especially in such large cities as Kyiv, might not participate in a demonstration at all. In the 1950s, the authorities managed to reach the peak of mass participation of all layers of urban population in demonstrations. According to official reports, there were about 400 thousand people participating in a festive procession in the capital of the Ukrainian SSR in the mid-1950s. There were also about 100–200 thousand participants in regional centers. Such a huge number of demonstrators was achieved at the expense of *mobilization* of schoolchildren and students. In the 1950s, a column of demonstrators was headed by children who could be gathered and involved in celebrations in an organized way through the school network. Sometimes instead of children, a column could be led by *physical educators* – athletes who were united in sports societies and sections.

However, at the turn of the 1960s and 1970s, the situation changed. The number of participants continued to grow, but their composition became a bit different. If to analyze the plan of events, it becomes noticeable that workers had long been no majority in these events. Most among the demonstrators were employees and students. It was these categories of the urban population that were best subjected to various forms of compulsion. The structure of the festive column has changed as well. In the latter part of the 1960s, honored figures began to appear at the head of the column. In 1970, during the celebration of Lenin's jubilee, the column was headed by winners of socialist competition, veterans, leaders of Communist party and Komsomol committees, shock workers, etc. These were people considered by the authorities as loyal as possible to the regime. Instead, children and youth were placed to the rear of the festive demonstration (Жигульский 1985: 105). Such an order of passage of the column was kept until the end of the USSR.

The entire scheme of participants' location and the order of procession were determined in relation to the main point of a holiday – the rostrum. If in the mediaeval era, the crowd came to look at a monarch

as a miracle, then in the latest time, on the contrary, the people walked to the authorities to give party bosses a chance to look at them and be inspired by popular support. People walking in festive columns carried slogans that had been approved by those standing on the rostrum. Townsfolk carried their portraits, and even brought symbolic gifts to their bosses. The demonstration's destination became the tribune, because in the spatial transcription, it was the tribune that completed the movement from the periphery to the center. S. Yekelchyk wrote that propagandists have turned most of the important events into a thanksgiving ritual (Єкельчик 2018: 57).

Participants of a demonstration went to celebrate not empty-handed. They carried peculiar symbolic gifts related to a holiday, which were a mandatory attribute of a festive ritual. The nature of gifts was determined by the political situation. Most often, townspeople reported to a rostrum in fulfilling and over fulfilling orders and decrees of the party top. They carried product models or even their symbolic images. For example, in 1951, children had to carry model of planes, ships, radio receivers past the tribune, thus reporting on their achievements. Interestingly, young men who were engaged in circles of young naturalists carried living rabbits and pigeons to the rostrum. The children had to release the pigeons right in front of the podium where the leadership stood (CSAPO of Ukraine, F. 1, inv. 30, d. 2326, f. 162).

The biggest problem faced by party leaders was to maintain a balance between a holiday and an organized procession. In case of loss of control and insufficient planning, the demonstration simply could turn into a sluggish walk, a saunter, as it happened when conducting a May Day demonstration in Kyiv in 1945 (Єкельчик 2018: 61). Although Bolsheviks all the time emphasized the mass character and spontaneity of civil rituals in the USSR, in reality, from the first days of dissemination of Soviet holidays, ideologists of the new regime (A. Lunacharsky) had argued that the self-organization of masses, without guidance, always turns into a crowd that wanders aimlessly (Шумихина, Попова 2012: 207).

To make the columns of demonstrators look like an unconstrained festive procession, the authorities determined the entire composition and appearance of its participants. Children were required to wear festive clothes and carry flowers. Brass bands were also to march in the column, among which there were *accordionists and organizers of massive entertaining events* (CSAPO of Ukraine,

F. 1, inv. 30, d. 3248, f. 114). The latter term meant cultural workers who had to excite the column of demonstrators with shouts, jokes and singing. Already as early as in the 1960s, many respondents indicated that participating in a demonstration was a duty, yet it simultaneously caused them joyful emotions. A female respondent born in 1947 mentioned the coercion to celebrate: *There were given orders in factories or enterprises. A Komsomol organizer could be told that he had 20 people at the enterprise, while he brought only 5 of them. Then there could be problems. However, everyone went with pleasure and joy* (II). Interestingly, the respondents themselves did not deny the fact of coercion to participate in a holiday: *There were moments when the authorities came to a workshop or a brigade and said: If you don't attend a demonstration, we'll withdraw the award. This happened too. Everything could happen. But mostly it was fun, it was interesting, music was playing, an orchestra was playing* (I).

M. Rolf claimed that the compulsory nature of celebration and an opportunity for informal private communication led to an emotional split personality (Рольф 2009: 347). However, nowadays we do not have such data that could show us this crisis. On the contrary, the Soviet ritual culture contributed to the weakening of this contradiction, it was able to reconcile this internal conflict, but again, not without the participation of the state.

Girls and boys surrounded the accordionist Dmytro Zarudnyi in a close circle. Applauded by attendees, a young man performs chastivky (doggerels), humorous songs. Next to him, pupils of the river college sing "Moscow Nights". Dozens of voices catch up the familiar tune (Дерезе 1962). This is the way the press of that time described the celebration of folk festivals, which were often mentioned by respondents as well. In the post-Soviet reflection of a recent historical past, alongside pictures of poverty and scarcity, one can often see a smiling image of a Soviet man during the celebration of some next red-letter day. The image of eternal holiday, with which the Soviet chronotope was filled, created a stereotype of permanent joy, gaiety, zeal and high spirits, which became quite enduring in post-Soviet Ukraine. Of course, festive atmosphere is an important holiday attribute and exists in any culture, but only in the Soviet daily life, the expression of joy and merriment was a matter of state importance. The authorities could not leave even the festive mood of their citizens unmonitored.

Ethnologists find it difficult to structure such a form of celebration as a stroll, as it is a fairly new element of leisure practices which have gained popularity in the XX century. In the 1950s–1960s, central party bodies planned *folk walking* of townspeople as a military operation – thoroughly and scrupulously. In urban centers, at a short distance from each other there were located the most powerful means of sound influence. Around monuments, on squares and in parks, where was the largest flow of townspeople, theatrical groups well-known in a town or in the whole Ukrainian SSR performed. All theatres, from the academic ones to the young spectator theatres, were obliged to prepare their own programs consisting of poetry, dances and singing. According to a plan, they used to start their performance at 7 pm and change the location immediately in an hour. Often, such collectives were strengthened by a car on which the sound amplifiers were mounted. A little further from the central part of a town, mainly in parks and public gardens, lesser-known, mostly amateur groups, worked while on the outskirts, where factory and student clubs were located, there was loud music played and songs sung, and factory and student amateur activities were performed. According to a plan of preparation for celebrating May 1, Komsomol authorities and bodies of culture departments at city councils should provide celebrations with organizers of massive entertaining events, as well as accordianists and brass bands (CSAPO of Ukraine, F. 1, inv. 30, d. 2326, f. 186). Komsomol City Committees have also assigned a group of 5–10 young people who were to be present in a square for some time and sing festive songs there. In some cases, when the distance between the centers of sound influence on citizens was too large, a *musical patrol* began to operate between the squares. Such a patrol, which consisted of an accordionist and an organizer of massive entertaining events, moved over a predetermined route and created an additional audio influence on citizens even in remote areas. An outsider, who was unacquainted with the preparation for a holiday, used to see a picture in which people just walked *to accidentally* meet at intersections of streets or in parks, to sing and dance. This is the way it was seen by journalists who wrote that joyful holiday songs and dances arose everywhere – on a town's outskirts and in an urban downtown (Варванцев, Димирець 1955). During May Day festivities in Kyiv in 1964, 45 concert groups were involved, about 30 wind orchestras played, while

the total number of people, who created a festive mood on this day in the city, amounted to 2000 people (Виходьте 1964). Thus, the holiday gradually spread to the whole city, moving from its center to the outskirts. In this, we see the features of the chronotope of the Soviet celebration, which exists in the form of dynamic multilayer festive procedure. This festive scenario includes official actions filled with bureaucratic formalized rituals, as well as the very process of celebration, characterized by free behavior, and sometimes even anti-behavior.

Thus, we see that during the 1950s and 1980s, as well as throughout the entire existence of the Soviet system, there was a contradictory attitude of citizens towards participation in Soviet rituals. On the one hand, people understood the compulsory nature of celebrations, and on the other, they were able to enjoy the opportunity to break even for a brief moment out of the grey Soviet routine. This paradox – an incompatible conflict of the freedom of celebration and the compulsory nature of ritual – is, in my opinion, a key feature of Soviet ritual culture. Properly, the combination of *voluntary* and *compulsory* in one phenomenon is a specific feature of Soviet culture, while mass rituals were a form of external reconciliation of this conflict. However, the final merger of the *political* and *household*, or *leisure*, aspects of festivals did not occur. They were separated in time and in space. The private component of celebrations shifted away from downtown, often even outside a town, into parks, gardens and on the shores of reservoirs, where political control was weakened or missing. The further development of the specified scientific issue is connected with the involvement in the analysis of new archival documents, photo and video sources, as well as the interpretation of field ethnographic materials, in particular, recordings of interviews with respondents, which will be implemented by the author in the following papers.

List of informants

I. Diomydovych Volodymyr, b. in 1931. Recorded by A. Maltsev. Odesa, August, 8, 2017.

II. Rudenko L., b. in 1947. Recorded by O. Balausha. Kyiv, June, 2, 2017.

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