



Convoy of historical vehicles in Brno in 2015.

author: Puczmeloun / source: Wikimedia Commons: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:2015_anniversary_of_the_liberation_of_Brno#/media/File:Oslavy_70._v%C3%BDro%C4%8D%C3%AD_osvobozen%C3%AD_Brna,_n%C3%A1m%C4%9Bsti_Svobody_02.jpg

Shifting Attitudes Toward the Second World War Commemorations in the Czech Republic

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This article explores public opinion, commemorations and debates surrounding the 70th anniversary of the end of the Second World War and traces commemoration-related changes since 1989 in the Czech Republic. It argues that the period of essentially ignoring the memories of the former communist narrative has come to an end: we now see a tendency to retrieve those former memories and, as a result, there is greater pluralism in the narration of the past in the public space.

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Shifting Attitudes Toward the Second World War Commemorations in the Czech Republic

After the end of the communist regime in Czechoslovakia, a process of pluralisation began to emerge: memories, commemorative forms, and local attitudes toward the commemoration of the end of the Second World War started taking new shape. Memories that were oppressed before 1989 became dominant, while the former "official memories" were pushed into the background. This article explores public opinions, debates and commemorations surrounding the 70th anniversary of the end of the war and further attempts to trace the changes that have occurred in the annual commemorations since 1989. It argues that the period of essentially ignoring the memories of the former communist narrative has come to an end: we now see a tendency to retrieve those former memories and, as a result, diverse narratives in the public space now have the possibility to coexist.

"In Europe, the lifting of the barriers between East and West brought to an end an era of memories frozen under the ice of two rigidly opposed doctrines." – Aleida Assmann.^[1]

Aleida Assmann's description of the transformation process that began with the end of the Cold War and has since changed memory cultures in Europe, gives quite an accurate picture of the development of end of the Second World War commemorations in the Czech Republic. These commemorations began to take shape following the 1989 Velvet Revolution that put an end to the forty-year era of communist rule. With the establishment of the new democratic regime, many different memories that were oppressed because of their inconsistency with the official communist narrative began to surface and either became part of the new interpretation of national history, or entered into local commemorative events. This is not to say that those memories were gone during the communist dictatorship and appeared again all of a sudden. Although they were not allowed to be expressed in public, they survived in the individual minds of the people.

Before 1989, the official narrative of the end of the Second World War consisted primarily of the liberation of Czechoslovakia by the heroic Red Army. This narrative was used to legitimise the Czechoslovak foreign policy orientation and its close ties with the Soviet Union. Commemoration on 9 May was celebrated with innumerable articles in the media, grandiose ceremonies, and "litanies of thanks".^[2] The celebrations were planned in great detail and organised by the Party several months in advance so that there was no space for local or individual memories – let alone memories that did not fit well into the communist narrative. As such, it is not surprising that the following events were not allowed to be commemorated by textual, visual, or performative means: the liberation of Pilsen and Western Bohemia by the US Army, the fact that the anti-communist Vlasov Army supported the Prague Uprising,^[3] non-communist groups who also participated in the Uprising, and the suffering of minority groups (German, Jewish, Roma etc.). Plaques, statues, or memorials dedicated to these events were removed from public space after the communist coup d'état in 1948.

With the regime change in 1989, various memories that were taboo, or in Assmann's words "frozen" for about forty years, entered public debates as well as public space. Streets were renamed, new memorial plaques installed, old monuments toppled and new ones erected. In Pilsen, for example, a plaque commemorating the liberation by the US and Belgian troops was already renewed in 1990 on the occasion of the first celebration of this event. After years of downplaying the role of the Western armies in the liberation of Czechoslovakia, Pilsen became the city with the largest celebrations of the end of the Second World War. Indeed, the Freedom Festival, as the celebrations were called, received wide media

coverage. In 1991, "Moscow Street" – one of the main avenues in Pilsen – was renamed "America Street", and in 1995, the memorial "Thank you, America!" was inaugurated.

Needless to say, Pilsen was not the only city that dusted off memories omitted in the communist narrative: new memorials were erected throughout the territory to remind the Czechs of the suffering minorities. In 2004, for example, a Holocaust memorial was built in the central Moravian town Valašské Meziříčí.^[4] Moreover, numerous plaques were installed in remembrance of the expelled Germans.^[5] In many other towns and villages that were liberated by the Western Allied troops, plaques, statues and new street names occurred. But the most visible symbol of the reinterpretation of the end of the Second World War in the Czech Republic was the decision to move the commemorative day from 9 May (as celebrated in Russia) to 8 May (as celebrated in Europe) and to rename it, "Day of Liberation from Fascism" instead of the former, "Day of Victory over Hitler's Fascism and Liberation of our Homeland by the Soviet Army". With this symbolic act, the Czech Republic demonstrated its attachment to Europe and its separation from the Russian-oriented tradition.

It was not only the post-1989 rediscovered memories that had an impact on the commemoration of the end of the Second World War. The aversion to Russia, which spread across Central Europe in the 1990s, was an important factor as well. After years of exorbitant celebrations of the Soviet Army, Czechs were reluctant to honour the Soviet soldiers that they had recently associated more with the occupation of 1968 than with the liberation of 1945. Moreover, the term "liberation" itself was questioned and labelled as inappropriate for the events of 1945 because, as several participants stressed in the debates on this topic, this so-called liberation was followed by another period of totalitarian dictatorship. The visible consequences of this more negative attitude towards the Soviet role in the Second World War were the desecrations and removals of Soviet Army memorials. The Monument to Soviet Tank Crews – a tank installed in Prague in remembrance of the arrival of the Soviet soldiers – was first painted pink by a Czech artist and later removed completely from the prominent square in Prague's fifth district. Of course, not all of the much-debated Soviet monuments were removed or destroyed: many monuments remained in place but were not properly maintained and began to crumble. Moreover, the annual celebrations in the cities liberated by the Red Army became more moderate and were overshadowed by celebrations in Pilsen and other Western Bohemian cities – the tide had turned.

To Celebrate or Not: Debates on the Meaning of the Liberation of Czechoslovakia

Gradually, the strongly hostile emotions against Russia faded away. This is not to say that they disappeared completely; rather, Czech public opinion towards Russia became more differentiated encompassing both positive and negative experiences in mutual relations. Hence, the celebrations of the end of the Second World War became more multifaceted and the debates on this topic seemed to lose emotional charge. On the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, Czech President Klaus warned against evaluating the liberation through the lens of events that followed it, especially the communist dictatorship.^[6] In Opava, a memorial to a Soviet soldier, which was supposed to be removed due to reconstruction of the central square, was merely moved to a new location. It is very likely that if the reconstruction had taken place in the 1990s, the memorial would have been removed altogether. Instead of modest wreath-laying ceremonies held by officials and omitted by the media (which were typical of the previous period), towns liberated by the Soviet Army began to celebrate their liberation with programmes that were more attractive to the general public. Of course, those celebrations were far away from the grand Freedom Festival in Pilsen, but they still indicated a more positive attitude towards liberation by the Soviets. Overall, the impression emerged that after years of strongly

ideologically charged celebrations, it is possible to move to a more nuanced view of the end of the Second World War; a view that would incorporate different aspects of this event and allow a dispassionate debate on its key issues.

However, the 2014 Crimean crisis affected this development and once more flared up debates on the "correct" way to commemorate. The effects of this crisis became apparent on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the end of the Second World War in 2015, especially in connection with Czech President Zeman's decision to attend victory celebrations in Moscow. Several Czech public figures criticized this decision because of Russia's aggressive behaviour in the Ukraine. One argument that was expressed repeatedly is that it is inappropriate to celebrate the end of an occupation in a country that itself is currently occupying another country. Or as the writer Miloš Urban formulated: "Why 'celebrate' the end of an long-past war when Russia is provoking a new war?"^[7] The journalist Bohumil Doležal took it even further: he saw Zeman's decision as a violation of Czech national interests because, as Doležal predicts, Russia, if not stopped soon, will continue to revise the results of the Cold War and once again threaten Czech territory.^[8]

Of course, the President's decision was not only met with criticism, but also with approval. The communist politician Ladislav Kašuka interpreted Zeman's trip to Moscow as a sign of a history-conscious attitude that does not misuse contemporary political struggles for boycotting the memory of such important historical events that should never be forgotten.^[9] And there were more supporters, not just communist voices that called for a division between the present political situation and the commemoration of the past. In most cases, they favoured Zeman's attendance of the ceremony honouring Soviet soldiers killed in the Second World War, but they were against his attendance of the military parade. In the end, Zeman relented and decided to miss the parade and only participate in the wreath-laying ceremony.

But the mere discussion about the "right" attitude in this situation showed how controversial these historical issues still are and to what extent they can be (mis-)used in the political struggle. Furthermore, the heated debate was not limited to the political arena, but also spread amongst the scholars. Historian Jan Němeček expressed regret that because of the Crimean crisis, the achievements of the Soviet soldiers in liberating the Czech territory have been underestimated. But what is more, he criticized the scholars who questioned the liberation by the Soviet Army for historical rather than actual, political reasons – whether it be the establishment of the communist regime that followed the end of the Second World War, or the behaviour of the Soviet soldiers towards civilians during the military operation.^[10]

Tomáš Klvaňa was one of the scholars criticized by Němeček. Klvaňa claimed that there was in fact no liberation of Czechoslovakia in 1945. In an interview, he argued that instead of speaking about liberation, it is more accurate to call the 1945 arrival of the Soviet Army in Czechoslovakia an occupation: "In my opinion, it was not liberation. The Red Army conquered Czechoslovakia. In a short period of time, one totalitarian regime was replaced by another."^[11] Another article titled, "Through Liberation to Slavery: There Is Nothing to Celebrate" expressed similar views and was published on the news portal Svobodné Fórum, founded by Klvaňa, among others. Here, the argument against the use of the term liberation was split into three claims: first, the Soviet Union itself was not free, hence, it was unable to liberate other countries; second, the Soviet regime contributed to the onset of war by attacking Poland; and third, for almost all of the territories that were "conquered" by the Red Army, a new phase of slavery and terror began after the war.^[12] The article summarizes several arguments frequently used by opponents of celebrations of the liberation by the Red Army. One additional argument in support of this position is the brutal behavior of Soviet Army against civilians, which was absolutely taboo during the Communist

dictatorship. The Swiss historian Adrian Portmann pointed to this not-yet-sufficiently-researched topic in an interview that was published under the title, "Liberation Equal to Occupation". The interview quoted him talking about the necessity to understand the liberation as a new occupation because of the replacement of one totalitarian dictatorship with another.^[13] Although Portmann distanced himself from the interview and complained that his words had been misinterpreted, his statement gave rise to much controversy and was criticized not only by Němeček, but by others as well. In one article, Portmann was even labelled as an "obscure German-Swiss historian" and his claims were described as "hallucinations".^[14]

Besides the controversy surrounding the question of whether or not it is appropriate to celebrate the liberation by the Soviet Army, the question came up as to whether it is reasonable to celebrate the end of the Second World War at all. The conservative journalist and politician Roman Joch wondered why there are such huge celebrations of the end of the Second World War (not only in Russia but also in the Czech Republic) when the war still seems to continue today. In Joch's opinion, the Soviet Union entered the war as Germany's accomplice, and until Russia admits to its complicity and alliance with Hitler, it will continue to be at war, albeit by different means.^[15] Bohumil Doležal also holds the opinion that there is nothing to celebrate, yet for a different reason. He claims that 8 May is not a date that should be celebrated in the same manner as other public holidays in the Czech Republic, such as 1 January (Restoration of the Czech Independence), 17 November (Velvet Revolution – Struggle for Freedom and Democracy Day) and 28 October (Independent Czechoslovak State Day). While these dates refer to events that contributed to the development of democracy and state sovereignty in the Czech Republic, Doležal argues that 9 May led to the loss of both.^[16]

These few examples of the most frequent positions held in the Czech debates on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the end of the Second World War show that the controversies about the correct way of dealing with this event are not yet settled. The memory of the Soviet Army as a liberator of the country is particularly difficult and disputed. Russia's prevailing aggressive foreign policy towards Ukraine, however, is only one (rather secondary) reason for these difficulties. It matters more that some people still perceive Russia as a threat to Czech sovereignty and feel vindicated by the Ukrainian crisis. The deeply rooted resentments against Russia, enhanced by current political developments, have a considerable impact on Czech remembrance of the end of the Second World War. The second major difficulty with the "Liberation" or "Victory" Day lies in the historical development in Czechoslovakia after 1945 and from the fact that the country fell into a phase of communist dictatorship after the war. Although the communist coup in 1948 was non-violent and carried out by legal means without Soviet assistance,^[17] the claim that the Soviet troops brought a communist government to Czechoslovakia is quite popular. This is not surprising as blaming others is a widely used strategy because it helps one maintain a positive self-image. The constructed pattern that the communist regime was imposed upon Czechoslovakia from abroad with the aid of some treasonous collaborators fits better in the national narrative that, in general, prefers heroes (or at least victims) to perpetrators or accomplices. Finally, during the forty years of communist dictatorship, it was not allowed to research (let alone to publicly discuss) some of the problematic issues surrounding the arrival of the Soviet troops. If rape, robbery, shootings of civilians, or other crimes were mentioned in connection with the end of the Second World War, there were only German or American perpetrators, while the Soviet soldiers were depicted as polite, friendly, and child-loving.^[18] After 1989, historians began to dismantle the myths around the Red Army by pointing to the negative sides of the relationship between Soviet soldiers and Czech civilians. Consequently, these issues occurred in the media quite frequently and fed into discussions on how to commemorate appropriately.

How to Celebrate? 2015 Commemorations of the End of the Second World War in the Czech Republic

After outlining the most visible debates in Czech media on the significance of the end of the Second World War and the appropriate way to commemorate this event, I will now turn to the actual commemorations that took place in the anniversary year. Notwithstanding the debates in the media, an opinion poll in April 2015 showed that a large majority of the Czech population (81 per cent) considers the end of the Second World War as an important event that should be adequately celebrated.^[19]

Research conducted by the Public Opinion Research Centre provided similar results: 76 per cent of the respondents consider it important to commemorate the events of the Second World War. In this respect, there have been no significant changes over the last twenty years. Similarly, the percentage of those who think that the Soviet Army played an important role in the liberation of Europe has not changed: 87 per cent in 1995, and 85 per cent in 2015. The proportion of those who consider the role of the US Army important for the liberation of Europe has also not changed very much: 83 per cent in 1995, and 78 per cent in 2015.^[20] As for President Zeman's trip to Moscow, another survey revealed that the majority of Czechs (about 53 per cent) endorsed his decision to attend the celebrations in Moscow in order to honour the fallen soldiers in the liberation of Czechoslovakia. Roughly one third of the respondents indicated that Zeman should not go to Moscow for the celebrations.^[21] Thus, among the Czech population, the view prevails that the liberation of Czechoslovakia by the Soviet Army is an event that deserves celebration regardless of the actual political development. And this year's commemorations seemed to reflect such an attitude.

Of course, the most visible and grandiose celebrations of the end of the Second World War were again, as for the last twenty-five years, in Pilsen. In 2014, Zdeněk Víšek noted that Pilsen's huge celebrations are a unique phenomenon not only in the Czech Republic, but also in Central Europe. He asked whether it is imaginable to have such pompous celebrations in cities liberated by the Red Army. He considered it impossible and stated that their celebrations are usually limited to dull wreath-laying ceremonies and official commemorative acts without public interest. He claimed that those cities seem to be ashamed of not being liberated by the "right" troops.^[22] So, how were this year's celebrations in Pilsen?

The traditional Freedom Festival lasted for six days, was one of the biggest in its 25-year history and was promoted as one of the highlights of "Pilsen – European Capital of Culture 2015". Besides commemorative acts and wreath-laying ceremonies at the Second World War memorials, the programme consisted of several concerts, battle re-enactments, period fashion shows, presentations of military technology, activities for schools, a football match and the annual Convoy of Liberty which is a parade of historical military vehicles. Furthermore, a new memorial to American General George S. Patton was unveiled. In addition to the official programme,^[23] there were various special events organised by private companies. For example, one brewery produced special beer made from hops grown in the US and some restaurants offered a special American menu. It is not surprising that the diverse programme was appealing to different groups of society, attracted thousands of locals and visitors, and was broadly covered by the media.

Although other Czech cities were unable to compete with Pilsen's extensive celebrations – which were even more intensified because of Pilsen's title as the European Capital of Culture in 2015 – there were obvious attempts to make the programmes more appealing to the general public. For example, there were concerts, screenings of historical movies, exhibitions, and expositions of American as well as Soviet military technology in Prague. Prague's third district Žižkov, together with a military-historical club

and the Military History Institute (Vojenský historický ústav) organised a re-enactment of the Prague Uprising. About 400 actors represented soldiers of the Wehrmacht, the Czechoslovak resistance, the Vlasov Army and the Red Army and presented Second World War military vehicles and weapons.

Brno, the second largest Czech city, proclaimed 2015 the Year of Reconciliation and encouraged several spectacular activities. The intention of the project was to commemorate the events of the Second World War, to remember all the victims, including Jewish, Roma, and the German minority, and to stress the cosmopolitan character of the city. As part of the project, a reconciliation pilgrimage took place commemorating the death march of Sudeten Germans. Furthermore, there were various exhibitions, movies, and on the anniversary of the liberation of the city, there was an all-day programme which included a concert, a convoy of historical vehicles and a field kitchen handing out "liberation goulash".

Many other cities liberated by the Red Army also lured spectators to similar programme highlights – battle re-enactments being one of the most popular and widespread ones. The report on celebrations in the North Moravian city of Ostrava characterized them as dignified and attractive. It stressed the great interest of the public in the re-enactment of the bloodiest and biggest battle in the Czech territory during the Second World War: the battle for control over the industrial city of Ostrava. The celebrations in Ostrava contained cultural programmes as well and were closed with a firework display. Battle re-enactments were organised also in Olomouc, Český Krumlov and České Budějovice. Many cities launched special web pages on the end of the Second World War celebrations that contained not only the celebration programmes, but also ample information on the history of liberation.^[24] So, as for the commemorations of the 70th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, it would be inaccurate to depict the celebrations in the cities liberated by the Red Army as dull and unattractive, or as expressing any shame for having been liberated by the Soviets.

Conclusion: The Pluralisation of Memories, Commemorative Forms and Debates Surrounding the Anniversary of the End of the Second World War

This short overview of the commemorations of the end of the Second World War in various Czech cities shows not only a tendency toward the pluralisation of memories, but also toward an increase in commemorative forms. The commemorations before 1989 were planned in the centre by the Communist Party, included solely the remembrance of the liberation of Czechoslovakia by the Red Army and were almost the same throughout the country. Now citizens of different cities look for their own Second World War memory, find their specific local expressions of remembrance and appreciate events and figures they consider memorable and significant. The unveiling of this year's new monuments and the installation of new commemorative plaques demonstrates that the finding process has not yet been finished. The wreath-laying ceremonies and official commemorative acts seem to become less important as the groups of war veterans and witnesses shrink. Of course they still take place, but usually they remain unnoticed by the public. That is not to say that the memories of the end of the Second World War are vanishing. Rather, the generations of those who did not experience the war are attracted by other forms of commemoration which appear to give them an understanding of that period (i.e. battle re-enactments and exhibitions of period fashion, vehicles or arms).

Regardless of the debates in the media on whether the role of the Red Army in liberation should be remembered in positive terms and appreciated or not, the majority of the population considers it important. Most Czechs are of the opinion that the fallen soldiers should be honoured, notwithstanding the actual political development or the events that followed the end of the Second World War in

Czechoslovakia and led to the communist takeover. And this year's commemorations point in a similar direction. After a period of a certain degree of reluctance to celebrate the end of the war in cities liberated by the Soviet Army, the position has changed over the past few years. It gradually seems to become possible that the recently "defrosted" memories will not replace, but rather complement the memories predominant in the communist era, and that the erection of new monuments will not necessarily require the dismantling of the old ones.

Footnotes

1. Aleida Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization: Functions, Media, Archives*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014, p. 53.
2. Timothy Johnston, *Being Soviet: Identity, Rumour, and Everyday Life Under Stalin 1939-1953*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012, p. 60.
3. The Prague Uprising was an armed insurrection against the German occupation of the city of Prague. It started on 5 May 1945 and ended with the insurgents' capitulation on 8 May. During the uprising, the Russian Liberation Army (also called Vlasov Army), which was composed of Russian prisoners of war and anti-Bolshevik émigrés, supported the revolt.
4. The memorial was built in place of a former synagogue to commemorate the 150 Holocaust victims from the town.
5. For example, Ústí nad Labem in 2005, Postoloprty in 2010, and recently, in Špindlerův Mlýn on 6 September 2015.
6. Projev prezidenta republiky Václav Klause na vzpomínkové akci v Ostravě u příležitosti oslav 60. výročí konce 2. světové války [Speech by President Vaclav Klaus at the commemorative event in Ostrava to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the end of the Second World War] (2 May 2005), retrieved 27 August 2015, URL: <http://www.klaus.cz/clanky/2310>
7. See the answers given by Czech public figures to the question: "Is it appropriate that Miloš Zeman is going to be the only head of an EU member state to attend the celebrations of the end of the Second World War in Moscow?" Retrieved 27 August 2015, URL: <http://nazory.ihned.cz/thinktank/c1-63692180-ma-se-milos-zeman-jako-jedina-hlava-clenskeho-statu-eu-zucastnit-oslav-konce-2-svetove-valky-v-moskve>
8. Bohumil Doležal, Zeman nechce uctít padlé, jede uctít Putina [Zeman wants to honour the fallen, honour goes Putin] (13 April 2015), retrieved 27 August 2015, URL: <http://echo24.cz/a/wB6JV/zeman-nechce-uctit-padle-jede-uctit-putina>
9. Ladislav Kašuka, Odmítnout pozvání na oslavy konce 2. světové války může jen buran! (5 August 2015), retrieved 27 August 2015, URL: <http://www.parlamentnilisty.cz/arena/nazory-a-petice/Ladislav-Kasuka-Odmitnout-pozvani-na-oslavy-konce-2-svetove-valky-muze-jen-buran-388063>
10. Přemysl Houda, Uctěme sovětské vojáky. Osvobodili nás. [Interview with Jan Němeček] (19 April 2015), retrieved 27 August 2015, URL: http://ceskapozice.lidovky.cz/ucteme-sovetske-vojaky-osvobodili-nas-dyc-tema.aspx?c=A150416_104448_pozice-tema_houd
11. Tomáš Klvaňa, Rudá armáda nás v květnu 1945 dobyla. Nešlo o osvobození (20 March 2015), retrieved 27 August 2015, URL: <http://www.parlamentnilisty.cz/arena/rozhovory/Tomas-Klvana-pro-PL-Ruda-armada-nas-v-kvetnu-1945-dobyla-Neslo-o-osvobozeni-367135>
12. Osvobozením k otroctví. Na tom není, co slavit [Editorial] (29 April 2015), retrieved 27 August 2015, URL: <http://svobodneforum.cz/editorial/osvobozeni-jehoz-dusledkem-bylo-nove-otroctvi-neni-duvod-slavit/>
13. Adrian Portmann, who was mentioned by his former name "von Arburg" in the article in question, opposed the publication of the interview because he claimed that the journalist did not ask him for an interview, but only for some consultation. According to Portmann, it was not clear that the telephone conversation would be published and he did not have the chance to authorize the article before publication. For the interview see: Ivan Motýl, "Osvobození se rovnalo okupaci." Historik i o násilí na ženách [Interview with Adrian von Arburg] (25 March 2015), retrieved 27 August 2015, URL: http://www.tyden.cz/rubriky/domaci/osvobozeni-se-rovnalo-okupaci-historik-i-o-nasili-na-zenach_337413.html. For Adrian Portmann's response (retrieved 27 August 2015) see: <http://www.csds.cz/cs/g6/3217-DS.html>
14. Václav Vlk, Bělobrádkův risk (2) (28 July 2015), retrieved 27 August 2015, URL: http://neviditelnypes.lidovky.cz/politika-belobradkuv-risk-2-df0/p_politika.aspx?c=A150726_173852_p_politika_wag
15. Roman Joch, 70 let od konce války (14 May 2015), retrieved 27 August 2015, URL: http://www.rozhlas.cz/plus/nazory/_zprava/roman-joch-70-let-od-konce-valky-1490059
16. Bohumil Doležal, Co jsme to vlastně oslavovali? (10 May 2015), retrieved 27 August 2015, URL: http://neviditelnypes.lidovky.cz/udalosti-co-jsme-to-vlastne-oslavovali-d9j/p_politika.aspx?c=A150511_201157_p_politika_wag
17. In 1947, tension in the Czechoslovak government increased. After the communist Minister of Interior, Nosek, extended the scope of his confidants, the non-communist ministers resigned and expected that President Beneš will not accept their resignations. However, under pressure, Beneš yielded and left the way open for the seizure of power by the communists.
18. Especially in the early years after the war, the image of Soviet soldiers with happy Czech children was very popular in the propaganda and disseminated through visual and textual media.
19. Phoenix research: Účast českého prezidenta na oslavách konce 2. světové války v Moskvě, (1–20 April 2015), retrieved 31 August 2015, URL:

- http://www.phoenixresearch.cz/dnld/Phoenixresearch-Prezident-CR-v-Moskve-04_2015-%28LO%29.pdf
20. In 1995, 73 per cent of respondents were of the opinion that it is important to commemorate the Second World War events; in 2000, 80 per cent; and in 2005, 76 per cent. For all the results see: CVVM: Druhá světová válka a protifašistický odboj očima veřejnosti – duben 2015 (4–13 April 2015), retrieved 31 August 2015, URL: http://cvvm.soc.cas.cz/media/com_form2content/documents/c1/a7378/f3/or150430.pdf
 21. SANEP: Návštěva Miloše Zemana v Moskvě (24 April – 1 May 2015), retrieved 31 August 2015, URL: <http://www.sanep.cz/pruzkumy/navsteva-milose-zemana-v-moskve-publikovat-4-5-2015/>
 22. Víšek, Zdeněk, Plzeňské oslavy a osvobození Československa, in: Listy 3/2014, retrieved 1 September 2015, URL: <http://www.listy.cz/archiv.php?cislo=143&clanek=031409>
 23. For the program see: Program Slavností svobody Plzeň (retrieved 31 August 2015), URL: <http://www.slavnostisvobody.cz/slavnosti-svobody/program/program-2015.asp>
 24. See, for example, URL: 70.olomouc.eu for Olomouc; see URL: roksmireni.cz/cs for Brno and its "Year of Reconciliation"; and see URL: osvobozeni.ostrava.cz/cz/



This tank installed in Prague in remembrance of the arrival of the Soviet soldiers was first painted pink by a Czech artist and later removed from the prominent square in Prague's fifth district to the military museum in Lešany.

Author: Hynek Moravec / Source: Wikimedia Commons:

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lesany_military_muzeum_4101.JPG



The memorial "Thank you, America" in Pilsen was inaugurated in 1995.

Author: Darina Volf



The new memorial for General George S. Patton in Pilsen

Author: Jan Polák / source: Wikimedia Commons:

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Plze%C5%88,_pomn%C3%ADk_gener%C3%A1la_Pattona_%281%29.jpg?uselang=de