



# **STREET NAMES – BETWEEN IDEOLOGY AND CULTURAL HERITAGE**

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**Prague 10th August 2012**

# The Research Project

This text has been supported by the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic, grant project NAKI no. DF11P01OVV022. *Místní a pomístní názvy jako kulturní dědictví a zdroj lokální, regionální a národní identity* (Place Names as a Significant Component of Cultural Heritage and an Important Source of Local, Regional, and National Identity. Preparing Guidelines for the Preservation of Place Names).

<http://projekty.osu.cz/mistapameti/>

# Starting Points

The names of streets in pre-modern cities were descriptive.

They were inspired predominantly by

their direction (e.g. *Pražská* – ‘Street towards the City of Prague’),

their character (e.g. *Nová* – ‘New Street’),

the nationality and the trade of their inhabitants (e.g. *Česká* – ‘Czech Street’, *Pekařská* – ‘Baker Street’)

and any other important object or feature in their location (e.g. *Kláštevní* – ‘Monastery Street’, *U kostela* – ‘Street by the Church’).

The descriptive system was used until the end of the 18th century, then this was enriched by a totally new form of naming known as **commemoration**, and other forms such as numeral, alphabetical and thematic naming, etc.

The terms **“commemoration”** and **“commemorative motive”** or **“commemorative naming”** = the naming of places after persons, events, ideas, even other places, to honour or to commemorate them is included in this.

The commemorative motivation was based solely on formally expressed possessivity, although it was not a real act of possession.

For instance, streets and squares were named after politicians (e.g. *Masarykova*, *Žižkovo náměstí*), after writers, composers and painters (e.g. *Nerudova*, *Dvořákova*, *Mánesova*), after groups of people, after important days in national history, historical events and other ideological and political values (e.g. *náměstí Svobody* – ‘Square of Freedom’).



# New Socialist Cities

***Stalinstadt***, now Eisenhüttenstadt – Germany

***Ostrava-Poruba*** – Czech Republic

***Havířov*** – Czech Republic

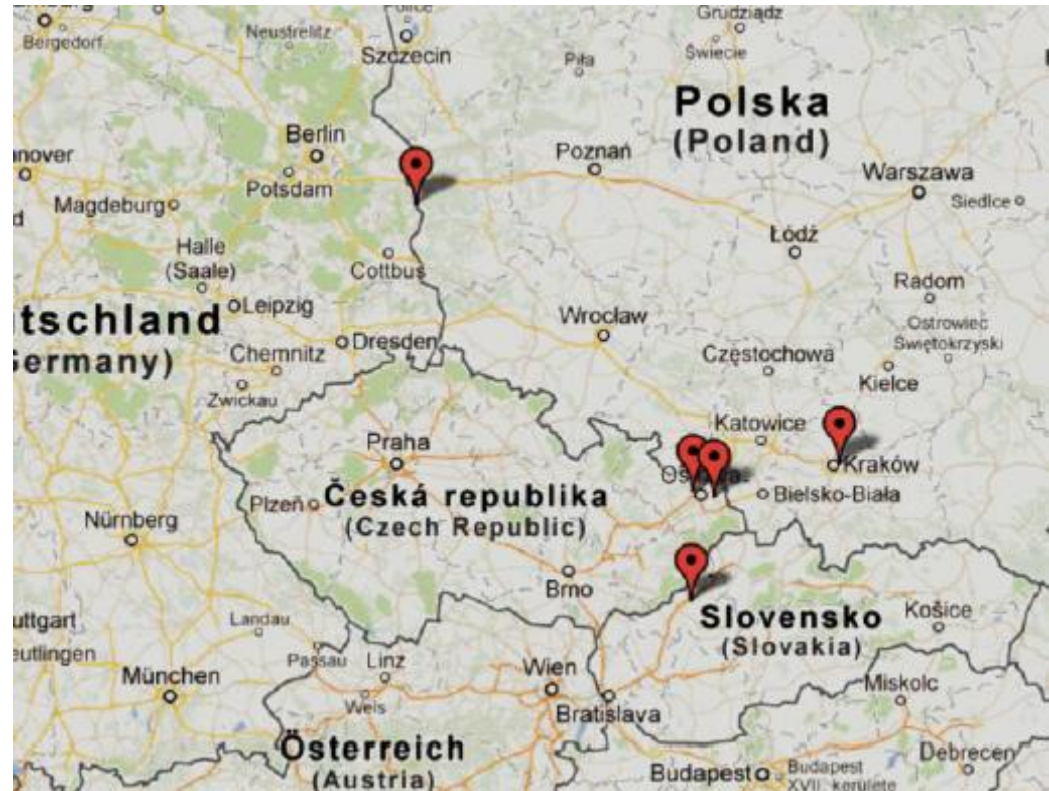
***Nová Dubnica*** – Slovakia

***Ostrava-Stalingrad***, now Ostrava-Zábřeh – Czech Republic

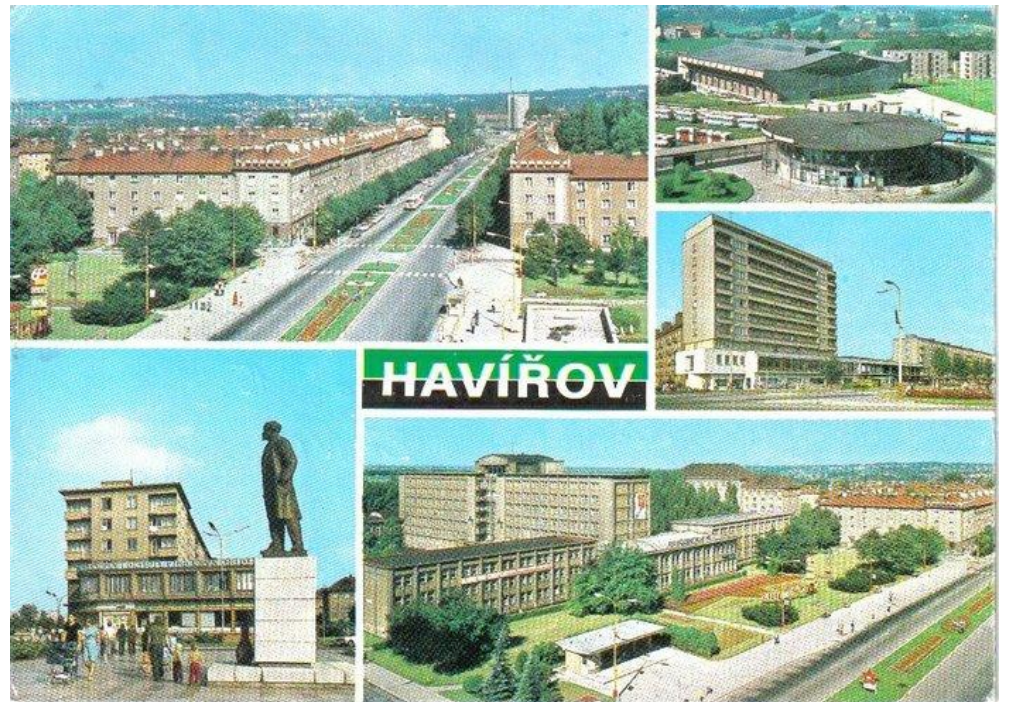
***Kraków-Nowa Huta*** – Poland



**Havířov – *Hlavní třída*** ('Main Avenue'),  
previously *Gottwaldova třída*



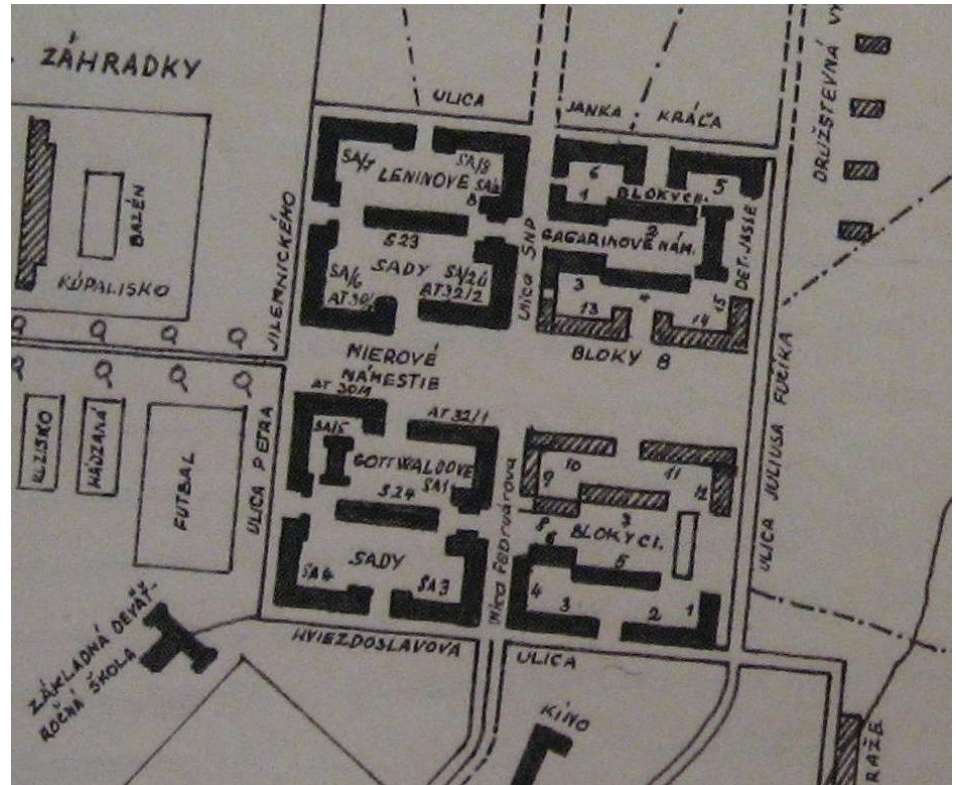






## in Street Naming

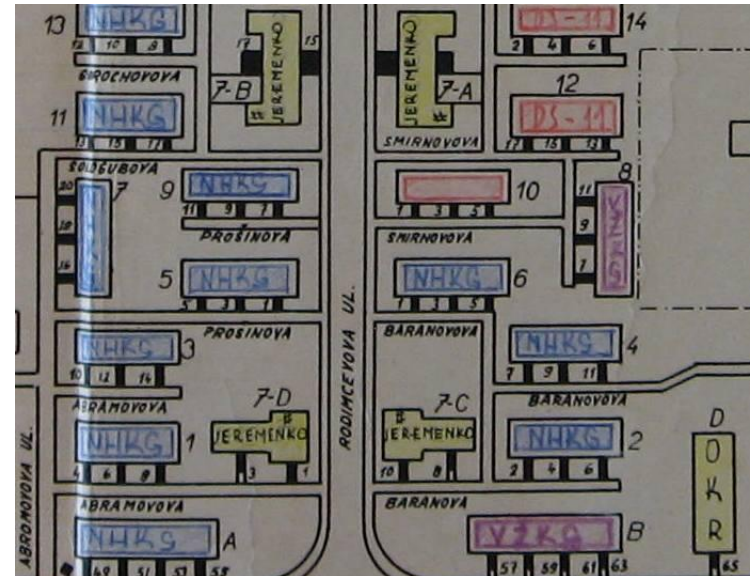
Streets of the city centre were named after preferred persons such as Julius Fučík, a Czech communist journalist, Klement Gottwald, the first Czechoslovak communist president, the Slovak romantic poet Janko Kráľ, and events, such as the Slovak National Uprising (*SNP*) of 1944.



# Ostrava-Zábřeh – Monothematic Street Names Complex

The street names are also completely commemorative, however they are focused only on the socialist present.

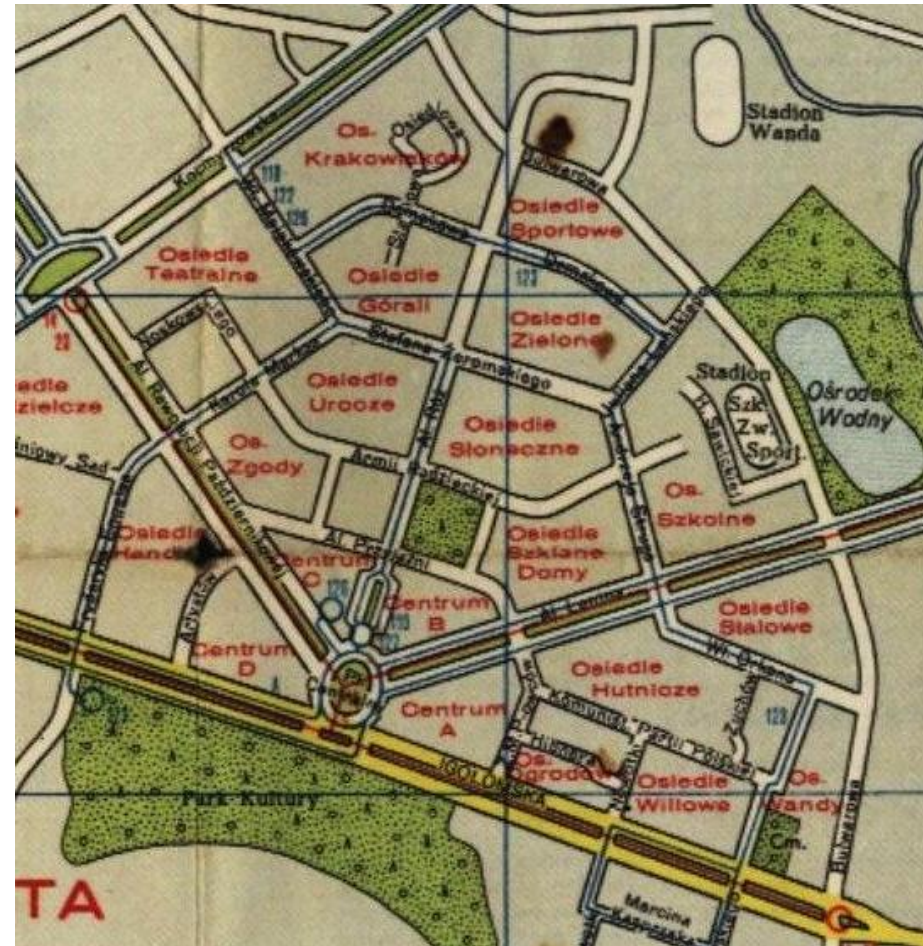
The main idea uniting local street names in the district of Ostrava-Zábřeh, named *Stalingrad* during the fifties, is their motivation in connection with the battle of Stalingrad, the Red Army, communist heroes and the fight against Nazism, e.g. Čujkovova, Gerasimova, Žoluděvova, the central square named *náměstí SNP*, to commemorate the Slovak National Uprising.





# Kraków-Nowa Huta

During the communist era street names were inspired mostly by the personal names of politically appreciated figures, such as *Marcina Kasprzaka*, *Fryderyka Engelsa*, *Lenina* and *Armii Radzieckiej* ('Soviet Army Avenue').



# Change or Preserve Street Names?

## Five Reasons why to Save History in Street Names

- **First**, in the case of historical cities with several centuries of history and previously stable street names, it was a logical act to restore the original street names after the fall of Communism. However, the new socialist cities did not have any history older than four or five decades. Their urbanonymy was created in the communist era and no previous tradition exists.
- **Second**, renaming previous urbanonymy posed a very complicated task for local authorities and inhabitants.
- **Third**, general public knowledge of “who is who” behind a particular street name is very weak.
- **Fourth**, socialist cities and city districts were built predominantly as housing estates or suburbs of the traditional (historically rooted) cities in the fifties; they are not regarded as the city centre.



- **Fifth**, the last reason why street names in the new cities were not broadly renamed could have been the perception of them as a part of cultural heritage. The complexes of architecture of new socialist cities are under cultural heritage preservation, and local museums have been opened mapping their history, as in the “*Dzieje Nowej Huty*” museum in Nowa Huta.

**However**, the role of street names and their protection are not mentioned either in guide books and historical overviews, or in reports and statements accompanying the act of declaring the city zone under heritage preservation!

# Change or Preserve Street Names?

- **comic and ahistoric consequences of street names changing**, for example, in Nowa Huta the street name *Majakowskiego* was renamed *Obrońców Krzyża* ('Street of the Defenders of the Cross'), *Alej Lenina* is now *Alej Solidarności* ('Avenue of the Solidarity movement') and *Planu 6-letniego* ('Street of the Six-Year Plan') is now *Jana Pawła II* ('Pope John Paul II Street'), in Nová Dubnica *Leninové sady* ('Lenin's Park') was renamed as *Pribinové sady*, and *Gottwaldove sady* became *Sady Cyrila a Metoda* ('Park of Cyril and Methodius'). Both park names were renamed after persons linked to Great Moravia, the first Slavonic state.

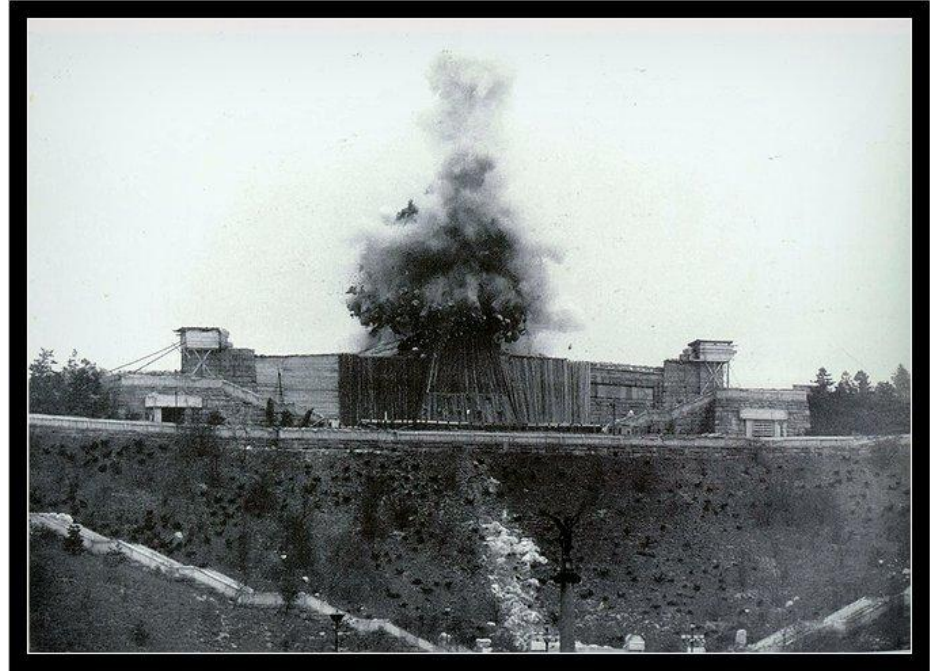




# Conclusions

**The urbanonymy of these socialistic cities built in the forties and fifties was primarily inspired by the personal names of those figures** who were, from the viewpoint of communist ideology, perceived positively both as leaders and as bearers of values for the society. Such street names represent very deep ideological namings and can be regarded as a tool enabling totalitarian regimes to dominate the space.

**A distinctly different situation in street naming prevailed in the new socialist cities built in the sixties and seventies.** The most important factor here was the criticism of Stalin's cult of personality in 1956 at the 20th congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union - **the “fear” of personal street names.**



Street and square names in newly built cities and housing estates from the sixties until the eighties placed the function of orientation above the ideological and educational function of street names. Commemorative names did not die out, however they are very often arranged in thematic wholes.



**How do we perceive commemorative street names?**

**Should we preserve them as a part of local identity, specificity and cultural heritage?**

We should preserve the history even of recently built cities, still quite new from today's point of view. To make my answer more obvious: we should preserve their original street names as a part of their cultural heritage.

**Thank You for Your Attention.**