

# Creating a Virtual Exhibition Space “Museums of Small Towns as Keepers of the Memory of Twinning Relations (on the Example of the Sverdlovsk Region in the 1950s–1980s)”

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**Abstract.** The article deals with the issues of digitalization of historical sources on the history of twinning relations of small towns. It is noted that the most convenient format for saving and further studying the topic is the creation of an electronic exhibition. It is proposed to create a virtual exhibition space dedicated to the friendship of the cities of the Sverdlovsk region of the USSR and the West Bohemian region of Czechoslovakia, which lasted from 1966 to 1991.

The exhibition will be based on photographs of materials deposited in municipal, state and enterprise museums. Collected materials from 10 museums in 7 cities. The exhibition will also feature photos of materials from the personal archives of residents of the Sverdlovsk region - participants of twinning relations, archival documents, periodical press materials, etc. It is planned to place about 870 photos and scanned images. The exhibition involves the formation of sections in the format of a city-a sister city. Information support will be provided in the form of a label and an audio guide. Visitors of the exhibition will learn about the exchange of official, industrial, creative, sports delegations, the organization of exchange groups for the recreation of school children in pioneer camps.

Along with the Russian-language version of the exhibition, an English-language version is also provided. Within 1–2 months, the exhibition will be presented in small towns of the Sverdlovsk region. The exhibition will host meetings of local history clubs, meetings with scientists, and discussion platforms.

Two months later, the exhibition space will be brought to the online format on the Internet. This will contribute to the development of transnational cooperation, the identification of materials on the topic of twinning relations in foreign countries.

**Keywords:** Electronic exhibition · Digitalization · Twin towns · Sister cities · Sverdlovsk region · West Bohemian region

## 1 Introduction

The issues of the history of twinning relations of the regions of the USSR as a symbol of constructive international dialogue are becoming increasingly important in modern

conditions. The topic is extremely in demand in the current agenda of international cooperation of the Russian regions [1]. At the same time, the problem of preserving or restoring the image of fraternity in historical memory is of particular importance in the modern foreign policy context and the conditions of politicization of history.

In the context of the intensive development of information technologies and the digitalization of the humanities, which became even more obvious with the beginning of the pandemic of a new coronavirus infection, traditional communication tools are actively supplemented with the latest electronic solutions. According to the researchers, “the means of relaying memory have reached a new level, which has been expressed in recent years in the creation of a huge number of websites whose purpose is to update and relay knowledge about the past” [2].

In the online space today, researchers pay a significant place to various aspects of the topic of the Great Patriotic War. Without detracting from the significance of the heroic pages of Russian history, we consider it an important task to preserve the theme of peace, friendship, brotherhood of countries and peoples in the historical memory. To solve this problem, the creation of a virtual exhibition space “Museums of small towns as keepers of the memory of twinning ties (on the example of the Sverdlovsk Region in the 1950s-1980s)” is aimed at creating a virtual exhibition space.

The creation of the resource will allow, on the one hand, to demonstrate to a wide range of people a wide range of materials stored in the collections of archives, museums and libraries. On the other hand, it will contribute to filling it with content presented by the visitors of the resource-direct participants of twinning relations. In a complex way, this will lead to the formation of a communicative space that contributes to the preservation of memory and the revival of the practices of people’s diplomacy.

## **2 The Main Part**

The twin cities movement emerged in 1943 as a public initiative and became one of the areas of popular diplomacy that helped to extinguish the heat of the Cold War and international tensions. This experience is now of particular value.

It should be noted that researchers are increasingly turning to the study of the history of the twin cities. In particular, works on the history of twinning of the cities of the Tula region [3] and the Krasnodar territory [4] were published. In this regard, it is of great interest to study the 25-year experience of twinning relations between the Sverdlovsk region and the West Bohemian region of Czechoslovakia. In accordance with the decree of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1966, these two regions are being intermarried. In addition, twinning ties were established between five pairs of cities in the Middle Urals and Western Czech Republic. In the process of establishing cooperation in the Sverdlovsk region, a conference was held on the establishment of the Sverdlovsk regional branch of the Society of Soviet-Czechoslovak Friendship. The conference was attended by a delegation from the West Bohemian region. The collective founders of the branch of the friendship society were 25 enterprises, 14 of which were located in small towns of the Sverdlovsk region.

In 1970, 10 pairs of twin cities were created. The administrative centers - the cities of Sverdlovsk and Pilsen and 9 more pairs of cities-became related. These were Nizhny

Tagil-Cheb; Pervouralsk-Plzen-north; Sysertsky district-Domazhlice; Kamyshlov – Karlovy Vary; Sukhoi Log-Plzen-south; Bogdanovich-Rokitsany; Karpinsk-Sokolov; Polevskoye-Klatovy; Beloyarsky district-Takhov.

Plans for the development of bilateral cooperation were approved annually. This friendship lasted until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

Close contacts between the twin cities remained in the past, but the memory of this cooperation has been preserved, which was reflected in the creation of a virtual exhibition space «Museums of small cities as keepers of the memory of twinning ties (on the example of the Sverdlovsk region in the 1950s–1980s)».

The creation of the resource is associated with solving the following tasks' – identifying direct participants of twinning ties, interviewing them; searching for artifacts and making digital copies of them; developing an exhibition plan and designing a virtual exhibition, supplemented by respondents' stories about the history of preserved artifacts, memories and reflections on the results of twinning as a form of implementing international contacts. The solution of these tasks will contribute to the formation of a communication space aimed at preserving the memory and reviving the practices of public diplomacy.

The preparation of the exhibition is carried out with the expectation of a wide target audience: school children, students, working people, pensioners.

Among the disadvantages of electronic resources as a tool of commemoration, researchers single out the lack of a broad advertising campaign and, as a result, obscurity among a wide audience. In this regard, it was decided to open the exhibition in full-time format. The exhibition will be shown permanently on the site of one of the cultural or educational institutions located in the territory of the Sverdlovsk region for 1–2 months. At the same time, mobile presentations of the exhibition with visits to the municipalities of the Sverdlovsk region are planned. After the presentation period, the exhibition space will be brought fully online in the information and telecommunications network «Internet».

The exhibition will be placed on the website of the Small Town Museum project: the multiplicity of Memory Cultures (historical and sociological analysis) [5].

The exhibition has one general section on cooperation between the Sverdlovsk and West Bohemian regions and 9 sections on pairs: the city of the Sverdlovsk region – the twin city in the West Bohemian region. Within the sections, thematic blocks are allocated – official contacts, contacts of enterprises, humanitarian cooperation (sports, culture, tourism). Such forms of cooperation as the exchange of party, lecture, trade union, pioneer, komsomol, sports, tourist delegations, delegations of media representatives and delegations of enterprises will be presented. Through the exhibition space, the dynamics of twinning ties will be presented retrospectively.

The content of the exhibition space is based on scanned images of photographs of delegations that visited the Ural cities, as well as photos of souvenirs, badges, pennants, crystal and porcelain products, etc., preserved in the collections of local museums. At the moment, the materials of 10 museums, including state, municipal and departmental ones, in 7 municipalities (Bogdanovich, Zarechny, Sukhoi Log, Kamyshlov, Polevskoy, Pervouralsk, Nizhny Tagil) have been digitized. In total, about 260 photos of artifacts and scanned images of photos stored in these museums are planned to be placed in this

exhibition space. Currently, the photographic materials are prepared for further digital processing, namely, the background has been removed.

Note that the cities of the Sverdlovsk region that had a sister city are located within a radius of 50–100 km from the administrative center. The exception is two cities: Nizhny Tagil – the second most populous city in the region is located 150 km from Yekaterinburg (until 1991 – Sverdlovsk). Another city that had a sister city in the Western Czech Republic is the city of Karpinsk, 400 km from Yekaterinburg. Given the special value of the international relations of the city, which is located at such a significant distance from the center of the region, in the near future, a trip to Karpinsk is planned to collect materials for their further integration into the exhibition space.

In addition, the exhibition will use materials placed in the state catalog of the Museum Fund of the Russian Federation (about 300 digital copies), «clippings» from periodicals-regional, local, factory publications (about 150 scanned images), photos of donated souvenirs from the personal archives of residents of the Sverdlovsk region (about 60 photo documents), scanned images of photos and correspondence materials from the personal archives of residents of the Sverdlovsk region – participants of twinning relations, video materials, including chronicles, documentaries [6], modern video sketches [7, 8], electronic copies of archival documents, from the funds of state and municipal archives of the Sverdlovsk region.

Among the archival documents, first of all, the materials of the funds of the Sverdlovsk Regional Committee of the CPSU and the Sverdlovsk Regional Committee of the Komsomol, deposited in the Documentation Center of Public Organizations of the Sverdlovsk region, will be presented. It is planned to place about 100 scanned images of archival documents in the exhibition.

Information support of the exhibition is formed on the basis of materials deposited in the funds of archives and museums, periodicals, memoirs of participants of events, scientific and popular scientific publications devoted to the development of twinning relations and will be presented in the form of texts and audio guides.

Within the framework of the exhibition space, online excursions will be conducted, during which attention will be focused on the points of the guest route of foreign guests and references to sister-city relations in the toponymy of small cities in the Sverdlovsk and Western Czech regions. For example, Rokitsanskaya street in Bogdanovich, Karlovarskaya street in Kamyshlov, Takhovskaya street, Takhovsky boulevard and the Takhov Hotel in Zarechny, the bust of Julius Fuchik in Pervouralsk – a gift from the twin city, etc. in the Middle Urals. In the Western Czech Republic, Kamyshlovskaya street in Karlovy Vary, Tagilskaya street in Cheb, Beloyarskaya and Zarechnaya streets in Takhov. In addition to online tours, transnational city – sister city bridges will be organized.

### **3 Conclusion**

The exhibition space is being created as an interdisciplinary discussion platform for discussing the history, modernity and future of twinning relations in small towns. «In the fields» of the exhibition will be held meetings of local history communities, meetings with history teachers of local schools on the subject of the exhibition.

The exhibition will be available in Russian and English in the online space. The issue of creating versions in Czech, French, German and Chinese remains debatable.

The electronic format of the project and its polylinguism will facilitate the inclusion of foreign sources of personal origin, as well as the establishment of contacts with the museums of the former twin cities. It is necessary to emphasize the scientific significance of the created resource, which will contribute to the updating of scientific research on the stated topic.

**Acknowledgment.** The article was prepared within the framework of the project “Small Town Museum: Multiplicity of Memory Cultures (historical and sociological analysis)”, supported by the Russian Science Foundation 21-18-00418.

(Статья подготовлена в рамках проекта «Музей малого города: множественность культур памяти (историко-социологический анализ)», поддержанного РФФ 21-18-00418).

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