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ECS european solidarity centre

The Jan Nowak-Jeziorański College of Eastern Europe in Wrocław

## MOLDOVA: THE STAR PUPIL OF EUROPE'S EAST?

### PLUS: ANALYSIS ON UKRAINE AND RUSSIA

JACEK SARYUSZ-WOLSKI
SERGII LESHCHENKO
SERGEY UTKIN
BORIS DUBIN

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# GRAND OPENING

## Museum of the History of Polish Jews

## October 28, 2014

## Raising the Roof on a Millennium of Jewish Culture

MUSEUM OF THE HISTORY OF POLISH JEWS

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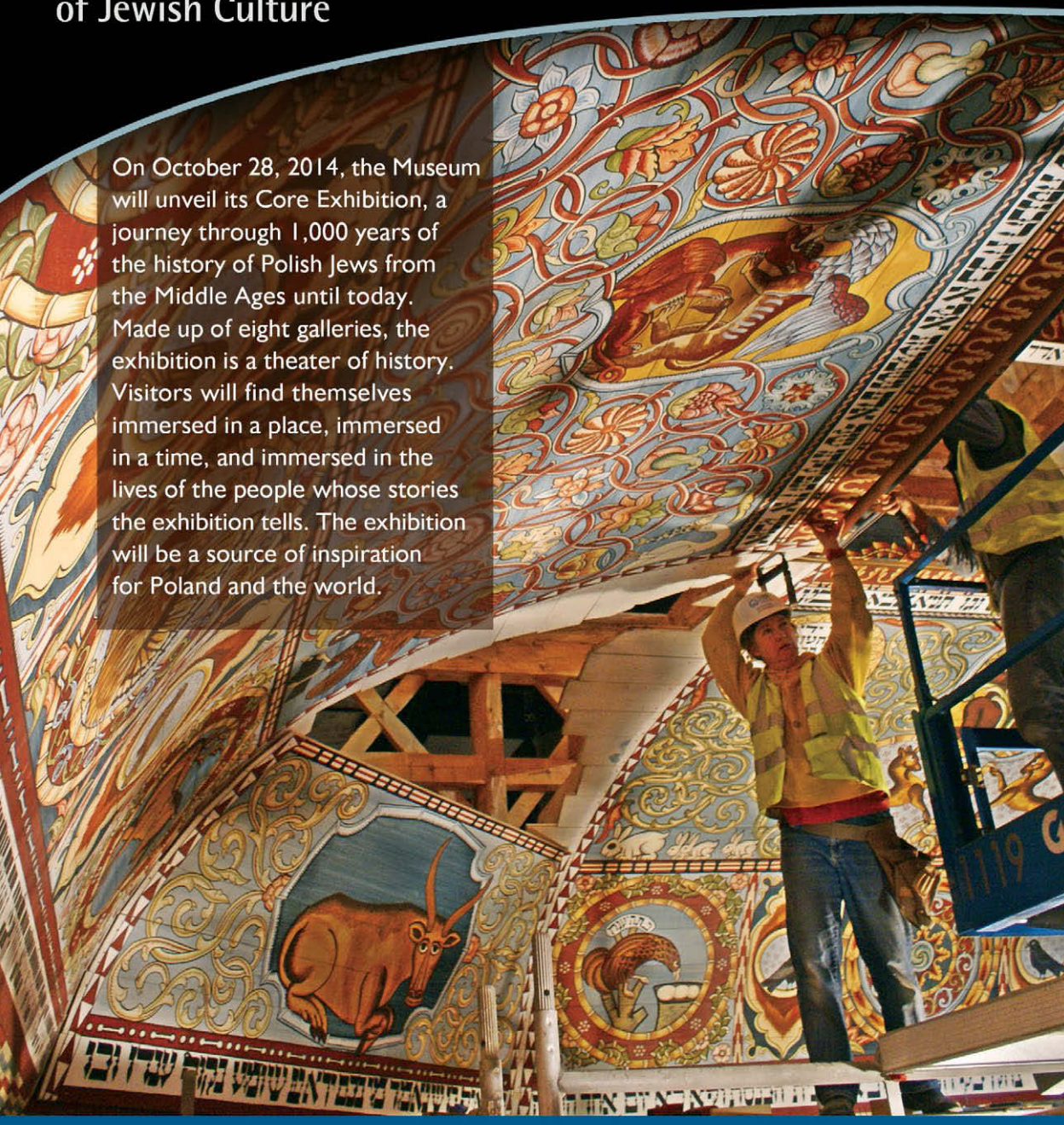

On October 28, 2014, the Museum will unveil its Core Exhibition, a journey through 1,000 years of the history of Polish Jews from the Middle Ages until today. Made up of eight galleries, the exhibition is a theater of history. Visitors will find themselves immersed in a place, immersed in a time, and immersed in the lives of the people whose stories the exhibition tells. The exhibition will be a source of inspiration for Poland and the world.

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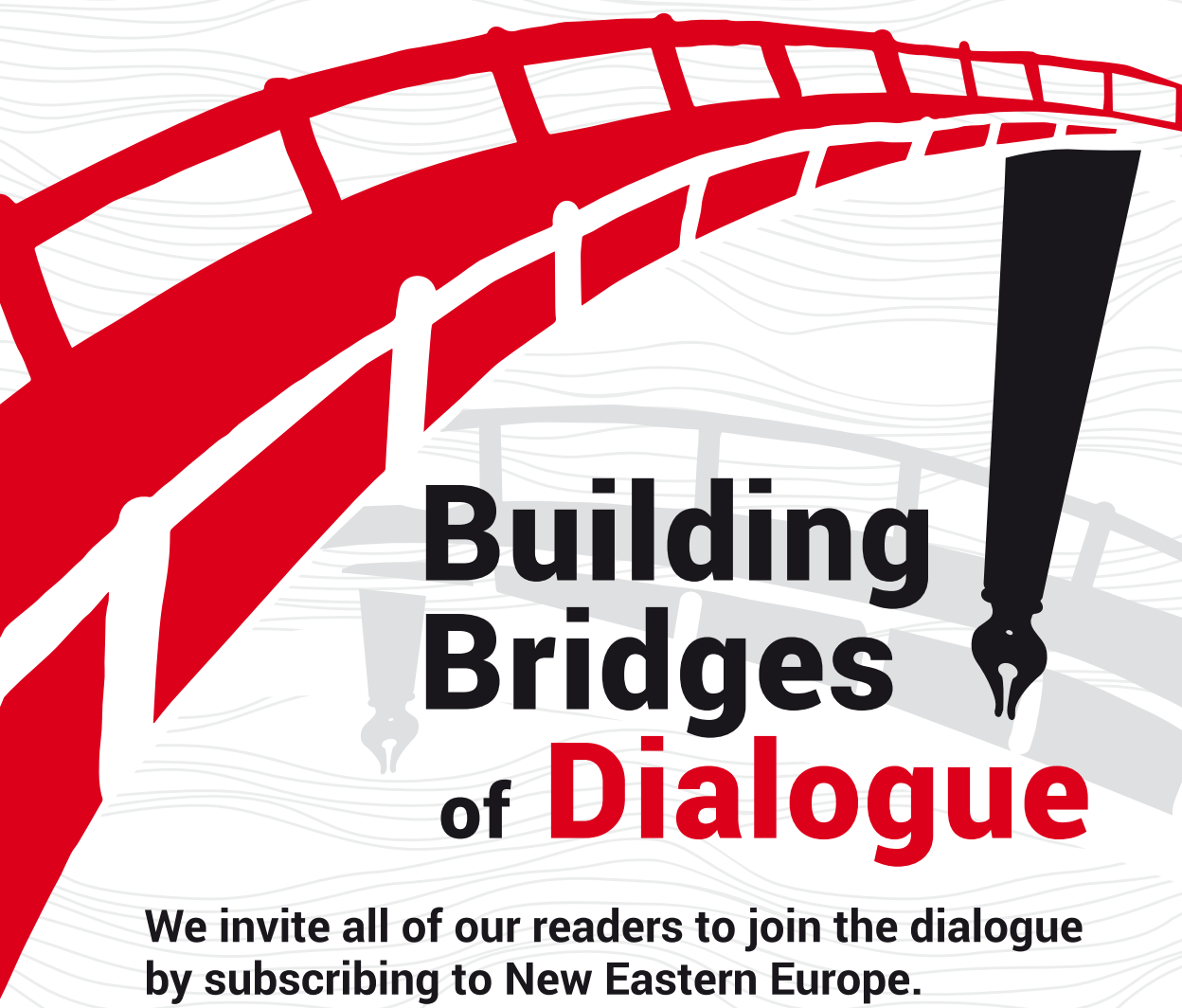

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New Eastern Europe

Dear Reader,

Time and again the geopolitical shifts that continue to take place in the region of Eastern Europe prove that in order to find solutions to complex crises, we need to dig deeper and avoid the simplifications that are offered to us daily, also by some mainstream media outlets. That is why this issue of *New Eastern Europe* is focused on a very small country that, to most, might seem insignificant.

The country in question is the Republic of Moldova. Our authors try to help explain the processes that are taking place in this former Soviet republic, which today appears to be looking for its place in Europe. Their texts might help you decide if Moldova is indeed the star pupil of Europe's East, as it is commonly believed in Brussels. Even though we leave the final answer to this question to be still decided on, we are convinced that despite its small size Moldova plays an important role in regards to the future of the EU's Eastern Partnership Programme and the community's relations with Russia.

Naturally, no analysis of the situation in Eastern Europe today can avoid the topic of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict and how it affects the arena of international politics. The questions of solidarity in regards to Russia's aggression come first in a text written by **Jacek Saryusz-Wolski**, a Polish member of the European Parliament, who argues Russian action in Ukraine is dividing the EU and the member states need to jointly rethink their relations with Russia. Russian political scientist, **Sergey Utkin**, counters this argument, stating that the sanctions which are currently placed on Russia will be seen as a pretext to wage an even stronger battle against foreign influences at home.

Specifically on Ukraine, three journalists report on the changes that have taken place in this country since the end of the Yanukovych regime. **Sergii Leshchenko** investigates today's whereabouts of Ukraine's oligarchs while **Milan Lelich** analyses how the military operation in the east is funded by the Ukrainian people, who continue to have little faith in public institutions and state bureaucracy. Of a different character, is the report by Italian journalist, **Edoardo Da Ros**, who describes the attitudes of people in Donbas, where pro-Russian separatists are still finding support among some members of the local population. Additionally, the issue offers analyses on Russia and the impact of its recent policies and behaviour.

Lastly, a special section on Oskar Kolberg and the musical faces of Eastern Europe (pages 200-244), which includes a complementary music CD, explores the folk roots of this region and its revival today.

*The Editors*

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Kolberg 2014

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# In Search of European Solidarity

JACEK SARYUSZ-WOLSKI

Following the annexation of Crimea and the ongoing destabilisation in eastern Ukraine, the European Union must now rethink its relations with Russia. The EU should draw a lesson from its shaky unity, which is constantly being challenged by the national interests of individual states during this crucial time.

The recent annexation of Crimea and the destabilisation of eastern Ukraine by Russia has accelerated a reassessment of the European Union's Eastern Partnership programme, something that has already been on the EU agenda for some time. Through its actions, the Russian Federation has not only hampered the reform process of Ukraine, but also undermined regional stability and disrupted the system of international relations. The consequences of Russian aggression have global implications. It has forced the EU not only to reconsider the effectiveness of its policy, but also to reflect on the consequences of international law, the implications for a wider Europe, as well as on the European Union itself.

## Five years young

In 2009 when the Eastern Partnership (EaP) was launched, the EU aimed to accelerate political association and economic integration with its eastern neighbours. The Association Agreements, which encompass a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA), were meant to be a protocol to put the desired transformation into practice. The EaP was also accompanied with a conditional offer of the "visa-wall" abolishment upon fulfilment of specified political and technical requirements. Therefore, this regional policy was to contribute to the global aim pursued by the EU since 2004 – to establish a stable and secure neighbourhood.

Since May 2009 and until today, the countries of the Eastern Partnership have gone through a very turbulent period and the set objectives still remain out of reach. During this time, all six countries have seen a democratic back-slide. The economic situation is rather depressing. The regional security is tense due to the recent Russia-Ukraine crisis, as well as the activation of separatist movements in the area of the protracted conflict hosted by five EaP countries.

Five years down the road, the Eastern Partnership may be viewed as both a glass half empty and a glass half full. On one hand, the EaP has brought some important deliverables. On June 27th 2014, three countries – Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia – signed the Association Agreements with the EU. In April 2014, Moldovan citizens who possess biometric passports were granted visa-free travel to the EU. On the other hand, three EaP countries, Belarus, Armenia and Azerbaijan, continue to drift away from the EU's policy, while Belarus and Armenia are losing their independence vis-à-vis Russia-led initiatives.

The biggest weakness of the EU has been its inability to speak with one voice.

Little success can be seen in the EU's involvement with Belarus. Having failed with sanctions against the non-democratic, ever-lasting president and his official accomplices, but at the same time understanding the need to engage in some dialogue, the European Commission launched new negotiations in early 2014 with Belarus on visa facilitation and readmission agreements. On May 29th 2014, Belarus, along with Russia and Kazakhstan, signed an agreement establishing the Eurasian Economic Union. Regardless of the claims that this is a purely economic union, the political integration and unification of its members will be unavoidable.

Likewise, Armenia was forced to accept questionable security guarantees from Russia. In the summer of 2013, after a major arms deal between Azerbaijan and Russia, the security of Armenia was threatened. Taking into consideration that its state budget is less than the military budget of Azerbaijan, Armenia agreed to join the Russia-led Customs Union and gave up on the already finalised Association Agreement with the EU. Azerbaijan, as earlier mentioned, enjoys strong military co-operation with Russia with no ambition to integrate closer either with Russia or the EU.

Five years since the EaP was launched, we now see a divergence into two groups. The first group, composed of Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia, has committed to the further integration with the EU. The second, which is made up of Armenia, Belarus and Azerbaijan are building closer relations with the Russian Federation. In the case of Belarus and Armenia, their participation in the Russia-led projects excludes any further integration projects with the EU.


Ukraine has been a primary focus of the EU's attention for some time. In late November 2013 the apathy and Ukraine-fatigue of the EU leadership which developed during Viktor Yanukovych's rule was transformed into admiration towards the Ukrainian youth and students who protested against the governmental decision not to sign the Association Agreement. This admiration was not shared by Yanukovych who ordered the violent dispersal of what the students called the "EuroMaidan". Through this movement, Ukrainians made their choice for Europe and for this choice many gave their lives during numerous attacks by the riot police and sniper shootings. What they achieved was the fall of the semi-authoritarian regime.

## An eye-opener

Russia's subsequent annexation of Crimea, which was a direct and blatant violation of numerous international principles and laws, followed by the destabilisation of south-east Ukraine was a consternation to everyone. The unconventional war between Ukraine and Russia has also become an eye-opener. On the global level, the actions of the Russian Federation have undermined the existing system of

international relations, with Russia breaking all the rules. At the European level, the security of not only the EU's neighbours has become jeopardised as Russia also made a number of threatening moves towards EU member states. While the inability of the EU to adequately respond to Russia with sufficient sanctions has prompted a reflection on the EU itself.

Firstly, Russian actions towards Ukraine have disrupted the system of international relations. In the centre of Europe in the 21st century, an EU strategic partner has breached the UN Charter, the Helsinki Accords as well as the 1994 Budapest Memorandum, where Russia was one of the parties that gave security guarantees to Ukraine. To achieve its goal, Russia has based its military intervention on expansionist arguments, such as protection of the Russian-speaking population and historical ties with Crimea. The global scale of precedent established by the Russian Federation suggests that any other state may attempt to adjust international law in accordance to its expansionist needs.

Any arms deal and its economic justification between EU member states and Russia are unacceptable.

Secondly, the military intervention in Ukraine was an eye-opener as far as Russia itself is concerned. The EU-Russia strategic relationship has been in stagnation for quite some time. The practice of the EU-Russian relations was correctly described by John Lough, an associate fellow at Chatham House, who said that it is about too little partnership and no strategy. The EU is now confronted not only with the aggression towards Ukraine, but also with numerous muscle-flexing violations of EU airspace by the Russian air force. In April, Russian TU-95 jets made control flights over the borders of the EU member states bordering the Northern Sea. In May and June, Finland reported Russian jets violating its airspace. In June, Russia conducted military drills in the Kaliningrad Region, placing S-300 air-defence missile systems in operation readiness, supported by the imitational exercises of SU-27 fighter jets. The exercise was concluded with airlifting of about 200 paratroopers and over 30 military vehicles, including infantry fighting vehicles BMD-2, armoured personnel carriers BTR-2, Kamaz and Ural Il-76 planes. Agreeably, these manoeuvres are vaguely the markings of a strategic and good neighbourly partnership. Therefore, the relationship with Russia should be seriously reconsidered.

Thirdly, the war in its neighbourhood gave the EU a possibility to reflect on itself. The EU has manifested obvious limitations which have derived from its inability to develop a common, strong and timely response to the Russian annexation of Crimea, its recurrent involvement in destabilising the east of Ukraine and numerous violations of EU airspace. Traditionally the biggest weaknesses of the EU are its

inability to speak with one voice and the division of the member states over national energy, defence and security issues.

## Divide and conquer

In the middle of the crisis, Russia strengthened bilateral ties and co-operation on the South Stream energy project with relevant EU members. The paradox of this project, which would cost the EU and Russia 40 billion US dollars, is that it is completely unnecessary. The existing transit routes supply the annual needs of the EU. Since 90 per cent of gas passes through Ukraine, it would not be wrong to conclude that the biggest motivation behind the South Stream project is to bypass and therefore punish Ukraine. Even though Russia started construction of the pipelines in 2012, the final bilateral agreements and visits of the Russian leadership to the EU states are being done now – during the largest and longest crisis in EU-Russia relations.

The EU institutions have tried to appeal to the member states, but some have ignored it. In April 2014, the European Parliament voted on a resolution against the construction of the South Stream pipeline. In June, the European Commission asked to suspend the building of this pipeline until Russia complies with EU regulations. While Bulgaria has followed this proposal, during a state visit to Austria, Vladimir Putin signed a bilateral agreement on South Stream with the Austrian president, Heinz Fischer. Strong support for South Stream is also expressed by Italy, Hungary, Slovenia, and even states in the pre-accession stage such as Serbia and Macedonia.

The rhetorical question is how the EU can trust Russia after all that has happened?

EU member states are equally divided over defence issue while prioritising a NATO-Russia agreement over the security interests of its eastern member states. NATO member states, which are *de jure* equal, are *de facto* unequal when it comes to protection. In the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act, both parties agreed "to prevent any potentially threatening build-up of conventional forces in agreed regions of Europe, including Central and Eastern Europe." Fifteen years later, the security situation has changed. The latest developments show that security of the eastern EU and NATO states is threatened by the military manoeuvres in Kaliningrad and regular air space violations. Both EU solidarity and NATO's Article 5 on collective self-defence are expected to be equally applied towards all the members, however, it is not the case, as the relocation of a permanent NATO base east of the Elba River is being blocked, mainly by Germany.

Another egregious example of prevailing national interests over common EU ones are bilateral arms deals between EU member states and Russia. The Mistral deal between France and Russia is the most sensational case. Signed by the French president Nicolas Sarkozy in 2011, the deal was highly contested. Along with the innovative warship, France sold Russia NATO know-how without prior consultation with other members. Regardless of the arbitrage settlement and conflict with other member states, France has continued its Mistral business with Russia. This year, while the EU member states were having a heated debate about the third stage sanctions against Russia, a French port greeted 400 Russian sailors for a Mistral-class helicopter training. The mistral delivery to Russia is scheduled for the end of 2014. France explains that the consideration behind this co-operation has a strong economic component, but taking into consideration that Russia is managing an act of aggression against another European country – any arms deal between EU member states and Russia is unacceptable, while any economic justification of such deals in a time of war is ridiculous.

## The final straw

On July 17th 2014, over the combat theatre in Ukraine, a civilian plane en route from Amsterdam to Kuala-Lumpur was shot down by an anti-aircraft missile near the Ukraine-Russia border. While there is no official report yet, some conclusions can be drawn already on who is the main suspect of this horrific crime. Firstly, the Ukrainian army did not use anti-aircraft systems, the other party did. Since the mercenaries did not have planes, the Ukrainian army did not use anti-aircraft missile systems. On the other side, the Ukrainian military forces were using bomber jets and other military planes. The aircraft were protecting the land army from columns of heavy armament vehicles which were regularly arriving from the Russian Federation to Ukraine.

Secondly, having believed that they had shot down a Ukrainian warplane, the mercenaries proudly announced it on their social media and this news was widely disseminated by the Russian media. Thirdly, the Ukrainian Security Services have both audio recordings of the mercenaries discussing bringing a Buk anti-aircraft system to Ukraine, hitting a plane and after the investigation of the plane debris reporting to their superiors that this happened to be a civilian plane with Indonesian and EU passports and not a Ukrainian warplane. The photo provided by the Ukrainian military shows the mercenaries having "hidden" the Buk in a residential area of one of the towns knowing that the Ukrainian jets will not bomb civilians.

Even though it is too early to make an assessment of the implications of this horrific act, what became clear to everyone is that this is a war – not a crisis, a

civil war, or a "junta" punitive operation as the Russian authorities proclaim it to be. This is a war where Russia is the aggressor. The negotiations and peace talks which the EU has been trying to kindly suggest are not applicable within the given situation. If the EU pursues the path of negotiations, the EU will inspire and even enable Russia to enact its plan to create a protracted conflict in the east of Ukraine.

Therefore, the immediate task of the EU is to help Ukraine to conduct a full investigation. The EU should put all possible pressure on Russia to enact the peace plan proposed by Ukriane's president, Petro Poroshenko. Vladimir Putin has already committed to it; however, it was never supported by concrete actions on Russia's part.

The Eastern Partnership, with all the financial and technical support, will be not effective unless the hybrid war is solved in Ukraine. However, the impact of the crisis is far from being regional. On a global level, the EU in co-operation with the United States, should strive for restoring the system of international relations where its actors are guided by the system of international law and principles. Ensuring global security as well as compliance with the international commitments would also reinforce the EU image as a promoter of democracy. The EU can coerce Russia by persistently imposing the third stage of sanctions in compliance with the Council Conclusions adopted on June 16th 2014.

The EU should draw a lesson from its shaky unity, which is constantly challenged by the national interests of individual states.

## Keep the faith

On the European level, the EU should rethink its relations with Russia as the latter has undermined its strategic status by assaulting Ukraine as well as by its military manoeuvres on the EU border. The rhetorical question is how the EU can trust and cooperate with Russia after all that has happened? Therefore, the EU should develop a new paradigm for its relations with Russia as soon as the security crisis is solved. The EU should draw a lesson from its shaky unity, which is constantly challenged by the national interests of individual states. The EU will continue to be weakened if the member states give priority to their own interests over the collective ones, especially during such a sensitive and crucial period as now.

With regards to defence capabilities, all EU and NATO members, regardless of their geographical position, should be protected equally. This is a question of basic equality and justice. Whereas the NATO military bases are situated in the West, it is the eastern and northern states that face the greatest threats. Guided by the EU principle of solidarity and NATO's mutual aid, the request to have NATO permanent

troops in the Baltic states and Poland should undergo serious consideration. The French-Russian Mistral deal should be unacceptable to both the EU and NATO. This case can be treated as a showcase on the growing gap between the national and EU interests and it should not recur in the future. At the same time, in the spirit of solidarity with an EU neighbour that is in a state of war with Russia, the European Council could impose a decision on France to suspend the delivery of Mistral based on the security and defence considerations of the union. Further, bilateral arms deals should be co-ordinated within the framework of the European Common Security and Defence Policy.

Despite all that has happened in the past year, we must have faith that there is a future for the Eastern Partnership. Moreover, the future can be bright and prosperous under the condition that the current crisis situation is solved. As for now, the EU should put its efforts into helping the three states which have signed the Association Agreement to make the reform process a success story.

Ukraine has been and will continue to be the strongest pillar of the Eastern Partnership due to its size, geopolitics, energy transit routes, as well as the fact that it has set an example to other EaP countries. It is also a partner that needs EU support the most because of its worrisome financial situation and half-functional institutions soaked in endemic corruption. Ukraine's new leadership has demonstrated a strong commitment to rigorous reforms with an aim to re-establish a state based on democratic principles and the rule of law. Therefore, the role of the EU in this process in not only to help Ukraine with financial support but also to help Ukrainian leadership in developing a realistic and feasible reform plan. NEE

Jacek Saryusz-Wolski is a Polish politician and member of the European Parliament serving since 2004. He was vice president of the European Parliament between 2004 and 2007.

# A Partnership Gone Wild

SERGEY UTKIN

In terms of its Russia strategy, the European Union finds itself in a deadlock. Given the situation in Ukraine, the EU cannot co-operate with Russia as usual but it does not really have the tools to change its policies. Sanctions which are supposed to influence the Russian economy will only be seen as a pretext inside Russia to wage a battle against foreign influences at home.

The Ukrainian crisis has changed everything in the political relations between the European Union and Russia and, in the long run, may change a lot in their economic relations as well. It is important to keep in mind, however, that the relationship was never a fairy tale. Nevertheless, it has brought results that mattered even at a time of conflict and its aftermath. It is possible that the future will bring new hope for improved EU-Russia ties. Currently, however, the EU is in an urgent need of a strategy and tools for this Dark Age.

## The road

The European Union's relationship with Russia is still young in historical terms, with real developments taking place only after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The fall of the Soviet Union came along with an economic disaster, a power struggle in Moscow between the president and the parliament which led to a short but violent civil war in October 1993, followed by the first war in Chechnya which started in December 1994 and lasted until the end of August 1996.

In between those two unfortunate events, in June 1994 on the Greek island of Corfu, the EU and Russia managed to sign the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, which only entered into force in December 1997. This happened months before another economic devastation that peaked in August 1998, when the Russian

government declared a default on its debts. The ailing President Boris Yeltsin by that time mainly focused on who would be his successor, while others speculated about the looming political and economic disintegration of the country. The succession was announced in December 1999 and finalised with the presidential elections in March 2000.

President Vladimir Putin seemed relatively open to the West. The second war in Chechnya happened to be a lesser trouble for the relationship as Putin poised himself as a staunch ally of the West in the fight against international terrorism, which was on everybody's mind after the attacks of September 11th 2001. A decade after the establishment of formal ties, the EU-Russia story got its first chance for progress.

If Russia and the EU are serious about building common spaces together, the common neighbourhood is all but destined to take part in the process.

It looked as though the EU readied itself in advance, but it was rather a coinciding upbeat moment in the development of the EU's foreign policy machinery that helped. In June 1999 EU member states agreed on a Common Strategy on Russia. The adoption of Common Strategies was set in the Amsterdam Treaty as one of the principle foreign policy instruments of the EU, thus, the document was supposed to play a serious role. The strategy adopted then stated that a "stable, democratic and prosperous Russia, firmly anchored in a united Europe free of new dividing lines, is essential to lasting peace on the continent. The issues which the whole continent faces can be resolved only through ever closer co-operation between Russia and the EU. The European Union welcomes Russia's return to its rightful place in the European family in a spirit of friendship, co-operation, fair accommodation of interests and on the foundations of shared values enshrined in the common heritage of European civilisation."

As noted by Hiski Haukkala in 2000, "philosophically", the strategy was hardly a new beginning, but rather a continuation of what had been written in the EU's documents on Russia for years. As it often happens to documents of that kind, it could easily be blamed for vague formulae and a lack of concrete proposals. However banal, the strategy's goal still seems valid and appropriate for both the EU and Russia. With the Ukrainian crisis, we are drifting away from this goal at an increasing speed, but for about ten years prior, the wind had been relatively fair.

The 2003 EU-Russia Summit in St Petersburg brought the idea of EU-Russia "common spaces": an economic space; a space of freedom, security and justice; a space of external security; and a space of research and education including cultural aspects. By 2005, four "road maps" were prepared to help the EU and Russia shape

The heart of the new ECS building will be a permanent exhibition dedicated to the history of the Solidarity movement.

# EXHIBITION

## HISTORY DOESN'T HAVE TO BE BORING

The exhibition will include a reconstruction of a grocery store from Communist Poland. A shipyard gantry crane cockpit will serve as a place to view footage with accounts from the organisers of the August 1980 strike. The round table – a symbol of dialogue – will have empty chairs so that the visitors can get a sense of the events that took place there.

The history of the Solidarity movement and the changes that it led to in Central and Eastern Europe will be presented in seven exhibition rooms on the first and second floor of the new ESC building – on a total of almost 3000 square metres.

Some 1800 exhibits will be on display, many of them in an interactive format. There will be a very broad range of exhibits, including: memorabilia, photographs, video footage and audio recordings, archival documents, manuscripts, maps, underground publications, newsletters, underground art etc.

Room after room will tell the story of the birth of Solidarity, the powerlessness of the oppressed peoples, the war waged by the Communist regime against its own people, the roads to freedom that had to be traversed and finally the triumph of freedom. The last room – named after Pope John Paul II – will be a place of meditation and reflection.

The ground floor will have a children's room, where the youngest visitors can learn and play.

**ecs.gda.pl**

The new ECS building will become a meeting place for people who hold the world's future dear. Here, they will get to know each other better, they will learn and grow.

# ECS

## EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CENTRE OPENING 2014

ECS is an institution of a new form: it is not only a museum, but also an education and scientific establishment aimed at providing a greater understanding od Solidarność and the anti-communist movements in Poland and Europe.

The ESC will organise events addressed to many different communities from Poland, Europe and the entire world, with conferences, debates, theatre productions, film screenings (including in 3D) and temporary exhibitions. Its goal is to provide factual support to organisations who work for the common good, freedom and human rights. A creative workshop centre will be set up, not only for children and young people from our region, but also for school and holiday groups from all over Europe. It will teach the core values of freedom, responsibility and democracy.

The ESC will run a research centre. Every academic and tourist will be able to use the library and the collection of archival photographs, films and audio recordings.

ESC will not cease to expand its collection. It will continue to publish books and produce documentaries.

A winter garden will be open all year round to serve artistic endeavours, meetings and leisure. There will also be an observation deck on the roof, with a beautiful panoramic view of the post-Shipyard area, Gdańsk's Old and Main Towns.


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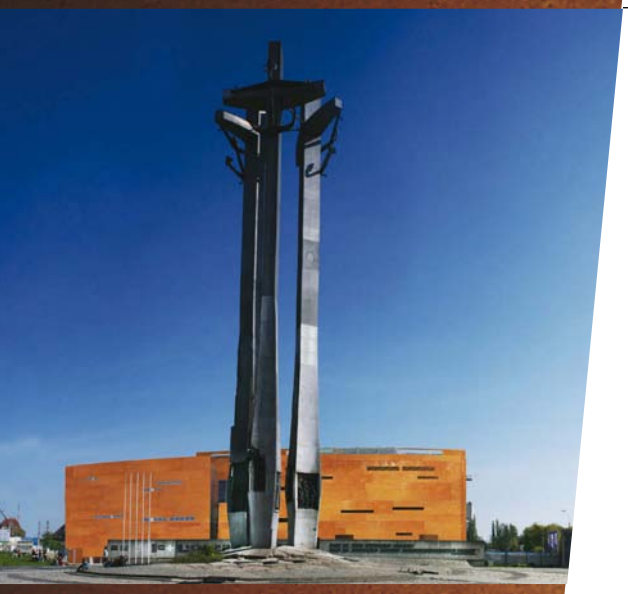

# European Solidarity Centre

## Gdańsk | Poland

## 1 SOLIDARITY SQUARE

The European Solidarity Centre (Polish: Europejskie Centrum Solidarności | ECS) is being developed in a place that is very important to Polish and European history alike. It was here, in Gdańsk's former Lenin Shipyard, that the events which ultimately led to the fall of the Berlin Wall and the return of freedom across Eastern and Central Europe, began.

The nearby Monument to the Fallen Shipyard Workers commemorates the bloody events of December 1970, when the regime opened fire on innocent people. Next to the Monument is Gate No. 2 of the former Lenin Shipyard, which in the 1980s became an icon in the struggle against the Communism regime. And last but not least, the nearby BHP Hall, where on August 31, 1980 the Inter-Factory Strike Committee signed an agreement with the Polish Communist government, which was so disruptive to the status quo that the dream of freedom became reality. Not even a decade went by before the world changed out of all recognition and Solidarity Square played a leading role in its transformation.

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these spaces. The future seemed brighter than ever for the relationship, although the bold idea could be viewed as a conciliatory prize for Russia at the time when ten new members joined the EU, eight of them former satellites of the Eastern Bloc. The feelings of those countries that found themselves on the outskirts of the enlarged Union became a matter of concern, as these countries were offered to become part of the European Neighbourhood Policy – a loose framework for closer co-operation with the EU. Russia's refusal to join seemed no more than the trite grumblings of a bigger state. The substance of the EU-Russia "road maps" was very similar to what the neighbouring countries were receiving in their respective action plans. The EU could pretty much use the same tools, approaches and bureaucracy for both types of partnership. However, what looked technical happened to be strategic.

## The impasse

Russia's quest for peer status in its relations with the EU inevitably affects the common neighbourhood of the two actors. If Russia and the EU are serious about building common spaces together, the common neighbourhood is all but destined to take part in the process. If the EU and Russia head towards rivalry, the common neighbourhood turns into a vast fault line.

For some time, the quest for peer status was mostly interpreted as a quest for respect. Calling the relations a "strategic partnership" and having summit meetings two times more often than with other major powers seemed to satisfy this demand. But Moscow wanted more than that. In a common space which would unite two major centres of power, decisions had to be taken by consensus. A common set of rules and regulations had to emerge from this instead of being the mere adoption of EU law. Clearly the case was not nearly as much about dissatisfaction with this or that part of the *acquis communautaire* as it was about power sharing.

Sanctions will only reinforce the Russian vision of an invincible fortress besieged by the West.

The EU's attitude on joint decision-making with neighbours can be described as twofold. For joint projects with a particular EU neighbour, negotiations with a subsequent compromise are natural. For decisions that create the tissue of the common space inside the EU, the decision-making is naturally reserved for the member states. For some of the EU's neighbours in the East this has been one of the reasons to strive for a membership perspective. Russia's stance was different. The mainstream analysis suggested that the country of 140 million people could hardly fit in the EU institutions in any foreseeable future. Thus, Russia could either submissively accommodate itself to norms it would probably never have a right to

set, or find ways to make its voice heard or listened to, even from outside the EU's castle. The Kremlin was definitely in the mood to try the latter option.

The Eurasian integration project was chosen as the major instrument to ensure this result. If the EU opts for a "take it or leave it" approach in talking with its neighbours, hoping to consume the post-Soviet space bit-by-bit, the post-Soviet states could benefit from coming together and building a competitive bloc which could then negotiate with the EU much more successfully. The idea happened to be a hard sell in most potential participants of the Eurasian Union. For a large share of the post-Soviet political elite, Russia's imperial past is constantly looming behind the grand design. Long-standing tensions in the region added to the complexity. Three countries of the common neighbourhood – Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine – have officially pronounced their willingness to integrate with the EU. In spite of its all efforts, Russia could still end up alone, facing the vast realm where the EU determines the rules of the game.

The temptation to see business ties as collaboration with an enemy will only lead both parties further into the abyss.

This grim picture is definitely painted with colours of the hard-core political neo-realism running deep in the veins of many Russian statesmen. For them, the everlasting zero-sum game of international relations is played by great powers struggling for the influence and resources that let them have the upper hand. The history of the last twenty years is, thus, a constant encroachment of the (presumably) united West, in the form of the EU and NATO enlargement, on the territories previously dominated by Russia.

Until the Ukrainian crisis, the staunch realists in the Russian government were balanced by pragmatic idealists, who pushed for closer and more constructive co-operation with the EU. The fruits of this policy line, which include visa facilitation and WTO accession for Russia, were eventually judged as much too modest for this political course to triumph. For the realists, the unimpressive results were an expected proof that the EU was never serious about closer ties with Russia. The developments in Ukraine unleashed the ghost of the West in the minds of the hardliners. For them, their vision has finally been vindicated. The adversary had been revealed and must be defeated by all available means.

## Wait and see

In terms of its Russia strategy, the EU finds itself in a deadlock. Given the Russian policies as they stand on Ukraine, the Union cannot co-operate with Russia as usual and it does not really have the tools to change the aforementioned policies. However,


Photo: European Commission

What could hypothetically be a deal for the Kremlin is unacceptable for the EU. What could be the way out of the crisis for the EU is seen as a complete surrender in the Kremlin.

the latter option is considered. The sanctions are supposed to influence the Russian economy and Russian decision-makers by pointing at their wrongdoings. Most probably, this will only reinforce the vision of the invincible fortress besieged by the West so dear to the Russian hardliners. The sanctions will work nicely as a pretext for battling against foreign influences at home. The possible economic troubles can be sold by state media to the people as collateral damage in an aggressive war waged against them. As demonstrated by other countries sanctioned by the EU, there is no quick and unambiguous outcome to expect. Sanctions may mark the EU's irritation with policies of a third state for years, but the only strategy they offer is the "wait and see" approach.

The strategic planning is furthermore complicated by the fact that few politicians in the EU are currently ready to consider any trade-offs to Russia, especially on the future of Ukraine. What could hypothetically be a deal for the Kremlin is unacceptable for the EU. What could be the way out of the crisis for the EU is seen as a complete surrender in the Kremlin.

For the next ten years, the EU may be left with a Russia that is strengthening its presence in the post-Soviet space and does not pay much attention to EU criticism

whilst keeping significant trade volumes with EU members. The attempts to diversify resource supply routes will be cost-ineffective and only produce meaningful results years from now. The desired decrease in interdependency between the EU and Russia would only strengthen the arguments of the Russian "Eurosceptic" hardliners.

Showing weakness is taboo for the Kremlin. The strengthening of sanctions would be met with reinforced attempts to break the ranks of the EU rather than succumbing to pressure. The principled position of the EU may quickly fall victim to the material interests of its members. Due to the nature of multilevel decision-making, the EU's actions are much more predictable than those of Russia, making life easier for the opponent, who has time to prepare for troubles.

The strategy starts with setting goals. The only realistic goals in the view for the coming years are limiting the damage and getting ready for the next political era in the long term. Exchanging punches, on the contrary, makes the damage grow. Rupturing ties would leave Russia and the EU alienated even when the next generation of politicians comes to the stage.

## In search of hope

The tools that are all but blocked in the EU-Russia relations by the on-going crisis are concentrated on the intergovernmental level of interaction. No important agreement will be signed, let alone ratified, with the exception of documents directly linked to the resolution of the Ukrainian crisis. Therefore, the EU will have to move the centre of gravity of its Russia policy to levels other than intergovernmental. European institutions have to listen to the companies and business associations that work with Russia. They are inevitably biased but, at the end of the day, they create and multiply the basic ties between the EU and Russia, giving hope for change in the future. They should feel confident and be encouraged to engage with Russian businesses. The same goes for investments, which in many cases have nothing to do with politics, and can stimulate the modernisation of the Russian business environment. Russian small and medium enterprises often do not dare compete on the EU market. Respective consulting services could help them make this step. The temptation to see these activities as collaborationism with an enemy would only lead both parties further into the abyss.

The same goes for people-to-people contacts. There must be more, not less, of them. The visa dialogue, firmly linked to the intergovernmental level of communication, is frozen but to a large extent visa facilitation for Russian citizens can be achieved through unilateral decisions of the EU or even its member states. The Schengen regulations allow long-term, multi-entry visas to be issued more frequently. The successful completion of visa liberalisation with countries of the

common neighbourhood may finally break the usual Russian myth of the absolute improbability of visa-free travel to the EU.

Most of the scientific and cultural communications can flourish without the direct involvement of governments if there is enough funding available to them on the basis of their transparently checked merits. Russian civil society structures are weak, but will grow and learn to organise. They can be banned from receiving direct foreign help, but may still benefit from taking an active part in international communications.

One of the key audiences to talk to in Russia is the students. Many of them leave universities with no working knowledge of foreign languages and an awareness that their only experience abroad may happen on a holiday beach. Access to Erasmus Mundus and other exchange programmes and multicultural training activities should become a routine for the Russian youth. A sanctioned and isolated Russia patrolled by an increasing number of NATO vessels would be further than ever from a political change that could bring back the brighter prospect of EU-Russia relations. The change can only be performed by Russians who genuinely want it. Not hitting them hard, but helping them should be the purpose of the EU strategy.

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# Baby Steps

KAMIL CAŁUS AND PIOTR OLEKSY

The signing of the Association Agreement with the European Union by Moldova is a tremendous opportunity for Moldova to accelerate the development of the country in an unprecedented way. To fully use this opportunity, however, Moldova will need to deal with a series of deep structural problems that its economy has been facing for years.

The banking system is an Achilles heel of Moldova's economy. The ownership structure and the ties of bank owners with politics are non-transparent, which negatively influences the credibility of the sector and constitutes a serious threat to the entire economy. Officially, the owners of the key banks are businesses registered in tax havens but which, in reality, are controlled by Russian or Moldovan businesses connected to the Kremlin. A large number of shares are controlled completely by official Russian state enterprises, such as VEB Kapital. Consequently, in the first months of 2014, the share of foreign capital in Moldova's banking sector equalled 76.4 per cent. Out of this, as many influential politicians in Chișinău believe, around 80 to 90 per cent are Russian capital. What's more, Russian influence on Moldova's banking sector continues to rise.

Control of Russian capital over a large part of Moldova's banking system allows Moscow to speculate with the Moldovan currency and artificially lower its value. Since mid-2013, there has been a permanent depreciation of the Moldovan leu in regards to foreign currencies. Last year, the leu lost 8.2 per cent of its value against to the US dollar and 12.3 per cent against to the euro. According to data generated by the National Bank of Moldova, the reason for this fall is a decrease in the supply of foreign currencies accompanied by high demand, especially seen from the banks controlled by Veaceslav Platon and Igor Shor (Moldovan millionaires

closely connected to Russia). The fall of the value of the leu has been recently halted thanks to the intervention of the National Bank of Moldova, which nonetheless is proof as to how Moldovan banks can be used to destabilise the economic situation in the country.

## Raiderstvo

Moldova's banking system is also used by Russian and Moldovan oligarchs for money laundering. Moldindconbank, the largest Moldovan bank and which is probably under the complete control of Platon, is a key example. What additionally contributes to the lack of stability in the banking sector is a rivalry of influence between the oligarchs as to who owns individual banks and repeated cases of so-called *raiderstvo*, which takes the form of illegal takeovers of shares in banks and other enterprises.

The main problem of Moldovan business is the lack of a capital market and very limited depreciation opportunities.

Many have recently speculated that Platon has, for quite some time already, been making regular attempts towards taking control over the third largest bank in Moldova – Victoriabank, which is probably controlled by Moldovan oligarch Vladimir Plahotniuc (who is also the main sponsor and vice-president of the Democratic Party, a member of the pro-European coalition). To reach this goal, companies, which are either owned by Platon or are linked with him, have taken large loans from Victoriabank and have consciously ceased paying them off. This trick has had an impact on the bank's solvency, its credibility and the price of its shares. It has also allowed a re-purchase of shares in Victoriabank which, in practice, were bought with money that had earlier been borrowed from the same institution.

Although in February 2014 the National Bank of Moldova accused its new shareholders of a plot aimed at taking over control of the bank and forcing them to re-sell their shares, the new shareholders became enterprises connected to Platon. These firms managed to obtain around 30 per cent of the shares. The main problem of Moldovan business is the lack of a capital market and very limited depreciation opportunities. The only possibilities available are, in fact, bank loans with very high interest rates ranging from 12 to 15 per cent. Seemingly, they too, because of the murky structure of the banks, are risky.

There are two stock exchanges registered in Moldova: the Moldovan Stock Exchange and the Chișinău Stock Exchange. In reality, however, these two institutions are more phantoms than operating stock markets. The latter (in which the Romanian Stock Exchange has its shares) almost does not work at all, while

the former has more registered brokerage houses than companies and the daily number of transactions rarely exceeds five (if any transactions take place at all). It seems that creating a stock exchange system, and especially the market of small and medium-size enterprises, is the main challenge for Moldovan financiers. A transparent and functioning capital market would allow many enterprises to find additional funding for their activities. At the moment, it is only possible thanks to expensive credits or remittances sent by families from abroad. The latter is also a less common of a model.

## Right conditions, no efficiency

Moldova is the country with the largest amount of black earth in the world. This together with a large insolation and an adequate amount of rainfall constitutes excellent conditions for agriculture. Taking into account these conditions and the small size of the country, it seems that agriculture should fulfil the majority of its economic needs. Unfortunately, technological backwardness is the major reason why Moldova doesn't come close to meeting its agricultural potential. First and foremost, Moldova does not have a modern and efficient production capability. Those that do exist are so costly that most produce goes for export (mainly to Ukraine) while in Moldovan shops it is generally difficult to find local products. This is also the reason why prices in Moldova are not much lower than prices in Central European countries. Using EU resources not for restructuring the production industry, but for building it from the bottom up is one of the main challenges that Moldova is currently facing.

Despite reforms, key problems remain for foreign investors including corruption and significant shortcomings in property and tax law.

Another major problem is a lack of refrigeration and storage facilities which at the times of very good harvest would allow for some of the produce (for example fruits and vegetables) to be kept for the following year. Current refrigeration facilities allow for the protecting of around 15 per cent of the entire production. Its excess is simply thrown away even though it could be kept if adequately protected and used later. Hence, the Moldovan economy is, to a large degree, dependent on the climate: in dry years the country's GDP drops by a few per cent, while in the years when there is an adequate amount of rainfall it goes up.

The lack of adequate facilities also makes Moldovan farmers highly dependent on the fluctuations of foreign markets. A drop in the demand for fruit, or a temporary ban on the imports of Moldovan fruit, are enough for the crops to be destroyed.

This is best illustrated by the embargo on most of Moldova's fruit production that was imposed by Russia in July 2014, taking place during peak harvest. The only exception in this regard is the wine industry as, in fact, many of the Moldovan wine-producing companies meet the sky-high EU norms and are able to export their products to European markets. In addition, contrary to the fruit industry, the storing of wine is much less of a problem, which makes this industry less susceptible to economic changes.

## Nobody knows anything

Both Moldovan entrepreneurs as well as the civil servants and politicians suffer from a lack of clear and reliable economic data regarding their country and its economy. The data generated by different offices or ministries quite often vary significantly. The effect of this phenomenon is a common tendency to treat Moldova as the poorest country in Europe. This is, among other things, the result of the fact that the Moldovan revenue office is not capable of collecting credible data on the state of wealth of its own taxpayers. Methods of collecting such information are almost comical: a bureaucrat comes to a farmer and asks him for information about the income, wealth and economic conditions of the household. The farmer declares what he regards as necessary and this declaration is in no way verified. Illustratively speaking, a farmer who owns 100 sheep can declare that he owns just 20 sheep. He will pay a lower tax and nobody will check whether he was telling the truth or not. As a result, in Moldova there are a lot of "stray" cattle and livestock.

Obviously another reason for the statistics-based classification of Moldova as the poorest country in Europe is mass emigration. Estimates suggest that currently there are even as many as one million Moldovans working abroad (at the moment there are 3.7 million people living in Moldova). Remittances sent by these workers to Moldova make around 30 per cent of the country's GDP. They are not subject to any tax. Such mass emigration brings about, obviously, terrible social effects. The phenomenon of the "euro orphans", meaning children raised by older siblings or grandparents, has become omnipresent in Moldova.

On the other hand, however, from the perspective of the ruling elite, this situation has its advantages as the workforce is now Moldova's main export good – the country is being left by people who are sending money back home. This money, in turn, helps the local economy. Consequently, Moldova can maintain the status of the poorest country on the European continent, which increases the interest of different donors and co-ordinators of assistance programmes.

## It's the energy

Stable and certain deliveries of energy resources are the key issue for the development of the Moldovan economy. Unfortunately, this country has been fully dependent on external deliveries of energy and energy resources since regaining independence. The worst situation concerns natural gas. Russia is the sole supplier of natural gas to Moldova. This generates an understandable political risk as Russia, since the end of 2011 when the last long-term contract regulating gas delivery to Moldova expired, refused to accept a new contract. By doing so, it has been forcing Moldova to sign short-term contracts which do not extend beyond 12 months. Based on the bilateral agreements concluded with Kyiv, Moldova could in theory, in case there are problems with receiving gas from Russia, use Ukrainian reserves. However, in the context of the current (but also any subsequent) Russian-Ukrainian gas war, it is difficult to expect that Ukraine would be willing to share any of its reserves with Chișinău.

The panacea for dependency on Russia and the lack of certainty in the Ukrainian energy sector should come with the establishment of the interconnector linking the natural gas systems of Romania to Moldova by the end of August 2014. The connector allows a delivery of around ten per cent of the gas that Moldova needs and only on a limited territory – the area of the western city of Ungheni. Only the building of a gas pipeline from Ungheni to Chișinău and the modernisation of Romanian transmission systems will allow Moldova to truly meet its gas needs. At the moment, it remains unclear if and when this will happen.

A slightly smaller problem, although recently also quite significant, is electric energy security. Moldova actually has an electric power plant, Moldavskaya GRES, in the southern Dnestrovsc, but it is located in the breakaway territory of Transnistria. Since 2005, the plant has been the property of a Russian state-owned company called Inter RAO UES. As opposed to natural gas, however, Chișinău does have an outside option – a Ukrainian company owned by Rinat Akhmetov called DTEK PowerTrade.

## Not an investor's paradise

For quite some time, Moldovan authorities have been increasing efforts to attract foreign investments and bring to the country new technologies and know-how. The currently ruling elite can be praised in this regard since it created a number of special economic zones, offering preferential conditions for certain economic activities, as well as several industrial parks. Foreign companies registered in Moldova have also been offered special tax rates whose value is determined based on the scale

of investment in the country. These activities have improved the situation, but have not eliminated the key problem for the investors: corruption of the judiciary and the civil servants as well as significant shortcomings in property and tax law.

That is why it is quite common that foreign investors operating on the Moldovan market are surprised by sudden and unexpected calls from state agencies to pay for supposed multi-million euro tax delays, even though they were freed from these obligations. Quite often these decisions are based on court decisions. In 2012, Moldovan business circles were shocked by news of a scandal which involved three large investors: the American Lear Corporation, the German Draexlmaier and the Australian Shan Lian Group, which – due to some serious problems with the Moldovan tax office and customs services – decided to give up their plans for expanding in Moldova or withdrew any invested resources. It is difficult to state whether these situations are meant to force bribes from foreign businessmen or are a reflection of the weak Moldovan law. Regardless, their effect is lowering interest in Moldova among foreign investors.

## Oligarchs, the Moldovan way

Even though Moldova's economy is not large and, with the exception of Transnistria, there were no significant industrial enterprises from the collapse of the Soviet Union from which a Russian or Ukrainian model of oligarchy could have emerged, it would be untrue to say that an oligarchic-like model of ties between business and politics is completely foreign to Moldova. Wealthy Moldovan businessmen cannot be compared to Ukrainian oligarchs when it comes to property size, but their influence on the authorities and the overall politics in the country is at least comparable, if not greater. The key oligarchs, in the Moldovan understanding of the term, are both the former prime minister and leader of the largest coalition party, Vlad Filat, the son of former president Oleg Voronin as well as the earlier-mentioned Vladimir Plahotniuc, Veaceslav Platon and Igor Shor. They all make up the group of the ten richest men in the country. Their influence on the state apparatus gives them an opportunity to provide their companies with certain privileges, allowing them to influence certain laws and regulations. It is clear that this is in contradiction to the idea of free competition and is an obstacle to the country's free economic development.

In order to protect their own political and business interests, Moldovan oligarchs do not hesitate to wield their influence. This is well-illustrated by the situation which took place when the Polish company Krajowa Spółka Cukrowa took over the property of a defunct Moldovan sugar plant located in Cupcini. The takeover of the sugar plant and establishing of the company Moldova Zahar was one of

the largest foreign investments in Moldova in recent years. Attempts were even made so that the official signing of the contract would take place during a visit by Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk to Moldova. On the Moldovan side, it was envisioned that the then-prime minister of Moldova, Vlad Filat, could present the entire deal as his own achievement. Unfortunately, the sugar plant that was subject to the takeover belonged to a business holding controlled by Plahotniuc, who did everything he could to postpone the takeover of the company, hindering his political and business rival from a PR success. It is worth pointing out that at that time Plahotniuc and Filat were (and still are) members of the ruling coalition.

The story of Moldova Zahar highlights the structural problems of the Moldovan economy. Soon after the sugar plant's takeover, it became clear that there was a big problem regarding the need to find fields to cultivate the beets, as Moldovan farmers all own small and dispersed lots. To create a plantation that could offer profitable crops, these lots would need to be combined like pieces of a puzzle. Each piece would have to be negotiated with an individual farmer. Yet, it turned out that the local farmers had no money to buy seeds. The solution was to "lend" them the seeds, which they could pay back in the form of crops. IMany of the farmers instead opted for much faster profits and decided to sell the seeds at the market.

In order to protect their own political and business interests, Moldovan oligarchs do not hesitate to wield their influence.

That was not the end of Moldova Zahar's troubles. The most difficult moment that the company faced was the blackmail it experienced from a local natural gas supplier. Two weeks before the beet processing machines were ready to begin operation, the sugar company received a notification from the gas company that it would stop gas supplies unless the sugar company paid off the debt of its predecessor. It is important to note that Moldova Zahar did not take over the company, it only bought the production plant, which means it did not take any former obligations. The whole story ended with a political scandal.

Hopefully, the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement, as a part of the Association Agreement with the EU, will open a new chapter in relations between Moldova and European companies. According to some conservative estimates, the passing of the regulations that are a result of the agreement will accelerate Moldova's economic growth by an additional five per cent and will lead to a significant 16 per cent increase in exports. To fully utilise the opportunity now being offered to the Moldovan economy, the authorities in Chișinău will have to face fundamental problems that limit its economic development. Clearly, eliminating these issues

will require a great deal of political will and perseverance. The Moldovan ruling elite would have to demonstrate that it is ready to go above individual political and business interests. Moldova's recent track record, however, illustrates that this is something which will prove extremely difficult.

*Translated by Iwona Reichardt*

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# Walking on Quicksand

ILEANA RACHERU

With parliamentary elections scheduled for November 2014, the Moldovan elite are searching for a strategy that will allow them to maintain power and counteract the threat by the Russian-supported opposition groups. Forging a new pro-European alliance, however, will not be the only obstacle to overcome.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Moldova has navigated into the grey waters of a multi-vector foreign policy, unsuccessfully trying to balance between Russia and the European Union. A clear pro-EU choice was made by the newly installed Alliance for European Integration after the 2009 "Twitter Revolution". On June 27th 2014, the EU Association Agreement (including the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement) was signed marking, according to the Moldova's Prime Minister Iurie Leanca, "a milestone in our European agenda".

A visa free agreement was also completed by Moldova in April 2014. But the Association Agreement is just the beginning of the difficult path "paved" with domestic factors which can easily destabilise the pro-European regime and with Russian eagerness to fight for its "traditional sphere of interest".

## Shifting geopolitics

Over the last 20 years, Moldova has proved to be an unwilling actor in integration projects proposed by Russia. Moldovan leaders refused from the beginning to take part in any military/security projects in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) even if they were frequently pressured by Russia for more and deeper co-operation. The CIS Treaty signed in 1991 was ratified only after serious disputes in

the Moldovan Parliament in 1994. One reason behind this decision was a reversal of a double-edged sword of the Transnistrian conflict and the neutrality provision mentioned in the 1994 Constitution. Moldovan leaders argued that involving Chișinău in the CIS military co-operation would violate its constitutional provisions and inflame the situation in Transnistria. Another rationale was that Moldova did not have a common border with Russia and it could "hide" behind Ukraine. Ukraine was perceived as a large geopolitical buffer zone that could be used to avoid greater integration into the Russian sphere of influence. In this situation Moldovan leaders tactfully played the card of a multi-vector foreign policy, balancing between Russia and the EU.

Polls show that 68 per cent of Moldovans believe the country is heading in the wrong direction.

The annexation of Crimea in March 2014 and the ongoing war in Ukraine have raised serious concerns for the Moldovan authorities. At the moment, the Moldovan elite do not have a strategy for the new regional geopolitical realities. The split between the national interests of EU members are equally worrying for the Moldovan leadership. Moldova can count on the unquestionable support for the membership perspective from Central European countries, but Leanca did not achieve similar promises during his July 2014 visit in France. Moreover, during a visit to Chișinău, Angela Merkel emphasised a need for a "step-by-step" process towards "a more solid partnership". The situation is expected to worsen after Jean-Claude Juncker's election as the president of the European Commission. In his speech preceding the vote, Junker stated that "no new countries are expected to join the Union in the next five years". The "enlargement" process will be reduced to the ongoing accession negotiations.

Since the latest snap parliamentary elections in 2010, Moldova has been governed by a reshaped and loose pro-European coalition (the Alliance for European Integration). The coalition consists of a number of political parties including Moldova's Liberal Democratic Party (MLDP), the Democratic Party (DP) and the Liberal Party (LP), all of which are frequently at odds with each other. The Alliance is occasionally destabilised by personal animosities between its main main financial supporters or political leaders. In 2013, the parliament fell victim to serious turmoil caused by Vlad Filat (currently the main business figure of the MLDP and its leader) and Vlad Plahotniuc (a local oligarch, sponsor of the DP and a former member of parliament). As a consequence, a vote of no confidence against the then-prime minister Filat and the abolition of the parliament deputy speaker (held by Plahotniuc) was supported by some members of the Alliance and the opposition – the Communist Party.

## Pro-European but in the wrong direction?

The costs of these personal fights were paid by Moldova's institutions such as the National Anti-Corruption Centre and by the process of European reforms, which was put under serious criticism. In 2013, a faction called the Party of Liberal Reformists emerged from the Liberal Party. Mihai Ghimpu, the party's leader, accused Vlad Filat of poorly handling the situation. Consequently, Ghimpu moved to the opposition, joined by a loyalist group from the Liberal Party, and offered legislative approval for the government's pro-European initiatives. The latest quarrel inside the pro-European coalition was seen in July 2014 when the provisions of a law extending and clarifying the functions of Gagauz autonomy were disputed.

In February 2014, local pro-Russian businessmen tried to buy elected pro-European politicians in an attempt to destabilise the government. Hence, the creation of a coalition between the Communist Party and DP (which had been intensively courted by the communists in the past) is seen as a possible outcome in this autumn's elections. A strengthening of the pro-European coalition, however, cannot also be excluded. Opinion polls conducted in April 2014 by the Institute for Public Policies indicate that the pro-European parties (including LP) enjoy the support of 49 per cent of the electorate. In this context, Ghimpu will probably get back in the coalition, but this would depend, to a large extent, on the position he would receive in the new government.

The polls also showed that 68 per cent of Moldovans believe the country is heading in the wrong direction. The visa free regime with the EU and promises that the economic situation will improve once the EU agreements are signed are the only important cards that the ruling coalition can offer in this year's electoral campaign. With some small exceptions, the reforms were almost entirely limited to legislative activity and no tangible results can be seen. Generally, there is no real political will or interest in the government tackling high-level corruption, as the politicians are well aware that any investigation against prominent officials could have a domino effect. The charges will be personally perceived as an instrument to destabilise the coalition and remove adversaries.

> Moscow uses symbolic, but effective, means to promote its image and to improve the support of pro-Russian parties.

## A blind eye

The lack of an independent judiciary was obvious in several rampant cases of corruption and organised crime. The threats are increasing in the context of the ongoing Ukrainian-Russian war. In July 2014, the media revealed a weapons

transaction conducted in Chișinău by a well-known criminal figure. Ukraine was the final destination of the weapons and the figure was "surprisingly" released from jail after serving seven months of a 20-year murder sentence. The government in Chișinău stayed silent. Furthermore, an inefficient and ineffective investigation conducted by the General Prosecutor's Office revealed an illegal referendum posing real threats to Moldova's national security organised by the local Gagauz authorities in February 2014. A case was opened, but local politicians, known for notorious separatist activity, were not involved in the investigations.

However some minor developments show small steps in tackling low-level corruption: two judges were charged for corruption and another six criminal investigations have been launched against judges in the last two years. The Ministry of Education is trying hard to remove corruption from the high school leaving exams. But the measure was received with discontent by parents and the political opposition who lamented the "Soviet practices" of introducing video cameras to supervise pupils. The government had also managed to reform a border police notorious for rampant practices of corruption.

## Russian cards

There are two main cards that Russia is playing on Moldova's political table. The first is represented by Vladimir Voronin and the Communist Party he leads, while the second one is Igor Dodon and his Party of Socialists (often cooperating with Mihail Formzual, the *bashkan* of Gagauzia and his Party of Regions). The communists fiercely campaigned for Moldova's membership in the Russia-led Customs Union. After the liberalisation of the visa regime with the EU, Voronin has moderated his rhetoric by calling for a renegotiation of the Association Agreement. His party's stance on foreign policy has changed "overnight" in the last few months. In May 2014, Voronin questioned Moldova's accession to the Customs Union and signalled a preference for a multi-vector foreign policy.

Moldova has a long-lasting and problematic track record with its commitment to signed agreements.

Although the Communist Party still enjoys the best scores in the polls (39 per cent in April 2014), its potential to derail the European course is questioned by several factors. The ambiguous foreign policy message promoted in the last months illustrates Voronin's credibility in his relationship with Moscow and the internal fighting in the party. While in office as president (2001-2009), Voronin has often changed his rhetoric between the pro-Russian and pro-western options. Voronin also has credibility problems when dealing with Moscow and Vladimir Putin. In

Photo: European Commission

Moldova has a long-lasting and problematic track record with its commitment to signed agreements. The European rush is a powerful signal now motivated by the electoral campaign.

2003 as president, he refused to sign the Kozak Memorandum just a few hours prior to Putin's arrival in Chișinău for the signing ceremony. In Moscow, this was perceived as a personal offence.

The Communist Party is also caught in internal fights between the old communist leader and the younger members who are trying to oust him. Three important members were excluded from the party leadership at the last plenary session of the Communist Party. Clearly, Voronin is using the old Bolshevik strategy of eliminating all potential challengers, which will bring the party again to the brink of scission. An improbable scenario where Mark Tkachuk, a young party leader, would manage to overturn Voronin would be the party's suicide before the elections. A poll published in April 2014 showed that Voronin is the most trusted politician in Moldova with 14 per cent support, while Tkachuk does not appear in the top seven preferences. In rural areas, where the communists get their main electoral support, the party is associated with Voronin.

Igor Dodon, the leader of the Socialist Party, is the only figure promoted by Russian media as a supporter for Moldova's integration in the Customs Union. But support for Dodon is low. According to opinion polls, Dodon and his party enjoy an insignificant support of one to two per cent. Dodon has become Russia's last option. However, until now Russia has invested only small amounts in media campaigns designed to promote his image. Some press reports published in Chișinău have revealed that Moldovan businessmen with ties to Russia are now financing

the Socialist Party. One rationale behind this might be the fact that Dodon and his party do not have any real chance to reach the six per cent threshold in the November parliamentary elections.

## Derailing the European train

Other factors which could be used to undermine any possible co-operation between the left wing forces are their different political visions regarding the directions of domestic and foreign policy. Members of the Communist Party show moderate positions, arguing for a multi-vector foreign policy that avoids deep integration into Russia's sphere of influence and provides access to various sources of EU funding. The Socialist Party, on the other hand, claims total integration within Russia's political and economic projects.

In a country with a polarised society, Moscow uses symbolic but effective means to promote its image and to increase the support for the pro-Russian parties. The anti-EU and anti-Ukrainian propaganda spread by the Russian media has also had a negative influence on a significant part of Moldovan society. Moscow also supported the actions of the pro-Russian political groups and civic movements active in promoting nostalgia for the Soviet Union. What also should be taken into consideration when analysing Russia's symbolic potential in hindering Moldova's path towards the EU is Moscow's public diplomacy offensive.

President Putin's special envoy for Transnistria, Dmitry Rogozin, an awkward nationalist who was an active fighter in the Transnistrian conflict, unofficially travelled several times to Chișinău and Tiraspol. He repeatedly made clear that Russia will not accept the European integration of Moldova within its recognised borders. Two weeks before the ceremony for the agreement's signature, Russian deputy foreign minister, Grigory Karasin, invited himself to Chișinău "to find solutions to reduce the negative impact on bilateral relations of the future of Moldova's EU agreement". All of those symbolic actions are aimed at maintaining pro-Russian sympathies and attracting new supporters from among undecided voters (23 per cent according to the latest polls).

Russia is also traditionally playing the secessionism card in Moldova. A local referendum for joining the Russian-led Customs Union versus the EU was organised in Gagauzia in February 2014. Around 98 per cent of the respondents voted in favour of joining the Customs Union. The events in Gagauzia showed a continuation of Moscow's traditional practices for destabilising the political regime in Chișinău: the involvement of Russian citizens in financing the referendum, the participation of Gagauz authorities in its organisation and controversial statements by Russian officials regarding Moscow's positions towards the situation.

In the case of Transnistria, the head of the local Supreme Council used the referendum for Crimea's annexation as a pretext to ask for the recognition of a similar "referendum" organised in 2006 by the unrecognised authorities. Although Russian officials declared that the situation in Transnistria would be analysed by the government, no official response was sent to Tiraspol. However, Moscow had warned Chișinău about the possibility of the Moldova train losing some "wagons" (meaning Transnistria and Gagauzia) on its route to Europe. Furthermore, Russia's minister of foreign affairs frequently accused Moldovan authorities of imposing an "economic blockade" against Transnistria. In July 2014, Moscow invited Yevgeny Shevchuk, the Transnistrian leader, to sign a Memorandum on Co-operation between Russia and Transnistria.

Another issue that should be mentioned regarding Transnistria as an obstacle towards Moldova's European integration is the recent worsening of the security situation in the context of the conflict in Ukraine. Transnistrian relations with Ukraine worsened after Kyiv decided to secure the Transnistrian segment of the Moldovan border in order to prevent separatist supporters from entering into Ukraine.

## Moldova's future

It seems that Chișinău's only chance to keep Moldova on the European track is the implementation of the "Georgian model" with a harsh fight against low-level corruption and a soft agreement within the ruling coalition to rapidly eliminate at least the most compromised political figures before the next elections scheduled for November 2014. Strengthening vital institutions for functional justice is also an unavoidable measure.

There are some possibilities to establish a new pro-European coalition after the November 2014 elections. As previous experience shows, the process of negotiations will be quite difficult and if there is any compromise it may be reached at the very last moment. The communists will intensively court the DP and the MLDP to form a coalition, while the latter two will try to blackmail each other over a pact with the Communist Party.

Russia has "traditional" secessionist weapons to weaken Moldova's territorial integrity and security, but they can be addressed. Secessionist activities organised by the Gagauz leaders can be avoided with measures for strengthening the institutional capacity of the General Prosecutor. Moscow and the pro-Russian parties will continue to make attempts to destabilise the pro-European alliance. They can be skilfully avoided through a coalition that can overcome multiple "cohesion" tests. The EU's indecisiveness over its relations with the Eastern Partnership countries

will be to Moscow's advantage as it is a powerful argument for local pro-Russian political forces.

Forging a new pro-European alliance, however, will not be the last obstacle to overcome. Moldova has a long-lasting and problematic track record with its commitment to signed agreements. The European rush is a powerful signal now motivated by the electoral campaign. It does not offer any guarantees, however, that Moldova will stay on the European track once the elections are over.

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# Landlocked

IOANA BURTEA

Few cases in the history of national identity are as interesting and complex as Moldova. Establishing even fundamental traits of Moldovan society has been a challenge since historical times. If anything, Moldova has turned out to be quite malleable under different occupiers, but nothing has ever really stuck.

Psychologists define national identity as an awareness of difference, a feeling of "us" and "them". Most researchers agree that a nation's identity is not an inborn trait, but results from the presence of common features in people's lives: language, national flag, history, etc. Issues tend to appear when national identity collides with people's civil or ethnic identity, as in the case of the Catalans in Spain or Israeli Arabs. What usually happens in these situations is that group identity tends to strengthen and become more vocal. But when sociologists and anthropologists look at Moldova, one of the smallest and poorest countries in Europe, all theories on identity quickly fall apart.

International affairs professor Charles King of Georgetown University is one of the very few western researchers who ventured into Moldova after the fall of the Soviet Union, in the 1990s. His book *The Moldovans* took over a decade to complete and his conclusions would make any eastern studies' groupie cry under the bed for a month. I, on the other hand, have been researching Moldova for only two years, out of which nine months were spent in Chișinău, the state's capital. The experience, quite frankly, made me want to cry under the bed because of the many years it would take me or anyone to fully understand what happened to that nation. Still, few cases in the history of identity are as interesting and complex as this landlocked region lying east of Romania, between the Prut River and Ukraine. The key is to not expect the laws of historical logic to apply here.

## Fundamental traits

Moldova is the second smallest country among the former Soviet satellite states. Its size is about a third of Indiana in the United States. It is composed of two main regions – historical Bessarabia to the west, between the Prut and Dniester rivers, and secessionist Transnistria east of the Dniester. Tiny Moldova is the least urbanised European country from the former Soviet Union, with about 40 per cent of the work force being employed in some sort of agricultural work. Charles King found that, according to the 1989 census, which allegedly remains the most reliable, almost 65 per cent of Moldovans spoke Romanian, followed by 13.8 per cent Ukrainians, 13 per cent Russians, 3.5 per cent Gagauz Turks and 2 per cent Bulgarians. A 2004 census reflected a rather different reality and brought back a controversy that has gone on for centuries: almost 60 per cent of the citizens said they spoke Moldovan, something which linguists and historians have struggled whether to call a language distinct from Romanian, while over 15 per cent described their language as Romanian.

Not even the mighty Soviets were able to create a new long-lasting nation in Moldova.

The confusion surrounding the language spoken by the majority of the population in Moldova is just one aspect of a national identity conflict that has its roots even before the 19th century. Over the years, Moldova has been a part of several nation-states (mostly involving Romania or Russia) and the name of its official language changed regularly. Finally, in the fall of 2013, the Constitutional Court in Chișinău found no difference between Moldovan and Romanian, deciding to change the state language to the latter, at least for now.

Establishing even the fundamental traits of Moldovan society has been a challenge since historical times, as the issue has always been intimately woven into political conflicts. If anything, Moldova turned out to be quite malleable under different occupiers – whether it was Russia or Romania – but nothing ever really stuck. Not even the mighty Soviets were able to create a new long-lasting nation in Moldova, but that does not necessarily mean that the country's core identity was ever very strong or clear. Instead, as King argues, it was a combination of ambiguity, poor education, the artificiality of the Soviet system and the weak economy that led to the failure of the nation-building process. After 1991, when Moldova became an independent state, free to return to the arms of its "Romanian brothers", political analysts were shocked to learn that the country's government and population were "far less sanguine about their Romanian identity".

To understand more about Moldova's relationship with its two main occupiers, Romania and Russia, one must dig deep through the few historical archives that tell about a society which was always quite different from what anyone imagined.

In 1919, Emmanuel de Martonne, a Sorbonne University professor, visited Greater Romania, a newly formed kingdom which encompassed Romania and Moldova, as well as territories which now belong to Hungary, Ukraine and Bulgaria. In the province called Bessarabia, de Martonne found a "motley population" which sparked his interest. The French professor was perplexed about the way Moldovans identified themselves and this still remains a big source of confusion for someone trying to understand Moldovan society in 2014. One of my interviewees from Chișinău, when asked how he would describe his identity, told me he views himself as a Moldovan, but in his mind being Moldovan means, more than anything, being Romanian.

## Origins

One of the first and richest chronicles about Moldova dates back to the 1700s, when Dimitrie Cantemir wrote about the early Moldovan lands in *Descriptio Moldavie*. According to Cantemir, himself a ruler of Moldova, the founding of the Principality of Moldova, a state which incorporated the eastern part of Romania, Bessarabia, and south-eastern Ukraine, was the result of a hunting trip. Legend has it that Dragos, a Romanian-speaking prince from the 1300s, chased a wild bison across the Carpathians and found a new uninhabited land beyond the mountains, which he named after his deceased dog, Molda. While the story is obviously an invention, it was used by early Moldovans to establish the rights of Romanian-speakers to the lands east of the Carpathians.

A far more believable theory, Charles King found, is that during the 14th century the area was inhabited by Magyars, Tatars, Cumans and the Romanian-speaking Wallachs (a general term for Latin populations north and south of the Danube River), organised in small principalities (*cnezates*). These early states came together under the Wallach Prince Bogdan towards the end of the 1350s. A similar process took place south of the Carpathians, leading to the appearance of *Tara Romaneasca* (Romanian Land), also known as Wallachia. Even during this time, chroniclers were often confused by the similarities between the two regions. Many referred to the inhabitants of the Principality of Moldova as "Moldovans", but also as "Vlahs" or "Romanians". King established that, in fact, who the Moldovans were at that stage depended on who wrote about them.

While Bessarabia was never a very prosperous region, under Russian control it remained the most backward state in the empire's western part.

The principality's most prosperous period was under princes Alexandru cel Bun (the Good) and Stefan cel Mare (the Great). Under Stefan's long reign (1457-1504),

Moldova reached its peak and secured its borders against the repeated attacks of the Ottomans, Hungarians, Tatars and Poles. After Stefan's death, though, Moldova changed. Conquered by the Ottomans, the state became a vassal of the Porte and its rulers unrecognisable to foreign visitors: more Turkish than Christian, with clothing and customs mimicking those from the sultan's palace. Later, the sultan appointed Greek nobles from the Fener district of Constantinople to administer Moldova and Tara Romaneasca. The "Phanariots" virtually destroyed the two states in the 18th century, stealing all the riches for themselves, implementing a corrupt system and imposing Greek as the language of the courts and churches.

After 1944, Soviet researchers took on the task to establish who the Moldovans were and who they were supposed to be.

Towards the end of the 18th century, a series of wars took over Europe. The main players were Austria, Russia and the Ottoman Empire, with Napoleon's France later joining as well. The great European powers, sensing the Ottoman Empire's decay, launched offensives to establish which of them would get what territory after the sultan would be defeated. Moldova and Tara Romaneasca became battlefields for decades, and in 1812 part of Moldova finally came under Russian control. The conquered region between the Prut and Dniester rivers became Bessarabia, which at that time was never considered a distinct territory, but rather the eastern part of the Principality of Moldova. That was how a new Moldovan state was born inside the Russian Empire.

While at first Bessarabia enjoyed a certain degree of autonomy in the Russian Empire, things changed for the worse starting in 1825 after Moscow authorities sensed pro-Romanian revolutionary tendencies in the young country. In 1854 Russian became the official language and the use of Moldovan/Romanian was purged from all schools. By 1899 there were no books in Romanian at the public library in Chișinău. The real tragedy was that, while Bessarabia was never a very prosperous region, under Russian control it remained the most backward state in the empire's western part – only six per cent of ethnic Moldovans were literate. It was so far away from the central region of the empire that Alexander Pushkin was exiled in Moldova from 1820 to 1823. Of the state's capital, he wrote: "Accursed town of Kishinev (Chișinău), to abuse you the tongue will grow tired."

## Frozen in time

The power in the state and even local administration belonged either to Russians or Russified Moldovans. This led to widespread corruption and the impoverishment of the population. The system in Moldova shocked even the new Russian governor

of the province in 1903, Prince Sergei Urussov. While visiting a prison, he noticed several prisoners had been kept in confinement months after their sentences had expired.

During the first Russian takeover, Moscow authorities were interested in ruralisation and maintaining a low level of education in the countryside – they figured revolutionary tendencies would be less frequent this way. While Russian was spoken in state institutions and by the "polite society", "Moldovan" remained the language of the simple peasant. At no time during this occupation did the Russians argue that Moldovans and Romanians were separate nations – all they wanted to do was extinguish any trace of non-Russian nationalism. In the meantime, through maintained connections with the Romanian-speaking intellectuals in what soon became Romania (Tara Romaneasca plus what was left of the Principality of Moldova) in the early 1900s, a feeling of pan-Romanianism took over Bessarabia. In the 19th century several national states appeared in Europe (Italy, Germany) based on shared descent and language. Even though the Russians tried to prevent this process from taking place, they only managed to delay it and, at the end of the First World War in April 1918, the Bessarabian autonomous parliament voted to join Romania.

Nonetheless, Bessarabians never thought of themselves as unambiguously Romanian. As part of Greater Romania – the largest state in history containing all the Romanian-speaking populations in Eastern Europe – Moldovan Bessarabians still referred to their language as "Moldovan", which infuriated Romanian nationalists. But having been a part of the Russian Empire from 1812 to 1918, Moldovans were absent from all the defining moments of Romanian consciousness-building. They missed the rebellion against the Ottomans in 1821, the standardisation and Latinisation of the language and alphabet in the 1860s, the creation of a unified Romanian state in 1859, the founding of a Romanian dynastic house in 1866 and the achievement of independence from the Porte in 1878. They remained frozen in time somewhere before 1812, when the idea of a Romanian nation was still in its infancy, and being pulled from one side to the other did not help.

After the Soviet Union regained control of Bessarabia in 1944, uniting it with a state called the Moldovan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (parts of southern Ukraine, central Bessarabia, and Transnistria) that had been founded in 1924, Soviet researchers received the task to establish who the Moldovans were and who they were supposed to be. The experiments had begun in the MASSR in the 1920s, as a collaboration between some members of the Moldovan elite and Russian researchers. Soviet propaganda at the time focused on the fact that, inside Greater Romania, nationalists were actually threatening the distinct Moldovan nation from Bessarabia with cultural and linguistic annihilation. And since Russia never

acknowledged the union in 1918, they saw Bessarabia as merely an occupied part of the MASSR. The problem for them was that Moldovans were, at best, a new nation and, by the 20th century, there had been no specialist journals or publications to study their language and customs.

## Product of the present

Soviet researchers thus decided to construct an official Moldovan language, different from Romanian. Chief MASSR linguist Leonid Madan, a young Moldovan educated in Kyiv, confessed at the time: "We are interested in language as a recent product, a product of the present, which we can use for our own purposes." By 1929, the passionate Madan published the state-approved *Moldovan Grammar* in Tiraspol, the capital of the Transnistrian region. In the introduction to this book, Madan wrote that language should not be constructed by scholars, but should be based on "the spoken language of the people" and open to change over time. He argued that the Moldovan language was basically vulgar Latin and the language spoken by indigenous Carpathian tribes like the Daci and the Geti, but after the disintegration of the Roman Empire it was modified by migratory populations such as Goths, Huns, Bulgarians, Avars, Pecinegi, Poles, Tatars, Turks, Greeks, Ukrainians and Russians. This, Madan wrote, led to an independent Moldovan language.

At the same time, it is undeniable that the Romanian language in the early 20th century had become more French-oriented, which led to a rift between ethnic Moldovans and Romanians. As much as Romanians would object to this, it is a fact that, even though Russians introduced the Cyrillic alphabet in the MASSR and Bessarabia, it was never imposed on them, but rather embraced as more in line with their traditions than the Latin one. As for Transnistria, it had never been part of any Romanian-speaking modern state, so Cyrillic was all they knew. Even while Bessarabia was a part of Greater Romania, certain publications maintained Cyrillic writing in order to make them more accessible to the peasants.

Leonid Madan's invented language, which mostly contained calques from Russian or Romanian words simply glued together and given another meaning, failed to be adopted even in the MASSR. Besides the difficulties in making peasants speak the new language, Madan faced other difficulties related to carrying out research in Moldova and identifying the best strategies to implement. The only Moldovan publication in the MASSR, *Plugarul Ros*, was criticised for using the new "Moldovan" language because it made it impossible for the peasants to understand. Moreover, Moldovan peasants, according to the state authorities of the time, were not in the habit of reading anyway, which made the linguists' job more difficult. The religiosity

and native distrust of the peasants made them sceptical to any institutional attempt at changing their way of life.

In the 1930s, Madan's work, as much as it confused the population in the MASSR and Bessarabia (through transnational propaganda), was labelled a failure by Moscow and the traces of his work and that of his colleagues were mostly erased. However, even when the Soviet Union incorporated the region in 1944, re-educating the population did not go very well and Russification was only achieved through repeated deportations of Moldo-Romanians and repopulating the territory with more Russians and Ukrainians.

After achieving independence, Moldova finds itself still struggling to identify what it means to be Moldovan. It is far too simplistic to say "they are kind of backwards." You have to look at their past and what they have gone through to even begin putting the pieces together. What is presented above is just the summary of a summary. Certainly, one key to understanding Moldova today is to understand the space you are in. You are not in Russia, but you are not in Europe either.

For me, Moldova is a great teacher and builder of character. It is a useful reminder that stereotypes and western readings mean nothing when your face is pressed against the window of an overcrowded *marshrutka* while Russian pop blasts from the radio. It is also important to realise that EU bubbles and fairy tales of a democratic continent where freedom of speech and non-discrimination rule can easily come tumbling down in the face of a flea invasion in August or a bad wine year that throws the country's only industry and economy into chaos. It may not bring clarity on the whole identity issue, but it gives you a whole new perspective on this tiny country wedged between Romania and Ukraine.

Ioana Burtea is a Romanian writer and journalist.

# The Unanswerable Question of Identity

KRZYSZTOF KOLANOWSKI

The 2014 census in Moldova is meant to give a clear picture as to how Moldovans identify themselves in relation to language and ethnicity. The discussion about the identity of Moldovans, however, is more about emotions than science. The identity question encompasses numerous issues including language, a feeling of belonging and personal attitudes towards Romania and Romanians.

The 2014 census conducted in Moldova is expected to provide the ultimate answers to questions which still remain unknown: how do the majority of the citizens in Moldova define their ethnicity? What is the name of the language spoken in Moldova? Is Moldova the "other Romanian state"? Or is it at least "the other Romanian-speaking state"? Or, alternatively, perhaps there exists a separate Moldovan nation, different from the Romanian one, speaking a separate Moldovan language, just like the author of the *Moldovan-Romanian Dictionary* (issued in 2003) would like to see it?

The previous census, carried out in 2004, revealed that 75.8 per cent of the population (3.38 million inhabitants) are Moldovan, 8.4 per cent are Ukrainian, 5.9 per cent are Russian, 4.4 per cent Gagauzians, with only 2.2 per cent identified themselves as Romanian. As for the mother tongue, 60 per cent claimed to speak Moldovan, 16.5 per cent Romanian and 11.26 per cent Russian. Thus, a clear line between Moldovans and Romanians was drawn. However, these results are claimed to be anything but unbiased.

## Identity politicised

The party in power at that time was the Communist Party of the Republic of Moldova with President Vladimir Voronin openly supporting the idea of Moldovenism and pursuing a confrontation in relations with Romania. The authorities allegedly instructed the census takers to declare the autochthonous population as Moldovan and their language as Moldovan. The headlines in the media from those days spoke of fraud, that the data were often entered in pencil and that people who declared themselves as Romanian were recorded as "Moldovan".

As long as the communists were in power, the general practice was to avoid calling the language by any name. Expressions such as "state language" or "our language" were used eagerly by all those who did not wish to take any position on the topic, especially if their opinion upon the naming of the language differed from the position represented by the ruling authorities. After the Alliance for European Integration came to power, officials began to name the language as "Romanian" more willingly. However, there is still no single interpretation on what to call the language and the indigenous population of the Republic of Moldova.

Simple statistics are not capable of solving complex issues of identity.

The census in 2014 is meant to render a clearer picture. However, irrespective of the results, which are still unknown, it can well be claimed that those open questions will still remain open. Firstly, there is no guarantee that the present census will be unbiased: it was accompanied by a strong linguistic campaign on both sides. The youth civic organisation Tinerii Moldovei had called for declaring a Romanian identity and the Romanian language as native whereas the Socialist Party, led by Igor Dodon, actively encouraged people to declare their Moldovan nationality and Moldovan as their native tongue. Both campaigns speculated with abusive arguments. Tinerii Moldovei had stated that those who have applied for or regained Romanian citizenship (estimates at a million Moldovan citizens) are obliged to declare Romanian ethnicity and language. On the other hand, the socialists were calling for people "not to sell out Moldova". In addition, the pro-communist media have already described cases of alleged fraud. However, more important is the fact that simple statistics are not capable of solving complex issues of identity. It would be particularly naïve to expect that a large number of people declaring themselves on "one side" will persuade those being on the other side to come over.

And yet the discussion about the identity of the Moldovans is more about emotions than science (by using the word "Moldovans" I wish to encompass the autochthonous population of the Republic of Moldova, without ultimately declaring or not its distinctiveness from the Romanians). The identity question encompasses numerous issues, such as language, i.e. whether there are differences between

the tongue spoken on the both sides of the Prut River; the genesis of the names "Moldova" and "Romania"; the emotional feeling of belongingness to a nation (the greater "Romania" or the smaller "Moldova"); and, finally, personal attitude towards Romania and Romanians.

## Identity is relative

Leaving all ethnic and linguistic minorities aside, at least three attitudes can be distinguished among the locals. First is the attitude that says "I am Moldovan and my native language is Moldovan". Secondly is the "I am Romanian and my native language is Romanian" attitude. And lastly is the "I am Moldovan and my native language is Romanian" approach. Apart from this, a certain part of the population seems to be undecided or unconcerned without any clear opinion on ethnic and/or linguistic identity.

Moldovenists attempt to define Moldovans as a distinct nation by arguing that Romania is rather the artificial body.

The first two attitudes represent the extremes. Usually, their supporters are the ones who are least prone to patient discussions with their opponents. Those who support the "Moldovans speaking Moldovan" approach are by definition hostile towards Romania, perceiving it as the most aggressive enemy towards Moldova with clear intensions to abolish its statehood. The ideologists of this approach, the Moldovenists, attempt to define Moldovans as a distinct nation by arguing that Romania is rather an artificial body, encompassing Transylvania, the western part of Moldova and Walachia, instrumentalised by the latter for "privatising" the cultural legacy of Moldova. According to the theoreticians of Moldovenism, the Romanian language is in fact Moldovan, which was, however, artificially complemented by words directly borrowed from French and Italian and became, thus, "incomprehensible for the simple people". The "Moldovan language" is claimed not to have this disadvantage.

The attitude "I am Moldovan and I speak Moldovan" seems also to be widespread without the above ideology among the rural and uneducated populations. It is often based on experiences and contacts with Romanians and the personal conclusions that "we are different than them and we do speak a different language" due to minor differences in pronunciation and the Moldovan habit of inserting Russian words. Last but not least, the persuasion about the existence of a separate Moldovan ethnicity and Moldovan language is popular among the Russian-speaking population of Moldova, which often does not speak Moldovan (ethnic Russians, Ukrainians, Gagauzians and Bulgarians). Some of the political actors representing the national

minorities, such as the *Bashkan* (Governor) of Gagauzia Mihail Formuzal, tend to position themselves as state-oriented (in Russian: *gosudarstvenniki*), i.e. those who truly defend the statehood of Moldova and all its attributes (such as the language) against potential foreign (particularly Romanian) intrusion. More than that, they see Moldova as a part of the so-called *Russkiy mir* (Russian world) and define the geopolitical priority as an imperative to participate in different post-Soviet integration projects such as the Customs Union. The pro-Russian orientation is perceived as having a higher priority than links of Moldova with their "ethnic motherland" as it is in case of Moldovan Bulgarians or Moldovan Ukrainians.

## The other Romanian state

The second attitude ("I am Romanian and I speak Romanian") completely denies the existence of a Moldovan nation or language whatsoever. The moderate version of this attitude perceives Moldova as "the other Romanian state". In the extreme version, however, the name "Moldova" is avoided and usually replaced with Bessarabia. Yet this term refers to the whole territory between the Prut and Dniester rivers which belonged to the Russian Empire in the 19th century and to Romania in the interwar period. It leaves out Transnistria, but encompasses a certain part of the regions of Odesa and Chernivtsi (Romanian: Cernăuți) in Ukraine. This group ("Romanians speaking Romanian") is constituted mainly by people living in cities, usually young and more educated. By definition, they declare a strong attachment to Romania and Romanianhood, mistrust Russia and have rather a pro-European attitude.

The question "What do the Moldovans think of themselves" cannot be answered with precision.

The domination of younger people can be motivated by the fact that they had more opportunities to travel and study in Romania or other European states. However, middle-aged or elderly persons can also feel attached to Romanianness, especially humanists and culture activists (e.g. the cultural weekly *Literatura și Arta*, notwithstanding its Soviet origins, presents a strong devotion to Romanian national values) or those who spent their childhood under Romanian rule before the Soviet annexation of Bessarabia in 1940. Yet, even the existence of such attitudes does not mean that a potential re-unification of Moldova (or the whole of Bessarabia) with Romania is on the political agenda of any mainstream political force in Moldova. However, the presumed danger of annexation by Romania is constantly used by the Moldovenists and promoted by some Russian media.

The identity issue in Moldova is a derivative of the question on how the impact of different historical periods in the 19th and 20th century is to be interpreted.

The Moldovenists, similar to the ethnic minorities in Moldova, tend to perceive the interwar period (under Romanian rule) as a period of economic collapse, backwardness, Romanian colonisation and oppression of any kind of non-Romanian population. The Russian and Soviet periods are considered a time when Moldova could develop. Besides that, it was in the 19th century when the Gagauzian and Bulgarian populations could settle in Bessarabia and enjoy economic and other privileges.

The supporters of the "Romanian option", on the contrary, tend to idealise the interwar period and perceive the Russian and Soviet periods mainly through the prism of the intensive Russification of society and artificial isolation from the external world. There is usually no discussion between these two groups, as each of them tends to accuse the other side of being a traitor. At this moment, we should highlight the fact that extreme opinions are usually not the opinions of the majority. Therefore, the Moldovan society is not a playground between Moldovenists and unionists, even if both groups are well visible in the public sphere. In fact, the moderate "version" of all three attitudes is probably the most widespread in Moldovan society. Thus, the third "moderate" option ("I am Moldovan and speak Romanian") may not be visible, but seems not to be the least popular one.

## One way out

The question "What do the Moldovans think of themselves" cannot be answered with precision. By having statistics of those who declare themselves to be Moldovans, we will not understand whether "being Moldovan" means automatically "not being Romanian", or whether Moldovan identity is perhaps a part of Romanian identity. Similarly, statistics of "Moldovan speakers" do not show whether the "Moldovan language" is perceived as a separate language or as an alternative name for Romanian. What is more, it is uncertain whether the number of people applying for Romanian citizenship can be any proof of their Romanian identity.

There seems to be only one way out: to accept things as they are and not to attempt to impose any option by force. It can be assumed that society will not become unanimous in this issue in the nearest future. Thus, a sustainable solution could be seen in calming the spirits, such as de-politicising the discussion and accepting the fact that Moldovan and Romanian are alternative names for the same language used in the Republic of Moldova just like the adjectives Dutch and Flemish refer to the same language spoken in the Netherlands and Belgium respectively. As for ethnic identity, it needs to be answered whether the naming of ethnicity has to be determined officially at all. In democratic societies, ethnic identity is a private matter of each citizen. Obviously, the recent census will show that the society of

the country consists of a certain percentage of Moldovans and a certain percentage of Romanians – just like the citizens of Montenegro can define themselves as Montenegrin, Serbian or even Yugoslavian.

The above solution, as simple as it is, may be, however, hardly acceptable for the different political forces. Especially in an election period such as now, discussions about identity can be a very handy tool for different political options to gain a clear profile and mobilise the voters.

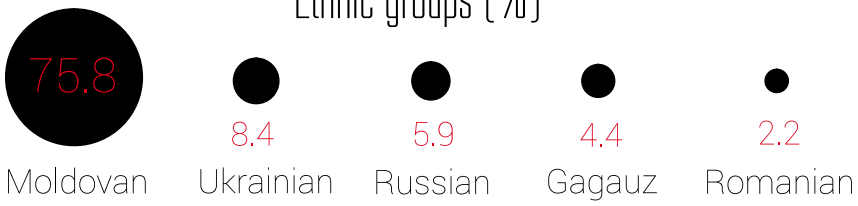
Krzysztof Kolanowski has served as the director of the Information Centre for Local Authorities in Moldova, a Polish-American project aiming at enhancing the capacities of Moldovan local public authorities in applying for foreign funds and managing their projects.

# Moldova: Association

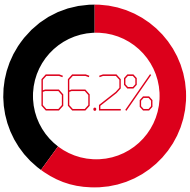

## Basic facts about Moldova

3.5 mln population

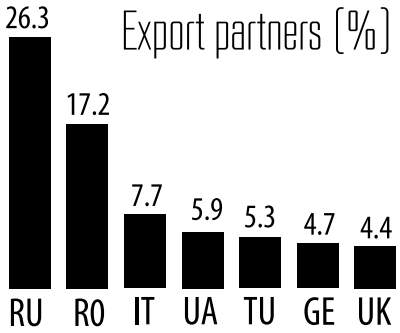
### Ethnic groups (%)



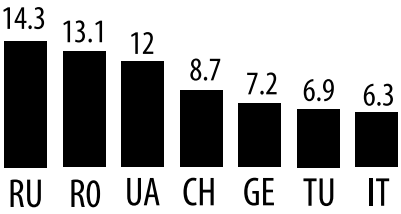

### GDP composition (%)

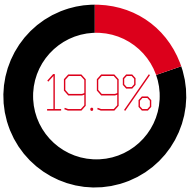



### Export partners (%)




### Import partners (%)




### Rates among Eastern Partnership countries

Freedom House Global Press Freedom Ranking 2nd place

Transparency International corruption index 3rd place

The World Bank's ease of doing business rank 5th place

# Agreement Factsheet

## Core reforms

reforms foreseen in a number of key areas, including

public governance | justice | anti-corruption laws | industry | environment

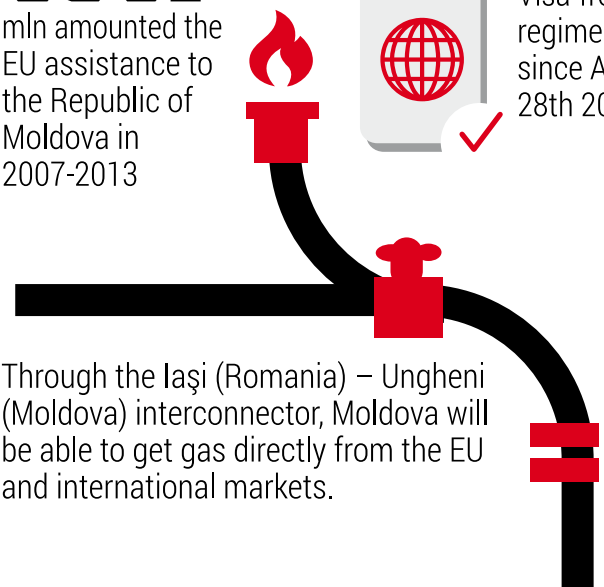
transport | consumer protection | education | social development | culture

## EU assistance

On May 6th 2014, the European Commission announced a support package for the Republic of Moldova, worth €30 million.

€561 mln amounted the EU assistance to the Republic of Moldova in 2007-2013

Visa-free regime since April 28th 2014



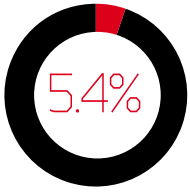
Through the Iaşi (Romania) – Ungheni (Moldova) interconnector, Moldova will be able to get gas directly from the EU and international markets.

## DCFTA profits

27

The DCFTA was already signed by Moldova on June 27th 2014 along with the association agreement

Independent economic research suggests that Moldova's participation in the DCFTA will boost its exports to the EU by 16%, and imports from the EU by 8%.




is expected GDP growth, if reforms are completed

Consumer prices are expected to decrease by about 1.0 and 1.3 percent over the short and long run

# Even the Smallest Autonomies Matter

DARIA PAPROCKA

At the beginning of 2014, few knew about Gagauzia, an autonomous region in the south of Moldova. In the context of the ongoing Ukrainian crisis, this little autonomy is under close scrutiny by all those who aspire to understand where Russia-inspired separatism can spark next.

Certainly there are number of aspects which make Gagauzia different from the rest of Moldova. First is the language. The Gagauz, an ethnic minority of Turkic origin, were completely Russified in Soviet times. Despite the fact that they have their own language, Gagauz, Russian is the predominant language of communication. It is also the language in which the minority receives its education. The Gagauz feel connected with the great legacy of Russian culture and thus at times consider themselves superior to Moldovans. At the same time, the level of Gagauz integration with Moldovan population is limited as few Gagauz speak the state language.

There are also differences of perception of Gagauzia's contemporary history. The ancestors of today's Gagauz fought in the Soviet Army during the Second World War and the cult of the Great Patriotic War is one of the elements defining the political core of most of them. The popular rhetoric where every political opponent is being suspected of sympathising with fascism is very much alive in Gagauzia. The Moldovan politicians that stand for strengthening relations with Romania are often perceived that way in Gagauzia.

## Half full, half empty

On the other hand, Moldovans are much more reluctant to nourish the cult of the Great Patriotic War, recognising that the Soviet Union had also a negative impact on the country. The critical assessment of the communist regime by the centre-right spectrum of the Moldovan political landscape leads repeatedly to discussions about banning the hammer and sickle in the public sphere.

Moldovans tend to perceive the Gagauz as hot-tempered, moulded by the Soviet regime and undermining Moldova's identity, whereas the Gagauz are keen to believe that Moldova is following Gagauzia's footsteps in political developments. During the 2009 crisis, a young academic from Gagauzia rolled her eyes when explaining to me that "Moldova once again takes a silly example from Gagauzia". The statement was followed by long-stretched comparisons between Moldovan and Gagauz politics, the latter being always ahead of the former in whatever developments: the good ones and the bad.

In 1994, Gagauzia received the status as an Autonomous Territorial Unit (ATU), with its own legislative and executive bodies. It was the solution to the Gagauz separatist tendencies that surfaced in response to the collapse of the Soviet Union and to Moldova's early debates about the possibility of joining Romania. The solution spared possible bloodshed and allowed for a peaceful settlement of the conflict and for sustaining Moldova's unity. Yet, neither Moldova nor Gagauzia remained content for long with the status quo. Within a few years, it appeared that Gagauzia settled for autonomy, although its aspirations might have been bigger, while Moldova seemed to concede to establishing the ATU to bring the conflict to an end, but without much of a political drive to continue the recognition of Gagauzia as an autonomous unit within Moldova.

None of the successive Moldovan governments developed a policy of consistent co-operation with the Gagauz Autonomy.

The ATU was given authority over the fields of education, public services, health care, local public finances, economy, ecology, labour and social care. However, no legal act specified the scope of those competencies. The Gagauz authorities saw the glass half full, whereas the Moldovan government saw it as half empty. Comrat (the capital of Gagauzia) tended to assume more autonomy, while Chișinău approached the stipulations in a much more moderate manner. As the Moldova Court of Appeals has the legal prerogative power to cancel legal acts issued by Gagauzia, and did so several times, animosities between the autonomy and Moldova escalated. Furthermore, the existence of the ATU was to be reflected in all Moldovan legislation, yet it never was; over two decades many legal acts were

drafted in complete oblivion of Gagauzia's existence. "Step by step they cripple our autonomy," one could hear from Gagauz politicians. "They treat us like any other region of the country."

The truth is that so far none of the successive Moldovan governments developed a policy of constructive co-operation with Gagauz autonomy or, speaking in broader terms, a policy of integration of national minorities.

## Slow pace

In 2014, tensions between Chișinău and Comrat began to rise. In February, the Gagauz authorities organised a self-proclaimed consultative referendum on two important issues. First was the status of Gagauzia in case Moldova merges with Romania; 97 per cent voted for Gagauzia's independence and less than two per cent for remaining in Moldova. The second question of the referendum concerned the "vector of foreign policy". There were only three per cent of those who voted for the integration with the EU, whereas 95 per cent voted for the Russian-led Customs Union. The Moldovan government did little to engage into a dialogue with the Gagauz about their reasons for such a negative approach towards pro-EU policies.

The dreams about an independent Gagauzia have become more real than ever.

In March, a working group on Gagauzia, consisting of deputies of the Gagauz and Moldovan legislatives, was formed. The group is to finally examine the legal aspects of the functioning of the ATO, but its rather slow pace of work has been just adjourned till the autumn session of the parliament. Other political developments go definitely much faster.

In April, the EU granted visa-free travel within the Schengen zone for all Moldovans holding a biometric passport. In June and July, the Association Agreement with the EU was signed. The spirits in Chișinău are high and the Moldovan government led by the Pro-European Coalition is hailing its success, but Russia has reacted promptly. Its embargos on Moldovan wine and fruit combined with statements about the need of the Eurasian Economic Union to consider protective measures in trade with Moldova feed to the fears of Moldovan farmers and small entrepreneurs. Recently, Alexei Likhachev, the Russian deputy minister of economy, stated that Moldova must choose between the EU and the Commonwealth of Independent States when it comes to trade as it "will not be able to combine two regulatory systems – the CIS and the EU". Statements like that are listened to with great attention in Gagauzia, for whom Russia is a much more natural partner than the EU. Interestingly enough, Gagauzia's wines are exempted from the Russian embargo.

At the same time, the events in Ukraine unfolded. Suddenly, the long forgotten Transnistrian frozen conflict became the centre of international attention, and consequently the small autonomous region of Gagauzia also received attention on the international stage. In May, Moldovan authorities caught Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin trying to leave Moldova with a petition calling for Transnistrian independence. A deputy of Gagauzia's legislative assembly warned the diplomatic corps in Moldova that the Gagauz can resort to arms in order to defend their land, which is not a part of Bessarabia. Gagauzia embarked on a project to establish its own police, independent from the Chișinău chain of command and despite the fact that such an initiative requires amendments to Moldova's Law on Police, Gagauzia's Governor (*bashkan*) has reportedly already ordered 10,000 military uniforms for the militia. Robert Kaplan, chief geopolitical analyst at Stratfor, called the region "a potential fifth column that [Russian President Vladimir] Putin could use to undermine Moldova". Gagauzia stakeholders believe they now have the political leverage they never enjoyed over the twenty years of the autonomy's existence.

## A threat to national security

The Gagauz political leaders have been speaking for years about the need for recognising Gagauzia's ATU competencies. Periodically, especially in the moments of great disillusionment with the Moldova's policies towards Gagauzia, one could hear *budem atceplyat'sya* – we'll go separate. The secessionists' statements could hardly be perceived as feasible since geographically Gagauzia is not a single territorial unit, but rather is comprised of three detached regions. The Autonomy's boundaries were determined that way to prevent any separatist tendencies. Yet now, with the crisis in Ukraine, the situation has changed. Suddenly, like in the 1990s, the borders seem flexible once again. The dreams about an independent Gagauzia, or maybe even a Greater Gagauzia, embracing those Gagauz living in Ukraine, have become more real than ever.

> Gagauzia's successful functioning is viable only in the framework of the Republic of Moldova and Moldova should capitalise on that.

Moldova recognises the conceivable risks for the state's security and has undertaken special measures. The Security and Information Service is to be vested with additional powers. Stipulations regarding using special technical means against demonstrators have been recently endorsed. Work on a new bill legislating counteraction to extremism and separatism in Moldova has already begun. As far as Gagauzia is concerned, for Chișinău, what was until not long ago a poorly

functioning autonomy, turned into "a region with separatist tendencies", a threat to national security and a cradle for potential terrorist attacks. Yet, there are many precautions and little incentives; for example the 2014 state reintegration fund does not envision any projects on the territory of the Gagauz Autonomy. These inconsistencies are quickly spotted in Gagauzia. Gagauz often say that Moldova treats them like a mother treats an unwanted child.

The way to avoid separatist movements and secessionist tendencies in Gagauzia in the long run is the eventual recognition of the importance of the autonomy. The policy of "we call it autonomy, we treat it as a region" needs to be abandoned. Gagauzia's competencies as an autonomous region need to be properly defined and Moldovan legislation duly amended to reflect the autonomy's existence. Despite all the talk about Greater Gagauzia, there is a lot of political realism among the Gagauz leaders. Every time the Moldovan unionists are vocal about joining Romania, Gagauz are among the first ones who insist on the importance of Moldova's statehood. It is understood that Gagauzia's existence is viable only in the framework of the Republic of Moldova and Moldova should capitalise on that. The examples of autonomous regions throughout the EU can serve as reference points, while Moldova's factual capacity to govern a country with an autonomous region within its borders can only contribute to the Transnistrian negotiation process.

## Ultimate goal

One should not expect any milestone in Moldova-EU relations in the near future, as any possible accession of Moldova to the EU is a matter of years. Thus, relations with the EU are not under an immediate threat, but Moldova will face difficult times trying to nourish good foreign policies with both the EU and Russia. Moscow has important leverages against Moldova, such as gas and migrant workers. It would be much more acute for the Moldovans if Russia chooses to toughen its policy lines on any of those two issues than the current embargos. The outgoing Pro-European Coalition is adamant that Moldova's accession to the EU is the ultimate goal, but it is a long and cumbersome process and disillusionment is likely to loom.

Having an entire region which vocally opposes integration with the EU will certainly not help. Therefore, there is a need for a constant dialogue with the Gagauz community, not only at the level of legislative working groups, but a more rudimentary one that engages people whose fears of the European market are very real. It is also a high time for a comprehensive language policy, which does not leave the country's Russian-speaking minorities completely unintegrated. Whatever Moscow politics towards Moldova may be, it is only natural that the Russian-speaking communities will gravitate towards Russia.

Unfortunately, the current times are not conducive for dialogue and stabilising policies, as 2014 is an electoral year in Moldova. Parliamentary elections are scheduled for November 30th and the *Bashkan* elections are due at the end of the year. Inevitably, the rhetoric gets sharper as the election campaign intensifies. The battle for the electorate makes politicians embark on tones they would not have chosen otherwise. The Communist Party never really championed the project of Moldova-EU integration, but was not rejecting it either. Yet, at the current juncture, its leader Vladimir Voronin frequently promotes the Customs Union as a much better option for Moldova. At the same time the Party of Socialists voices its cassandric visions that Moldova may suffer a geopolitical split; and any statement about unification with Romania may only enflame the situation further. The coming months will be a test for Moldovan and Gagauz politicians and whether they can still put the interest of the country and its unity first. NEE

Daria Paprocka has a PhD in political science. She is a freelance political analyst working for international organisations such as the Council of Europe, the OSCE and the UN. She previously worked as the political officer at the OSCE Mission to Moldova.

# A Window of Challenges and Risks

Interview with Vladimir Yastrebchak, political analyst, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Transnistria. Interviewers: Kamil Całus and Piotr Oleksy

**KAMIL CAŁUS AND PIOTR OLEKSY: Transnistria's foreign policy regarding the Ukrainian crisis can be described as a policy of neutrality and non-interference. However, once the situation in Ukraine is stable, Transnistria will have to establish relations with the new administration in Kyiv. What will these relations look like?**

VLADIMIR YASTREBCHAK: I think we need to be cautious optimists when it comes to relations with post-Maidan Ukraine. President Petro Poroshenko and his special representative for Transnistria, Andrei Vesolovsky, know Transnistrian-Ukrainian relations not only from analytic memos, but from direct experience as well. Mr Vesolovsky has previously worked as a special representative for Transnistria. Poroshenko is familiar with the case of Transnistria also because he previously served as a secretary of the Council of National Security and Defence of Ukraine and its foreign minister. He has wide network of personal contacts in the region too. In 2005, Poroshenko made significant efforts in order to ease the tensions between Ukraine and Transnistria.

**How is the conflict in Eastern Ukraine perceived by ordinary Transnistrians? Do they support the separatists in Donbas?**

First of all, we have to take into consideration a specific nature of Transnistria. People who live there have opportunity to get information on what's going on in Ukraine from different sources. Ukrainian and Russian TV channels are available in Transnistria to the same extent. What's more, many Transnistrians have relatives in Ukraine. Because of this, they can confront different points of view on the situation beyond the border. It's worth mentioning that the Ukrainian crisis is sometimes a point of contention between Transnistrians and their Ukrainian families. In Transnistria

there is a rather high support for Russian action in Ukraine, particularly for the annexation, or reunification (as we prefer to say) of Crimea. People in Transnistria also have a lot of sympathy towards the inhabitants of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions suffering from war. Of course, they are realists too. They know how complicated their own country's situation is, so they understand the highly neutral position demonstrated by the Transnistrian government. I am talking here about non-interference in Ukrainian internal affairs as well as extreme cautiousness when it comes to official statements and comments on Ukraine. Thus, Transnistrians support the Kremlin's policy in general, but they do not want to become a part of this conflict.

**Some Transnistrian media recently reported that the ruling political elite see the future developments of the breakaway state depend upon stronger links with Ukraine rather than with Russia. What is your opinion?**

Such opinions have appeared in the Transnistrian media frequently and they have already become a part of our "political tradition". When you want to cause troubles to someone, you call him a pro-Ukrainian politician. Antipathy for pro-Ukrainian politicians developed in 2006 when Kyiv backed the implementation of new customs regulations by Moldova that hit Transnistria. Many called the politics of Igor Smirnov pro-Ukrainian during his last term as president. Even I was labelled a pro-Ukrainian. But this label is an instrument used mostly in the internal political intrigues to discredit someone.

On the other hand, we cannot ignore Ukraine's influence on Transnistrian politics. Ukraine borders Transnistria and it has control over the goods that flow in the region, which is beneficial to Tiraspol as well. The border is the strongest tool in Ukrainian hands when it comes to affecting Transnistrian political life. But I would not say that it makes Transnistria totally dependent on Ukraine. So far, Russia is still a key player in the region. We have to assess Ukrainian influence in Transnistria carefully. Of course, it exists, but Kyiv does not have an ace in the hole.

**So all the talk about a pro-Ukrainian club within the Transnistrian political elite is simply an exaggeration?**

It is possible to find promoters of Ukrainian interests among the Transnistrian politicians, but we cannot say this is a group with great significance. Some opponents of the current president blame him for studying at the Diplomatic Academy of Ukraine, but they usually omit the fact that he studied at different Russian universities. Believe me, you will not find a single politician in Tiraspol who would openly claim that Ukraine is a crucial state for Transnistria. Such a statement would probably ruin his or her political career. It tells a lot about our society and political culture.

**Is Transnistria prepared for any possible damage that the signature of the Association Agreements between Moldova and Ukraine with the European Union could cause? The DCFTA may even bring Transnistria to an economic blockade.**

We should not equate the signing of the Association Agreement with any kind of economic isolation of Transnistria or an introduction of an economic blockade or restrictions. Why? Because both Ukraine and Moldova could have imposed such a blockade for a long time and they do not need any additional legal instruments to do so. In fact, in 2006 Kyiv and Chișinău agreed to block Transnistria. As a result, the Ukrainian economy was seriously damaged. Ukrainian railways and many other companies recorded multi-million dollar losses, not to mention the loss of its good image. Is Ukraine ready to repeat this step? It is hard to say because circumstances are now much more complicated than in 2006. The EU's diplomacy is well aware of the negative consequences a blockade with Transnistria would cause. This is why the EU decided to extend autonomous trade preferences (ATP) for Transnistrian businesses until January 2016.

**Nonetheless, the economic situation of Transnistria is worsening. How can Tiraspol overcome these problems? Does the current president, Yevgeny Shevchuk, have any idea how to get out of these troubles?**

In my view, the key thing is to maintain and ensure good trade relations with the EU, Moldova and Russia. They are our key partners and importers. This is the reason why in the last year Tiraspol came up with the idea of creating a free trade zone between Transnistria and Moldova. As far as I know, a similar offer was also made by Chișinău. There are also ongoing talks between Transnistria and the Directorate-General for Trade in the European Commission as well as with other international institutions dealing with trade. We are working on a compromise and hopefully we will eventually reach an agreement so we will be able to avoid a negative scenario. When it comes to plans on how to manage a critical situation, I guess they are all based on deepening co-operation with Moscow, particularly in trade.

**So why did Transnistria not agree with Moldova's signing of the DCFTA with the EU? It would be beneficial for the country as Moldova and the EU states, unlike Russia, are its key economic partners.**

The main reason is that the DCFTA is inseparably linked to the Association Agreement. Chapter 5 of the agreement is about trade and trade-related matters so you cannot sign the DCFTA without signing the Association Agreement. The DCFTA is rooted in a certain context and this context is hard to accept for Transnistria. For example, according to the laws, territorial reach of the DCFTA will be set by the EU – Moldova


Vladimir Yastrebchak is the former minister of foreign affairs for Transnistria.

Association Council. Transnistria has no representation on this body at all, so it cannot protect its vital interests. Our colleagues in Chișinău keep saying that Transnistria was invited to take part in the negotiations on the free trade zone, but they do not mention the fact that we were not invited to participate in talks on any other provisions of the Association Agreement. The DCFTA is a good trade agreement and we need to think seriously about it. But it makes no sense to discuss it when you have no chance to protect your own interests.

Beyond all that, there is also Chapter 4 of the agreement, which deals with economics in general. It contains very important resolutions for Transnistria, such as the registration of enterprises, accountancy and the tax system. The latter is particularly important because the tax systems in Moldova and Transnistria are totally different. In Moldova there is value-added tax, but this has not existed in Transnistria for over 14 years. As we see, there is a wide range of problems and points of contention regarding the Association Agreement and they were not discussed with Tiraspol.

**The DCFTA, exclusively as a free trade agreement with EU states was not a problem for Transnistria?**

We were being told that the acceptance of the DCFTA would only mean an acceptance of EU regulations, when in fact it actually means implementation of Moldovan law. As there is still an

unsettled conflict between Chișinău and Tiraspol, it could cause a serious jurisdictional conflict. This will happen anyway as soon as Moldova begins to implement the Association Agreement and Transnistria will still be trading with the EU no longer based on the ATP, but on general regulations. This situation will be a major economic and legal challenge which is going to influence the whole Transnistrian conflict.

So the problem is not in a poor quality of goods produced in Transnistria, but rather the legal questions it raises. Transnistrian companies that export their products to the EU already meet harsh European criteria. The most important is who actually will confirm this quality control according to the Association Agreement provisions. Then it becomes clear that it is necessary to respect Moldovan national law in order to comply with the DCFTA. Transnistria is not Europhobic. Our companies cope with European firms perfectly well. Transnistria's biggest concern is its relations with Moldova because Chișinău does not treat Transnistria as a subject of international law and prevents its participation in talks with the EU.

**If new regulations hit the Transnistrian economy, can it be a reason for another intensification of tensions in relations with Moldova? If yes, what could we expect?**

Of course it can. The truth is that neither Moldova nor Transnistria have enough power to effectively influence Tiraspol's or Chișinău's decisions. This is why the tensions regularly appear on the political level. If there are any problems in the field of economy or society, it immediately shifts to politics. We should expect that the most likely this scenario will take place and the worsening of economic relations will be followed by an interruption in the political dialogue.

**What exactly do you mean?**

For example, a significant limitation of the meetings between top politicians is possible. Mutual relations will be tied up. Key issues will not be dealt directly but by mediators. It will also be a threat to 5+2 format which has worked so far, in spite of all the obstacles.

**Could a possible economic crisis, being an effect of a political crisis, defrost the conflict and lead to military action?**

I hope it will not happen. I would rather expect the rise of what could be called "not exactly legal trade activity" on the Moldovan-Transnistrian and Transnistrian-Ukrainian borders; in other words, smuggling.

**Russia's foreign policy in the region seems to be aimed at creating a sort of common state, a federation or confederation of Moldova and Transnistria which would keep Moldova in the Kremlin's sphere of influence. However, Transnistrian goals seem to be different. Do people in Transnistria consider unification with Moldova, no matter what form it takes?**

The Transnistrian political elite do not consider such a solution possible at least for ten years, when the Kozak memorandum (officially: Russian Draft Memorandum on the Basic Principles of the State Structure of a United State in Moldova) failed. It was the last real chance for the regulation of the Transnistrian issue. Since that time, no one has ever mentioned the possibility of the creation of a common state. Many observers had high hopes for President Yevgeny Shevchuk when he took power in 2011. But he is not politically suicidal enough to announce the will for unification with Moldova. The Transnistrian elite often have different opinions and ideas than those in Moscow and it's totally normal. Otherwise Transnistrian statehood would have melted into Moldovan statehood a long time ago already. We should remember that the political elite in Transnistria has been around now for over 24 years. It has a fully shaped and mature structure which operates just like any other political elite anywhere in the world. It is, like other elite, interested in staying in power. Unification with Moldova would probably mean the loss of significance and power for the Transnistrian elite.

**How about unification with Russia? In April 2014, the speaker of the Transnistrian parliament, Mikhail Burla, went to Moscow…**

…to ask the Kremlin for the recognition of Transnistria's independence, not for its annexation. Prospective annexation could happen later, after the recognition. Most likely, there would need to be a referendum before this happens.

**But the unification with the Russian Federation is not an attractive perspective for the Transnistrian elite for the same reasons as in the case of Moldova – they will lose their privileges.**

Society sees it differently. If the creation of a single state with Moldova is seen as a loss of independence, unification with Russia is rather seen as gaining an independence of a new type. To many Transnistrians, real independence equals integration with Russia. On September 17th 2006, a double referendum was held in Transnistria where more than 97 per cent of the people voted in favour of further integration with the Russian Federation.

**Speaking of the political elite, what are the biggest challenges in Transnistrian political life?**

We have tremendous problems with the freedom of media, which is a consequence of the lack of real competition on the political scene. Under President Igor Smirnov, key seats in public media were filled by the presidential office and legislature. Since Shevchuk took the office, all the state media has been under full control of the president. Access to a number of websites has been limited and these were not only news websites, but also sites of officially registered Transnistrian political parties.

Igor Smirnov belongs to a different generation, so he favoured traditional media like radio or television. He did not pay attention to such trifles as the internet. Meanwhile the new, younger leadership is fairly aware of the power of the internet so it undertakes steps in order to restrict access. I do not see a point in these limitations, as it is very easy to overcome them.

**More or less a year ago we talked with you about the conflict between president Shevchuk and the Sheriff-sponsored Obnovlenie (Renewal) political party, which has the majority in the parliament. Does this conflict still exist? Incidentally, it is interesting that the websites you've just mentioned were shut down by the IDC Company, which is owned by Sheriff. It is a monopoly supplier of the internet in Transnistria.**

You have just answered your own question. If the conflict was still going, Sheriff would promote websites criticising Shevchuk and his circle. What's more, three large construction projects on the main street of Tiraspol are being handled by Sheriff. Sheriff now cares only about making money and stays away from politics.

**So there is no serious opposition in Transnistria today?**

No, but it actually did not exist earlier either. At the beginning of 2012, soon after Shevchuk became president, there were some disagreements and arguments but they did not bring any results and did not last long. Finally, the president and the parliament reached a consensus and now the parliament supports the president in all what he does.

**In November 2014, Moldova is going to hold its parliamentary elections. What result would be the most satisfactory for Transnistria?**

We all know very well that all the Moldovan political parties with a chance of getting seats in the parliament have the same stance on the Transnistria issue. The bill on special status of Transnistria praised by the parliament was proposed by the communists. We do not expect any special changes in relations with Moldova after the upcoming elections. Parties with a different point of view on Transnistria have no prospects so it is pointless to even talk about them.

**Do you mean Igor Dodon's Party of Socialists?**

Yes, exactly. But I also mean the Moldovan Party of Regions led by the Bashkan of Gagauzia, Mihail Formuzal. However, the example of Vladimir Voronin's Communist Party taught us that the political programme is one thing and the reality is another, particularly when it comes to pro-Russian declarations. In other words, nothing will really change after the election. We shouldn't expect that suddenly someone, who can make life of Transnistrians easier, will take power in Chișinău. Such expectations may be even harmful when the disappointment comes.

**Recent developments in Ukraine showed that long-term prognoses are very risky and that it is very difficult to predict the future in this region. However we would like you to try to envisage how the situation of Transnistria may change in the coming years. Do you think there is a chance that a "window of opportunity" will emerge soon and the Transnistrian conflict will be settled? Or perhaps it will remain as it is?**

Instead of a "window of opportunity" I see rather a "window of challenges and risks" and I am not sure whether it is possible to transform that into a "window of opportunity" in the near future. Looking from this position, even five years from now seems distant and I would not like to ponder it. The situation is unclear. But we cannot talk about keeping the status quo any longer. There was a new political reality brought into the region by the signing of the Association Agreement by Moldova and Ukraine. The situation will evolve, but the direction of this evolution will depend on the willingness for dialogue on both sides of the conflict and the attitude of currently ruling party. I need also to add that external factors in the conflict do not help Transnistria and Moldova to debate. They rather encourage us to dig in our trenches. We can observe a strong competition between pro-European and pro-Eurasian directions in the region. In such circumstances it is very difficult to keep political subjectivity and an ability to sustain bilateral communication. NEE

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# Putin's Brain?

ANTON SHEKHOVTSOV

In the wake of the 2014 Ukrainian revolution and Russia's subsequent war on Ukraine, Russian political thinker Aleksandr Dugin has become an object of many western analyses of Russia's foreign policy. Various media have called Dugin "the mad mystic who inspired Russia's leader" or "Putin's brain". Indeed, the man behind Russia's Neo-Eurasianism has received significant attention and his ideas have evidently entered mainstream political thought.

Before the dramatic events in Ukraine, Aleksandr Dugin and his Neo-Eurasianism remained largely confined to academic explorations of Russian nationalism, and these have always been accompanied by the question of whether Dugin's Neo-Eurasianism was significant enough to warrant so much effort. As early as 2001, Stephen Shenfield wrote in his *Russian Fascism* that "Dugin's influence on the Russian elite [remained] limited and highly uneven". This evaluation seemed fair for the year 2001, but since then the situation has clearly changed. How exactly it has changed and how Dugin's background has shaped the role he plays in today's Russian politics are the questions that will be discussed in this article.

## Age of vice

Dugin became involved in social activities in his late teens, when he joined the underground Yuzhinskiy literary circle, in which occultism, esotericism and fascist mysticism were the subjects of numerous discussions and a way to escape Soviet conformism. The works of French Traditionalist René Guénon (1886-1951) and Italian fascist thinker Julius Evola (1898-1974) exerted a particularly strong influence on the young Dugin and became a philosophical foundation of the doctrine that he developed many years later.

At the core of Guénon's Integral Traditionalism lies a belief in the "primordial tradition" that was introduced to humanity during the "golden age" and, as the world slid into decadence, gradually disappeared from people's lives. This belief also implies that time is cyclic; hence, the "golden age" will necessarily succeed the "age of vice" of today.

Evola politicised Guénon's ideas of an unsurmountable opposition between the idealised past and decadent modernity even further. For Evola, this opposition was also the one between a closed and hierarchic model of society of the "golden age" and an open and democratic model of today's "age of vice". He also believed that a fascist revolution could end the present age of decay, and this would bring about a new "golden age" of order and hierarchy.

According to Dugin, there is an irresolvable confrontation between the Atlanticist world and Eurasia.

Young Dugin hated the Soviet reality and strongly associated it with the "age of vice". Guénon's and Evola's works informed him of a delusive perspective of revolutionising and re-enchanting history by ending the era of perceived degeneration and inaugurating the new era.

The projected renewal of the world required political activism, so in 1987, Dugin joined the National-Patriotic Front "Memory" (*Pamyat*), the most significant far right organisation at that time. In 1988, Dugin was elected a member of Pamyat's Central Council but was expelled in early 1989, presumably for his attempts to change the ideology of the organisation. In the early 1990s, Dugin began looking for contemporary West European followers of Guénon and Evola. His active participation in various conferences in Western Europe introduced him to leading figures in the European New Right (ENR) – a network of European far right intellectuals and journals.

The ENR has always been a metapolitical movement; rather than aiming to participate in the political process, the ENR tried to pursue a strategy of modifying the postwar liberal democratic political culture. This strategy was adopted from the theory of cultural hegemony of Italian communist Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937). In its New Right manifestation, this "right-wing Gramscism" stresses the importance of establishing cultural hegemony by making the cultural sphere more susceptible to non-democratic politics through ideology-driven education and cultural production, in preparation for seizing political power by the far right. The cultural hegemony can be considered as established when the ideology of a contesting political force is perceived as common sense within society.

Despite the metapolitical nature of the ENR, its ideas have influenced many radical right parties in Europe. One particular idea of the ENR, namely ethno-pluralism, is especially popular among the ideologues of the party-political far

right, as it champions ethno-cultural pluralism globally but is critical of cultural pluralism (multiculturalism) in any given society. The ENR thinkers have supplied Dugin with the most important ideological ammunition that he employed to create Neo-Eurasianism.

Despite the name, Neo-Eurasianism has a limited relation to Eurasianism, the interwar Russian émigré movement that could be placed in the Slavophile tradition. Rather, Neo-Eurasianism is a mixture of the ideas of Guénon, Evola and the ENR, as well as classical geopolitics and National Bolshevism to which Dugin was introduced in the beginning of the 1990s by Belgian New Right author Robert Steuckers. In Russia, for the sake of political and cultural legitimacy, Dugin argued for continuity between interwar Eurasianism and his own ideology, but his Neo-Eurasianism is firmly rooted in western, rather than Russian, far right intellectual tradition.

## Dugin's Neo-Eurasianism

Despite the metapolitical nature of the ENR in general and Neo-Eurasianism in particular, Aleksandr Dugin did try to become involved in the political process in the 1990s and early 2000s. The first attempt was associated with the marginal National-Bolshevik Party (NBP). In 1995, Dugin even contested elections to the State Duma, but he obtained less than one per cent of the vote. His second attempt to get involved in politics is associated with the creation of the Eurasia party in 2002, but already in 2003 the party's other co-founder expelled Dugin from the party.

Dugin has been genuinely critical of Putin when Russia was allegedly friendly to the United States.

Since then, Dugin firmly settled on the metapolitical course. He founded the International Eurasian Movement in 2003 and was appointed professor at the Moscow State University in 2008. From 2005 onwards, he also became a popular political commentator who frequently appeared on prime time talk shows and published in influential newspapers. These positions allowed him to bring his Neo-Eurasianist ideas directly to the academic world, whilst using his academic title as a prestigious cover-up for his irrational ideas.

Dugin became especially famous in Russia for the Neo-Eurasianist version of classical geopolitics. His book *The Foundations of Geopolitics* (published in 1997) outlined his political and ideological vision of Russia's place in the world. According to Dugin, there is an irresolvable confrontation between the Atlanticist world (principally the United States and the United Kingdom) and Eurasia (predominantly Russia, Central and Eastern Europe and Asia) that resists the US-led globalisation and ethno-cultural universalisation. This confrontation is also placed in the

metaphysical plane: the alleged hegemony of Atlanticism and liberal democracy is interpreted as the triumph of the "age of vice", while the Eurasian revolution that would establish the Russia-led Eurasian Empire is understood as an advent of the "golden age".

Subscribing to the idea of ethno-pluralism, Neo-Eurasianism suggests that "Russians shall live in their own national reality and there shall also be national realities for Tatars, Chechens, Armenians and the rest". At the same time, the Russians are considered to be "the top-priority Eurasian ethnos, the most typical one", and "they are most fit for carrying out a civilisational geopolitical historical mission" of creating the Eurasian Empire. However, the Russian people are seen as being in decline, hence, the improvement of the Russians' "severe condition in the ethnic, biological and spiritual sense" should be addressed by appealing to "the most radical forms of Russian nationalism". It is necessary "to consolidate our ethnic, ethno-cultural identity – Orthodox and Russian", "to introduce norms of ethno-cultural hygiene".

Neo-Eurasianist foreign policy is revisionist, expansionist and implacably opposed to the US. It draws considerably on the theories of convicted Belgian Nazi collaborator Jean-François Thiriart (1922-1992), who proposed the creation of the "Euro-Soviet Empire from Vladivostok to Dublin" in the late 1970s. Dugin reinterpreted the Euro-Soviet Empire as the essentially similar Eurasian Empire which includes not only Russia, but the whole of Europe as well, so the Neo-Eurasianist agenda implies the "liberation" of Europe from all Atlanticist influences. In 1938, Thiriart praised the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact as he saw the Soviet-Nazi alliance to be a strong force against the US. For Dugin, too, the Berlin-Moscow axis is crucial in creating a Eurasian Empire. Here, Moscow and Berlin are symbols of two geopolitical centres of power. Moscow is the centre of the Russia-dominated space that would include Russia, countries of Northern Balkan Peninsula, Moldova, Ukraine (excluding Western Ukraine), Eastern Belarus, Central Asia and Mongolia. Berlin is the centre of a Germany-dominated space called "Mitteleuropa" that would include Germany, Italy and most of the territories of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire.

There are currently more differences than similarities between the political projects of Putin and Dugin.

## Ideology for sale

Dugin was a staunch opponent of Boris Yeltsin, but hailed the ascent of Vladimir Putin. In 2001, he wrote that Putin had completed six out of "Twelve Labours": he prevented the failure of Russia in the Caucasus region; put local governors

under control; introduced federal districts in Russia corresponding to the military districts; got rid of the oligarchs who controlled two main Russian TV channels; started the integration process in the post-Soviet space and announced the creation of the Eurasian Economic Union; and formalised the thesis about the need for a multipolar world. What Putin still needed to do was to fully complete the previous six "Labours": to clarify his position towards the US; to recognise the dead-end nature of "radical liberalism" in the economy; to allow for a rotation of the elite; to form his own efficient team that would help him in reforming the country; and to assign the Eurasianist ideology as the fundamental worldview of the future Russia.

It seems plausible that Dugin wanted Putin to accept him as the ideologue of Russia and the projected Eurasian Empire. In his speech at the inaugural congress of the Eurasia party, Dugin said that the party was going to rally around Putin and "delegate to him Eurasian models and plans of the Eurasian Project". Nevertheless, Dugin was genuinely critical when Putin was allegedly friendly to the United States or Russian liberal economists.

After the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, Dugin apparently obtained funding from Putin's Presidential Administration to establish the Eurasian Youth Union. It was one of several pro-Kremlin youth movements that were created to oppose the largely imaginary threat of a "colour revolution" in Russia. However, the Eurasian Youth Union was not the most successful of these movements and the Kremlin preferred to invest more money in the Nashi movement rather than Dugin's initiative. The Kremlin clearly perceives Dugin's ideas as useful. By being regularly present in the public sphere, Dugin and other Russian right-wing extremists extending the boundaries of a legitimate space for illiberal narratives make Russian society more susceptible to Putin's authoritarianism.

In a 2007 interview for Russian internet TV, Dugin pompously stated: "My discourse rules, my ideas rule. ... Sure, there are wide circles, layers of people between me and the power structures. [These people] dilute ... my condensed idea of Eurasian geopolitics, conservative traditionalism and other ideals which I defend and develop, to which I dedicate a lot of my work – they create a diluted version of these. Eventually, this version reaches the power structures and they draw upon it as something self-evident, obvious, and easily accessible. ... That's why I think that Putin is increasingly becoming Dugin. At any rate, he pursues a plan that I elaborate, in which I invest my energy, my whole life. ... In the 1990s, my discourse seemed mad, eccentric ... today our ideas are taken for granted."

Dugin's words, obviously, cannot be taken at face value, but his ideas evidently entered the mainstream political thinking.


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Neo-Eurasianist foreign policy is revisionist, expansionist and implacably opposed to the US. For Dugin, the Berlin-Moscow axis is crucial in creating a Eurasian Empire.

## Imperialist gamble

Dugin actively supported Russia's invasion of Georgia in 2008 and craved for the complete occupation of that country. For Dugin, the war in Georgia was an existential battle against Atlanticism: "If Russia decides not to enter the conflict ... that will be a fatal choice. It will mean that Russia gives up her sovereignty" and "We will have to forget about Sevastopol." Naturally, Dugin fanatically supported the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and urged Putin to invade south-eastern Ukraine. It was a dream that he had been cherishing since the 1990s: "The sovereignty of Ukraine represents such a negative phenomenon for Russian geopolitics that it can, in principle, easily provoke a military conflict. ... Ukraine as an independent state ... constitutes an enormous threat to the whole Eurasia and without the solution of the Ukrainian problem, it is meaningless to talk about continental geopolitics."

In the spring of 2014, Dugin seemed to have reconsidered the Neo-Eurasianist idea of western Ukraine belonging to Mitteleuropa. He argued that, "in its liberationist battle march" not only will Russia not stop at Crimea, Central and Western Ukraine, but will aim at "liberating Central and Western Europe from Atlanticist invaders". His inflammatory writings attracted a lot of media attention, and since his ideological narrative overlapped with the Kremlin's actions in Ukraine he was called "Putin's brain".

However, the increased media attention eventually rebounded on Dugin and the management of the Moscow State University – probably in agreement with, or even under pressure from, the Kremlin – decided not to extend his employment contract. Dugin accused Russia's liberal "fifth column" of conspiring against him, but the reasons for his falling out of favour with the Kremlin are most likely different.

First of all, as in the case of Russia's war in Georgia, Dugin perceived the invasion of Ukraine as the Kremlin's fundamental duty. He claimed that if Putin did not fulfil his "historical Eurasianist mission", then the Kremlin would betray Russia. Thus, Putin would turn into an enemy of Russian ultranationalists who would have a right to attack his regime. No matter whether Putin planned or did not plan to occupy Ukraine, the Kremlin could not accept such an ultimatum.

Second, there is a political circle close to the Kremlin that – being anti-American and imperialistic – considers Dugin's connections with the West European far right and evidently non-Russian fascist sources of Neo-Eurasianism as damaging the "anti-fascist" posture of Moscow.

Third, Putin never revealed that his foreign policy was guided by any kind of ideology and always stressed the "pragmatic" nature of the Russian approach to the West. Had Putin named any particular guiding ideology, then he would have been challenged intellectually – a battle that he would have been doomed to lose. Moreover, the assumption that the Kremlin was following Dugin's ideas made Putin predictable. At the end of the day, Dugin has put forward a very clear, "ready-to-use" geopolitical strategy, but it is Putin's unpredictability that plays to his advantage in foreign relations.

Despite the fact that the Kremlin has clearly distanced from Dugin, this does not mean that his Neo-Eurasianism has been condemned. But does Putin support Neo-Eurasianism? There are obvious similarities between Dugin's and Putin's narratives: anti-Westernism, expansionism, rejection of liberal democracy, etc. However, it would be wrong to suggest that any of these or similar ideological elements are exclusive to either Putin or Dugin, as they have been embedded in Russian politics for more than a century.

Furthermore, it seems reasonable to agree with Andreas Umland's assertion that there are currently more differences than similarities between the political projects of Putin and Dugin. Putin's project is authoritarian and restorationist, while that of Dugin is fascist and revolutionary. However, even if their goals are different, Umland argues, Putin and Dugin are allies. Moreover, "the first step to Dugin's new empire is the restoration of the old empire sought by Putin". In this sense, Putin, even if not directly pursuing Dugin's plan, does perform steps which may – in the long run – lead to the implementation of Dugin's project.

To conclude, the following three points are worth highlighting. First, Dugin's organisational and intellectual initiatives are integral elements of Putin's authoritarian system. In this role, Dugin joins dozens of other agents of right-wing cultural production who, in one manner or another, contribute to the public legitimisation of Putin's regime. Second, Dugin has worked his way up from the eccentric fringes to the Russian socio-cultural mainstream, but his ideology has not changed since the 1990s. What has radically changed is the Russian mainstream political discourse. Lastly, the increasing anti-Westernism and anti-liberalism of Putin's system, its drive to consolidate influence in Eurasia and the country's growing social conservatism are indicative of the fact that today Dugin and other far right intellectuals are winning their struggle for cultural hegemony in Russia. NEE

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# Underneath Putin's Ratings

BORIS DUBIN

The Russian leader is not like a real politician elected for a certain term based on certain conditions. He is rather an illusory embodiment of mass expectations which arise from a large amount of frustration accumulated over time. Thanks to the constant effort of the authorities and the media, the criteria that the Russian society uses to assess its head of state remain rather vague.

Russian sociologists noted rather early the Kremlin's interest in some symbolic undertakings that are addressed to all Russians. In addition, researchers observed a characteristic interest of the presidential administration in Putin's ratings. Starting in the 2000s, they persistently stressed a merely ceremonial, or even mock, character of the regime which back then could have been characterised, in the words of Yuri Levada, as having "high indicators instead of high achievements".

## Approval Rating Number One

Such a model of power, more than anything else, needs mass media, and especially television. Hence, under Putin, the media quickly came under state control while the oligarchs, whose capital and interests had been behind those channels since the mid-1990s, were expelled and isolated. Now, in a more consistent way, the television offers only the official interpretation of what is taking place in Russia and around the world. This communication strategy corresponds with the expectations and ideas shared by the majority of the Russian society. What is more, it strengthens them in their beliefs, which are publicly expressed and acceptable for "all". In this way, a majority is created within a society and this majority supports the actions of the president.

That is why any sociologist who wants to study Russian society should separately analyse the significance of the approval ratings for the authorities and the ability of ratings to depict social attitudes. I will also try not to mix these two perspectives.

Let me start with the social approval of Putin's rule, the so-called "approval rating number one". Right now, it is indeed impressively high and seemingly sustainable, which can be explained by several factors. First, in contrast to the relatively diverse representation on the political scene in the 1990s, which was characterised by the growing unpredictability of Boris Yeltsin, the then-political leader, and the economic turbulence caused by the aggressive economic reforms, known as the "Gaidar reforms", the image of a single ruler insisting on unity of the country and promising stability looked attractive for many Russians. That was also the reason why in 2000 Putin was called the "president of hope".

The second factor is related to Putin's power structure. It was presented to the Russian people as a hierarchy which not only has no alternative but also gives the leader unlimited authority and absolves him of any responsibility. The Russian people saw this structure as the right one (unlike the power they knew before which in their view was inefficient, corrupt and indifferent to people) and the majority of the Russian population started to prefer the paternalistic guardianship of the authorities. The third factor relates to the image of the ruler in this structure of power that, again, exonerates the society from the responsibility for the current situation. Such an arrangement is convenient for the majority of the Russian society as confirmed by opinion polls; between two-thirds and four-fifths of Russians admit that they cannot have influence on anyone outside their closest family circle nor do they possess their lives or can change them.

In a country where the majority of people admit that they are not interested in politics and do not want anything to do with it, considering it a dirty business where politicians are driven only by personal interest, it would be difficult to expect two-thirds of the population to have a different image of political life, its configuration and place in this system. Hence, the "president of hope", who was expected to be different than his predecessors, became a president of the despair: nothing is going to be different. At the end of the day, it is the same country with a vital asset (oil), one survival tactic and one president.

## Several realities

Dealing with approval ratings in today's Russia as opposed to, for example, Germany, the United Kingdom, the United States, France or, I hazard a guess, Poland, one should first of all keep in mind several realities that characterise Russia. First, almost all of the population is distanced from the authorities. Second, the authorities are assessed negatively and there is a general aversion to politics. In Russia, the leader is perceived not as a real politician, elected for a certain term based on certain conditions, but as a rather illusory embodiment of mass expectations

which arise from frustration that has accumulated over time. In the people's eyes, the state executive is separated from the rest of the actors on the political scene and this includes both the administration and the party leaders. This situation, again, gives the president many advantages, but also absolves him of responsibility. Finally, thanks to the constant effort of the authorities and their media, the criteria that the population uses to assess the head of state remain rather vague.

In other words, the height and stability of Putin's rating is an indicator that the majority of the Russians have accepted that there is no alternative to the existing order. Thus, this indicator can actually be a measurement of the poverty of Russian society (the narrowness of the margin of choice) as well as of its static disposition. To put it simply: it is the price for the lack of a civil society and public life. However, it is important to emphasise that the indefinite, even completely semantically empty, approval ratings in such basic conditions retain their shape and function. They are still the result of the preferences and expectations, frustrations and shortages, shared by the majority.

The height and stability of Putin's rating is an indicator that the majority accept that there is no alternative to the general situation in the country.

In Russia the approval rating is always high since, in the view of the majority, there is no other choice. Paradoxically, this non-competitive context creates a sense that the level of support for the leader is always insufficient and, hence, expected to be even higher. In a situation where there are several competitors, the incumbent is satisfied, for example, by even a forty per cent level of support. If there are two competitors (for example, in the second round of elections) it is enough for the candidates to get half of the votes plus at least a few more. In the Russian context, for the single, non-alternative and non-removable leader even sixty per cent support is not enough. Hence, the anxiety felt among the authorities.

The authorities become even more anxious when approval ratings decline, even insignificantly. This especially concerns the "approval rating number one". This particular trend has been observed by sociologists since 2011 and especially the time before the Duma and presidential elections took place in December 2011 and March 2012. Let's now look at some numbers. Based on the data obtained by the The Levada Center polling organisation, Putin's approval rating in the earlier years of his rule was around 75 per cent, peaking at 85 per cent in the summers of 2007-2008 as the 2008 Georgian war was supported by the overwhelming majority of Russians. By the summer of 2011, the support fell to two-thirds and continued to decline. At that time, Russians had less and less of an understanding of what was happening in their country, where it was heading and what its leadership had in mind. Opportunities to get information on this matter, apart from the most formal

and totally official, were hard to come by. At that time, about half of the Russian society used the internet and less than a quarter would get daily news online.

These were the results of the information policy of the authorities introduced in the 2000s and their consistent actions aimed at sweeping the field of media. I would call this phenomenon the "crisis of comprehension". Accordingly, there were virtually no political forces that could provide an alternative to the field of public information and to give a balanced assessment related to the interests and position of large groups within the Russian society. This was a result of the strengthening of the famous power vertical and the consistent alignment and cementing of the political field. To put it more precisely, it was the general abolition of politics in the classical understanding of the term, apart from the backstage politics. This is what we can also call the "crisis of perspective".

## Muting and suppressing

For most Russians who were receiving information about their country solely from the television screen, either "nothing was happening" or only bad events, such as accidents, high level corruption, acts of lawlessness and uncertainty of the authorities, were taking place. In fact, the overall picture of the world that had been structured for the Russian society was orchestrated by the three top political leaders: Vladimir Putin, Dmitry Medvedev and Sergey Shoigu (at the time Minister for Emergency Situations).

It seemed as if no one else was there. Independent entrepreneurs, representatives of non-official media, leaders in the area of culture, science and art as well as all other possible candidates for the elite were viewed as having very weak influence over Russians. At best, they were mentioned as notable figures by no more than a few per cent of the population. Even representatives of the allowed, controlled, communist-populist opposition had a level of popularity at least three times lower than the ruling tandem. This was followed by a thin group of high officials whose level of approval (4.5 per cent) barely exceeded the statistical error in opinion polls. Not surprisingly, the approval rating of the representatives of the liberal-democratic opposition was even lower (one to three per cent of respondents). Another oppositionist, Alexei Navalny, was known to less than six per cent of the population at that time. Thus, there was a clear and evident "crisis of authority".

Unsatisfied by the authorities, the majority of Russians still wait for positive change to come from these same authorities.

At the same time, a significant part of the Russian society – between two-fifths and two-thirds of the adult population – admits that they believe in the information provided by independent experts who report on the embezzlement and corruption at the top echelons of the power structure. Conversely, when it comes to such issues as the recognition on the extent of Stalin's repressions or the less glorious sides of the Second World War, the majority of the Russian society show that they do not know what to do with these facts. This proves that today the overall majority of Russians do not want to do anything which goes beyond providing the daily needs to their families. And this is another, or maybe the main, result of state policies which were introduced in 2000s and which aimed at muting and suppressing any independent initiative, let alone collective and public activity, the manifestations of social solidarity and shared responsibility. In short, it was a "crisis (or even paralysis) of a will to act".

The sociologists (myself included) who were gathering these data and who analysed them underestimated one key point. Being well enough aware of the level of frustration from the past and the present, as well as uncertainty about the future that the population had accumulated over two decades, we seem to have forgotten about the paradoxical nature of the mass political culture in Russia. Unsatisfied by the authorities, the majority are still waiting for positive change in the country, which, nonetheless, will come from these very same authorities. Notably, the Russian society does not put much hope in any real shifts: the majority need a simple and strong, distinct and compellingly symbolic action, perceived and valued by all.

## Genuine strategic triumph

Undoubtedly, the elections which took place in Russia in December 2011 and March 2012 did not bring much change in this regard. Even official data shows that "the party in power" lost 15 per cent of support while the president almost 10 per cent. The course and results of the "elections without a choice" raised a wave of civil discontent among the more educated part of the society, especially the urban dwellers. This dissatisfaction was supported, at least rhetorically, by about 40 per cent of the population, a figure which was relatively stable over the course of one year; from December 2011 until January 2013. At that time, the slogan "Russia without Putin" was supported by about one-fifth of the society. At the same time, until 2014, the president's approval rating remained at its lowest level in all the years – 65 per cent. The adoption and, later, practical application of the new repressive laws enabled the authorities to take down the wave of public discontent by marginalising and isolating its most politicised figures. These were, however,

only reactive steps, which could be treated as a tactical and temporary success, so to say, a technical victory, not affecting all.

The Olympic Games organised in the winter of 2014 in Sochi, which were meant to be triumphal for Russia, were, in fact, a repetition of the "our victory" strategy. However, the real strategic triumph of the Kremlin was the annexation of Crimea in the spring of this year and the later military action in the east of Ukraine. In the case of the latter, the situation turned out to be more complex as it moved into a protracted phase, which, of course, reduced the mass effect which was so much desired by the authorities and which, I believe, will continue to be reduced further. As I will refrain from discussing its essence here; I will rather explain the mechanisms that were used to influence public opinion.

Undoubtedly, in recent months, Vladimir Putin and his team have made significant changes to Russia's internal and international situation. To do so they used a special plan which for most people in Russia is more important than real politics. Consequently, the spring events were given an extraordinary character. Emergency measures, along with the common myths of Russia's "exclusivity" or "singularity" have always worked very well, both for the society and the government. They repeal the diversity of social life and the complexity of the actors' motivations. They abolish the written laws and unspoken rules. They concentrate all resources and control into one hand, which allows the regaining of certainty of the situation. Again the world is divided into "us" and "enemies"; there is a war. Hence, all other divisions, other definitions of the ongoing events as well as the real everyday problems and private concerns are pushed aside. Habitual fears fade away, including the fear of uncertainty, the fear of choice, individual action and responsibility. "We" are together; the "leader" is with us, and he knows what to do.

Nearly 70 per cent of Russians agreed that Russia was forced to send troops to Crimea.

In this vein, the annexation of Crimea was based on a powerful symbolic belief that "Sevastopol is a city of Russian military glory". Convinced that such was the case in July of this year over 40 per cent of Russians agreed that Russia had the right to this territory. The same number acknowledged that Russia has no formal right to it, but nonetheless had done the right thing by annexing Crimea. This plan was communicated by the mass media and accepted by more than 80 per cent of the Russian population as Russia is returning to the primordial role of a great, military power. In addition, the emphasis was placed on the rescue of "our men", meaning ethnic Russians who are harassed and oppressed by other nations. These other nations are primarily Ukrainians, whose state has been declared illegal and defective. They have been granted the status of absolute strangers, called nationalists,

Bandera followers or even Nazis, a rhetoric which was not even used during the Cold War. This time it was used to prove that "they" are not independent beings, but some sort of zombies or puppets of the West. Their actions are hence illegal, anti-human and evil; they will never manage to do any good. Fed with such images, 86 per cent of Russians accepted the referendum in Crimea as legitimate while 77 per cent believed the same in regards to the referendum in Donbas.

Mobilisation of marginal resources usually means that there is nothing else left.

In fact, these numbers manifest something very important, namely a symbolic break with the West and (again, symbolic) readiness for war. That is why, about 60 per cent of Russians in their statements in July 2014, meaning one hundred years after the outbreak of the First World War, show that are not worried about the prospects of an international isolation of their country. The same number of Russians is not disturbed by economic and political sanctions (only 35 to 38 per cent are concerned by both of these threats), almost 70 per cent agree that Russia was forced to send troops to Crimea, while 55 per cent say that they will support the Russian leadership in case of an armed conflict with Ukraine (30 per cent say they will not support).

It is clear that such statements would be hardly possible if it was not for the already-mentioned state control over the major media. Having said that, I also want to emphasise that the media should not be regarded merely as the cause, but rather one of the elements in the processes that has been observed in regards to the collective thinking and mass attitudes of today's Russians. In other words, these new viewpoints which I mentioned before have not been generated by the television, they have been enforced by it; this is an important distinction.

## Nothing left

In this context a question arises, how did these events affect Putin's approval ratings? Clearly, Putin's support has increased. From the previous 65 per cent it rose to 72 per cent in March 2014, reaching 83 per cent by May and 87 per cent in August according to the most recent data of the Levada Center. Some would say that the figure returned to the level of the "best" times, that is the period before the economic slowdown. However, the truth is that over the last six or seven years much has changed in Russia and which has revealed not only the mass confusion and frustration of many Russian but also their discontent with the current situation. That is why, I am of the opinion that the current indicator of Putin's support is an illustration that Russia's president not only has regained his former "friends", but

has also been joined by some of his former "enemies" among whom are the more educated members of the society who were active in 2011 and 2012.

The simplicity of Russia's social structure, its political system, the deficit of real achievements by both the authorities and the society, and therefore, a growing need for increasingly loud and symbolic actions addressed to "all" reflect, in my view, the unreliability of the current regime and its social bases. The mobilisation of marginal resources usually means that nothing else is left. Everything else is no longer valid. Extraordinary situations, by definition, are not eternal.

The current order, however, just as was the case in 2005-2011, may move from strong to weak adaptive forms of mobilisation. We should not underestimate its fundamental duality and duplicity, which is a typical feature of social life in Russia. That is why the ceremonial, imitative gestures and acts performed on the political stage have been, throughout all the years of Putin's rule, accompanied by quite pragmatic, prudent and real actions of the elite and powerful clans. They were concentrated on the retention of power, their savings, as well as degrading public life by progressively eliminating diversity, initiative, independence, competition and dynamics. In addition, as there have been no visible alternatives to the regime, the groups that could clearly and convincingly articulate and present any alternatives are not visible for the society.

The order that characterises Russia today, no matter what name it is assigned, has existed for the last 15 years. With next elections planned for 2018, which could bring six more years of Putin's rule, the time in power of Russia's current president could equal to the length of Leonid Brezhnev's rule or even surpass it. Stalin too held power, using terror and war, for slightly more than two generations. His regime managed to reproduce itself outside of the generation of those who initiated and supported it.

Russia has still been going through the phase of disintegration and repeated attempts aimed at strengthening its socio-political system as well as creating the new man, a project which was started in the Soviet Union in the second half of the 1930s. By pointing it out I do not want to say that what was undertaken back then is repeated today. In fact, it is exactly the opposite. In my view, what is taking place in Russia today gives the possibility to see and understand exactly what happened before. History, contrary to how it is often interpreted, is a space of differences.

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# Pulling the Plug

EIMEAR O'CASEY

Recently, the Kremlin has been losing tolerance for the liberal media in Russia. Interestingly, this cannot be judged as a direct response to an increasingly empowered opposition. Rather, this latest crackdown serves a more specific purpose: to further entrench a one-dimensional understanding of Russia in the world.

The last eight months have seen European eyes fall anew upon Russian foreign policy. Analysts have been at pains to understand both the Kremlin's motivations in its actions in Ukraine and equally how such a seemingly brazen neo-imperialism has been so effective on the one hand, and palatable within Russia' own borders on the other. Answers to the second question lie in understanding the major domestic machinations that have been put in place to define and control the information being received by Russians and to limit the means through which information can be shared. This is more than a "disinformation" campaign, which has been referred to on both sides of the Russian-Ukrainian crisis. It also entails a concerted and gradual gnawing away at the structural and legal foundations of the media. Seen through the prism of this assault on domestic freedom of information and access to information, the defiance of ordinary Russian's over Vladimir Putin's activities in Ukraine becomes less perplexing.

## TV rules

Russia's media environment has long been characterised as profoundly restrictive and controlled. Since 2010, Russia has consistently been deemed "Not Free" in Freedom House's Freedom of the Press rankings, with a score each year of between 80 and 82 – where 100 is the worst possible result. Russia's poor showing has obvious sources: the majority of media outlets are state-owned, either directly or through proxies, impunity against those who commit violence against journalists is widespread and journalists are often the subject of defamation or extremism

charges with clearly political motives. However, steps taken by the government over the last year to further restrict Russia's media landscape serve a specific, acutely politicised purpose: to prevent any dissident voices from the gathering narrow definition of Russian identity and Russian interest, as a "with us or against us" mentality hardens against the identity and interests of the West.

At the centre of Russia's media culture is television. Russians continue to rely heavily on television as their chief source of news and information, as evidenced by recent surveys. A poll published in June 2014 by the independent Levada Center found that 94 per cent of Russians named TV as their primary news source. Only nine per cent claimed to rely on the internet. This is accompanied by a lack of regard for internet freedom. In March 2014, the Pew Research Center found that Russia had one of the largest proportions (15 per cent) of respondents out of a group of emerging democracies who said that internet freedom was not important to them at all. The biggest gap between those who support internet freedom and those who advocate its restriction was recorded in Russia.

The lay of the land is currently such that through direct ownership, or via state-owned outlets Gazprom Media and National Media Group, the state controls all five of Russia's major television networks: Channel One, Russia One, NTV, Centre TV and Ren TV. The majority of Russians rely on either or both of the first two for their daily news and all five espouse a clear pro-government line. In its assessment of the 2012 presidential elections, for example, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe assessed the election coverage provided by Channel One, Russian One and NTV as failing to provide balanced coverage through largely positive portrayals of Putin and negative portrayals of the opposition candidates, the latter receiving just nine to 11 per cent of news coverage against 61 per cent for Putin on Channel One.

Russians' reliance on state TV for their information has traditionally made the propaganda machine's job easy.

## The Dozhd episode

Still, Russia remains far from entrenching the kind of free-thought blackout of the world's most oppressive regimes. The environment is restrictive and unpredictable, but it is not entirely closed. Indeed, those figures published by the Levada Center and the Pew Research Center tell much of the story. Russians' reliance on state TV for their information has traditionally made the propaganda machine's job easy: they have one major outlet to control if they wish to shape mass opinion. A Cosmopolitan, internet-savvy Russians, seeking non-state media sources, continue

to have several options open to them. Long branded, and indeed dismissed, as the Moscow hipster channel that no-one watches, TV Dozhd (or TV Rain) is an example of a modern, independently-funded and run TV station with a strong online presence, which has consistently provided a critical appraisal of mainstream events and regularly hosts a range of opposition figures and free-thinkers. Long tolerated, or ignored, by the regime because of its niche market and the fact that it is essentially preaching to the converted, Dozhd has existed more or less untroubled since its establishment four years ago.

In January 2014 however, there were the first indications that the tolerance was waning. Dozhd ran a live poll on the 70th anniversary of the lifting of the siege of Leningrad asking its viewers whether the city would have done better to surrender to the Nazis to save the hundreds of thousands of lives lost under the blockade. Public outrage at the poll, perceived at best as insensitive and at worst as endorsing Nazism, ensued. On that basis, one cable provider after another dropped TV Dozhd, while the St Petersburg Prosecutor General launched an investigation into the channel for possible violations of anti-extremism legislation. Dozhd was thereafter relegated to the internet and began offering a subscription-based service supported by advertising revenue – now estimated as making up 70 per cent of the channel's budget. The new restrictions ensured that if Dozhd was not already the exclusive domain of Moscow and St Petersburg's elite urban classes, it certainly was now.

This episode did not represent a direct assault by the government. Instead, it reflected two things: first, that cable-providers, among others, are engaging in self-censorship in a growing climate of fear of the Kremlin; and secondly, that there is a broad and growing consensus that debate on national identity and history is the preserve of the state machine and any attempts to diverge from it by independent voices cannot be tolerated.

In July 2014 the government made a direct move against Dozhd. The day before the Duma (lower house of parliament) broke for the summer recess, amidst a flurry of rushed legislation, deputies passed a law seen as a direct attack on independent television: starting in 2015, advertising on cable and satellite channels will be prohibited. The law's author claimed it was intended to level the playing field between public and private outlets, but Dozhd's management quickly announced that it would be forced to increase the price of its subscription.

## Tightening of the screw

Some of Russia's longest-standing independent media voices are in fact part state-owned, evidence perhaps of the nuances of the specific Russian brand of authoritarian governance. It is only in the last eight months that they too have finally felt the

true weight of those owners. Probably the first firing shot of this latest crackdown was in December 2013 when Putin closed the well-respected neutral news wire *Ria Novosti*. It was replaced with a new structure called *Rossiya Segodnya*, headed by Dmitry Kiselov. Ultra-conservative and fiercely pro-government, Kiselov is renowned for his anti-western diatribes and aggressive bigotry. He is a subject of the current sanctions imposed by the United States.

The radio station Eko Moskvi (Echo of Moscow) has suffered similar interference. Despite being two-thirds owned by the state gas-giant Gazprom, Eko Moskvi has long managed to provide a thoughtful, liberal voice, largely thanks to its formidably independently-minded editor Aleksey Venediktov. However, it too has now been given a sharp reminder of where its money is coming from. In February 2014, the station's president Yury Fedutinov was dismissed and replaced by a well-tested state-radio loyalist. The threat that Venediktov's reappointment will not be approved by the Gazprom board now looms large over the station.

Despite Russians' lack of reliance on the internet for news sources, the Russian government has nonetheless engaged in a concerted and increasingly dramatic assault on the internet as a source of dissenting expression and self-organisation. Tackling the internet threat began back in November 2012, when the Duma passed a law enabling state media watchdogs to ban websites they deemed as "extremist". The new law saw thousands of websites blacklisted. This anti-extremism proviso, a powerful weapon for the Kremlin in its vagueness, was significantly enhanced in February 2014, when a new law was passed to allow prosecutors to order providers to block access to sites deemed to have published calls for participation in demonstrations planned without the consent of the government.

The Kremlin's tolerance for liberal media outlets in the shadows, be it radio, TV or internet, is steadily coming to a close.

The law went into action on March 14th 2014, when four prominent websites were shut down under the extremism provisions: the blog of opposition political figure and anti-corruption crusader Alexei Navalny, independent and opposition sites *Grani.ru* and *Kasparov.ru* and the newspaper *Yezhednevny Zhurnal*. Eko Moskvi was also requested to block a webpage reproducing Navalny's blog. The timing could not have been more acute, with the widely-discredited Crimea referendum to vote on joining the Russian Federation being held two days later on March 16th. The blacklisting, justified on the basis that these sites were spreading calls to demonstrate, was a stark warning to any who might attempt to destabilise the pro-Crimean momentum.

It seems, then, that the Kremlin is not taking any chances. Its tolerance for the liberal media outlet in the shadows, be it radio, TV or internet based, is steadily coming to a close. Interestingly, this cannot be judged as a direct response to an increasingly empowered opposition. While the anti-corruption protests of 2011 and 2012 sent shocks through Putin's apparatus and prompted increasingly harsh freedom of assembly legislation, this looks like something different. It appears that the Kremlin has become cognisant of the force which a fully-controlled media environment lends it. Putin's approval ratings in July 2014 were at 83 per cent, their highest in three years and reflective of the patriotic fervour inspired by the annexation of Crimea. These ratings would not have been secured if Russians had not been fed a constant diet of alarming claims about Ukrainian fascists banging on Russians' door since the beginning of the EuroMaidan Revolution. Armed with this knowledge, tolerating the marginal elite news outlets, however remote a threat they may seem, would be a foolish indulgence for the Kremlin.

## Nothing left to read

The stage for an assault on Russians' understanding of the events in Ukraine was therefore set. The Russian state-media coverage of the ousting of Viktor Yanukovych in February 2014 and its aftermath was of extremism and chaos, violence and disorder at the hands of a majority of anti-Russian fascists. Most crucial to this narrative, however, was the dramatic overstatement of the threat posed to Russian-speaking Ukrainians, casually referred to as Russians, by the new pro-western authorities in Kyiv with warnings of pogroms against Russian churches and Russian-speaking communities across southern and eastern Ukraine. In keeping with the one-dimensional, state-sanctioned patriotism which has been secured over the last few years of Putin's presidency and further entrenched through incidents like the Dozhd controversy in January, Russia's military intervention in Crimea and eastern Ukraine was justified to the Russian populace on the basis of protecting Russian brothers from persecution at the hands of the violent Kyiv insurgents.

> The Russian media response to the MH17 downing is testament to the efficacy of the disinformation system now in place.

The Kremlin appears to have understood exactly how much was at stake in ensuring that its Ukraine line was swallowed whole. In March 2014, the editor of *Lenta.ru*, a respected Russian news wire, was fired after the site published an interview with a far-right Ukrainian nationalist. The media regulator claimed that the interview contained links to websites which incited ethnic hatred and the editor

was replaced with a pro-Kremlin journalist. This prompted most of the *Lenta* staff to walk out in protest over what they said was an attack on their editorial freedom. Reflecting the gathering pace of the crackdown, the staff wrote an open letter to their readership upon departure: "The misfortune is not that there is nowhere left for us to work. The misfortune is that there is nothing left for you to read."

The Russian mass media response to the downing of Malaysian flight MH17 near Donetsk on July 17th 2014 is testament to the efficacy of the disinformation system now in place. As the horrors of the attack grabbed headlines across the globe the day after it occurred, the story was relegated to a small paragraph on the bottom of the front page of the state-run *Rossiskaya Gazeta*. Even the respected business daily *Vedemosti*, part-owned by the UK's *Financial Times*, led with a story about the fresh US sanctions against Russia rather than the plane crash. Conspiracy theories both absurd and alarming in their disrespect for the dead victims ran wild: particularly popular was the suggestion that the Ukrainian government meant to shoot down President Putin's plane as it returned from a summit in Brazil, but confused it for the Malaysian civilian flight due to their similar liveries. Elsewhere, the presence of elite AIDS scientists and activists on-board provoked suggestions that there was a miracle cure for the disease on the plane which provoked its downing. At the very least, the media machinery was mastering an exercise in distraction while the Kremlin clarified its line.

Many analysts posit that Russia walks a line between authoritarianism and moderation in a cycle: the government gives and takes opportunities for free expression to ensure a constant maintenance of the delicate balance between control and the prevention of mass unrest. However, this latest crackdown looks like it may differ in its reach. Rather than simply reining in an increasingly vocal opposition, it is serving a more specific purpose: to entrench further a one-dimensional understanding of Russia's political role, its enemies and hence its values – past and present.

The opposition elite have become increasingly irrelevant in this agenda and the need to placate them with a modest sprinkling of independent news outlets is diminishing as the bulk of Russians feed off the state TV's elaborate disinformation with ever-greater reliance. The Ukrainian crisis thus looks to be facilitated, in part, by a ferocious manipulation of Russia's hearts and minds. NEE

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# The Russification of Serbia

JELENA MILIĆ

As the largest predominantly Orthodox and Slavic country in Central Europe not yet a member of the European Union, Serbia is an easy target for Russia's soft power. The Kremlin is now counting on the "Putinisation" of this Western Balkan state to show Russian citizens that its policy towards the West has strong support in some parts of Europe.

At the end of July 2014, Aleksandar Vučić, the Serbian prime minister, informed the society and members of Serbian parliament that the country was in a really difficult situation. He emphasised that it is the parliament who needs to decide whether to follow the European Union and impose new sanctions on Russia or not. Vučić mentioned on that occasion that Serbia could not survive another round of gas price increases and although membership in the EU is Serbia's foreign policy objective, it needs to pursue its own national interests above all. What interests was he referring to? We do not know for sure. What is certain, though, is that democratisation is never mentioned as one of them. Why should the price of gas rise in Serbia as a result of its support for EU's sanctions? Serbia already pays Gazprom more than many other European countries like Germany, France, the Netherlands, Finland, Italy and Denmark. So why is the Serbian political elite so concerned about possible Russian energy blackmail?

## From myth to reality

The growing support for Russia among Serbian society is a result of two processes. One of them is the adaptation of the history of Russian-Serbian relations and how it relates today to the goals of the political elite. The official historical narrative consciously skips very important periods in Serbian history such as the interwar period, almost the entire period of Yugoslavia from the Tito-Stalin split until the

escalation of the crisis in Kosovo and the NATO bombings, and the period of the first democratic government of Serbia of the late prime minister Zoran Đinđić. All of these periods have one thing in common: moments of poor Russian-Serbian relations which from 2000-2003 could not follow the dynamics of Serbia's relations with the West. The elite has also ignored the fact that fewer and fewer Serbs speak Russian and that Russian culture is much less attractive for Serbs than the western one. Knowledge of Russian was simply pushed out by knowledge of English.

Serbs who decide to leave their country in search of better economic perspectives do not choose Russia as a destination. Public opinion is being fed with half-truths on the large volumes of Russian-Serbian trade and the great importance of Russian aid. A typical example is the free trade agreement signed with the Russian Federation in August 2000, which is being largely showcased by Serbian officials as an exclusive gesture of Russian friendship towards Serbia. Meanwhile, all the goods produced in Serbia when the agreement was signed were excluded from it. Not much has changed since then. Also the reasons for the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999 have never been truly explained to the Serbian public. Instead, it is repeated as a mantra that the only country that helped Serbia in those hard times was the Russian Federation. However, the fact that Russia did not oppose UN sanctions against Serbia (Yugoslavia) in the early 1990s remains widely unknown, or deliberately omitted.

The reasons for the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999 have never been truly explained to the Serbian public.

A large wave of fabricated historical narratives began in 2007 when the West was preparing to recognise the new status of Kosovo. It quickly overwhelmed the Serbian public and it is still a dominant narrative. Russia's firm stand then was that Kosovo is an integral part of Serbian territory and any secession would be unlawful. Belgrade's Kosovo policy was based on the principle of protecting its territorial integrity and sovereignty so it gradually intensified its relations with Moscow. Russia became a key international ally of Serbia and both countries soon began to co-operate not only on the international scene, but also in many other fields. This became the glorification of the "traditional Russian-Serbian friendship", which is currently accompanied by the tale of a strong economic foundation.

This policy turned out to be successful, as a majority of Serbs rely on traditional sources of information which are under the prevailing influence of the political elite. It is no wonder why the very unfavourable oil-gas industries agreement between Serbia and Russia, signed in 2008, did not face any backlash from Serbian society. Through this agreement, Serbian dependence on Russia became real and it gained a significant economic component. Until then, its nature was mostly mythical.


Photo: Bartosz Marcinkowski

Organised or spontaneous co-ordination of Serbian and Russian interests resulted in a specific linkage of significant groups and individuals and the creation of the so-called "Putin's orchestra" in Serbia.

Russia is perceived today by the majority of Serbs as its closest ally. Serbian citizens have one of the most favourable opinions of Russia of all states. While more than 50 per cent of Serbs have a positive opinion (25 per cent describe it as "very positive") of Russia, 82 per cent of Serbian citizens views NATO in a negative way. The United States has only a slightly better image. The EU enjoys more credit, but 43 per cent of Serbs still perceive it negatively. The conclusions of the polls are rather sad as the vast majority of aid to Serbia comes from NATO and the EU states.

The current government did not launch this pro-Russian narrative, but it has fostered it. It is a mistake to think that the main reason for the cherishing of pro-Russian sentiment in society is strictly connected with Serbia's increasing economic and energy dependence on Russia. In fact, it is about the reluctance to further democratise Serbia.

## European integration the Serbian way

The second process that is bringing Serbs closer to Russia is the rise of cult of personality and homogenisation of society by viewing the outside world through conspiracy theories. Both Aleksandar Vučić and Vladimir Putin owe their unquestioned authority to weak institutions, a politically dependent judiciary and

media, the privileged position of the Eastern Orthodox Church in comparison to other religions, a non-transparent financial system and the partisan subordination of the parliament, national security institutions and the oligarchs. In both countries, the cult of personality has become a significant component of the state's political system. On the social level, the state promotes a collective identity while individualism and human freedoms are met with open contempt. Serbs gave a strong mandate to Aleksandar Vučić, to whom the separation of powers does not mean much. In Serbia, just like in Russia, autocratic leadership is widely accepted and warmly welcomed by citizens. Thus, Serbia's "Putinisation" is on-going, despite its formal progress towards the EU which should in its essence mean the opposite process.

It is partially true that Serbia has never had a strong democratic tradition. When Slobodan Milošević was defeated in the first round of presidential elections in 2000 and backed out, the young Serbian democracy faced serious challenges which made it difficult to work properly and to put it fully on a European track. Serbia had to co-operate with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, take on the secession of Montenegro and engage in the normalisation of relations with Kosovo, just to name a few. The Zoran Đinđić government tried to implement the EU's and the US's conditionality policies and this approach was kept to some extent even after his assassination, but with much less pressure. The new government under Vojislav Koštunica continued the politics of rapprochement with the EU, although it failed to effectively fulfil most of the EU's conditions. The hallmark of period of rule by president Boris Tadić and his Democratic Party, who succeeded Koštunica, was the capture of high-profile war criminals Radovan Karadžić and Ratko Mladić. But everything has its price. At the same time, the internal situation in Serbia became far from satisfying: the level of corruption among the ruling elite soared and the tempo of democratisation slowed down. This style of governance characterises Serbian politics today.

The majority of Serbs today perceive Russia as their closest ally.

Aleksandar Vučić signed the Brussels Agreement on the normalisation of relations between Belgrade and Pristina, which was a milestone in Serbia's foreign policy coerced by the West, but it did not change Vučić's leadership style to which the West still turns its blind eye and can be seen as a mirror image of Putin. All the critical voices against the government are currently labelled as anti-state and anti-reform. The government strategy is designed to curtail opposition, civil society and the free media. The majority of Serbs stay indifferent when it comes to their freedom. The relevant public opinion polls show that their perception of democracy is predominantly based on their social and economic position and only 30 per cent of them perceive democracy as the best system of governance.

## The Putinisation of Serbia

The Kremlin's aggressive foreign policy has resulted in an increasingly complex conflict with the West. It is now counting on the "Putinisation" of the Western Balkan states to keep low institutional and democratic standards even once these countries finally join the EU. Then they can serve as an example that joining the EU does not bring any desired outcomes like democratisation or a better living standard. Another reason why Moscow wants to keep Putin-style leadership in the Western Balkans is to show Russian citizens that its antagonistic policy towards the West has strong support in some parts of Europe.

Serbia, as the largest predominantly Orthodox and Slavic country in Central Europe which is yet to become a member of the EU and does not want to become member of NATO, in a dire economic situation with the public exposed to strong propaganda, is an easy target of Russia's soft power. High-level meetings between Serbian and Russian officials in the last two years are unusually frequent. This is despite the fact that in the last two years Serbia has made significant formal steps towards EU integration. The same logic is applied to Russian foreign policy behind attempts to delay further integration with the West of other states in the region such as Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro. Rapprochement with the EU is presented by the Kremlin as the forced democratisation of the region and pulling it away from the "traditional Slavic-Orthodox brotherhood", which is nothing but a self-proclaimed zone of Russian interest.

The annexation of Crimea, the war in eastern Ukraine and the activities of pro-Russian separatists unveiled how further democratisation could be dangerous to countries which are in the orbit of Russian influence. In recent months Russia has more actively interfered in Serbian internal politics. Organised or spontaneous co-ordination of Serbian and Russian interests, both those publically and behind closed doors (not necessarily state level, but also private) resulted in a specific linkage of significant groups and individuals and the creation of the so-called "Putin's orchestra" in Serbia. Its members are placed in all strategic institutions: within the cabinets of Vučić and President Nikolić, in business, the energy sector and security agencies. There are also members in NGOs, cultural organisations, the academic community, sport and media. There is more and more evidence that some members of "Putin's orchestra" are financed directly from Moscow.

The main goal of "Putin's orchestra" in Serbia is to undermine public support for European integration and delay Serbia's rapprochement with the West. Another important actor in Serbian political landscape which has a similar aim is the Serbian Orthodox Church. It is becoming highly reliant on the Russian Orthodox Church even though it previously differed from its Russian equivalent in the field of social freedoms. Leonid Reshetnikov, head of the Serbian branch of the influential Russian

Institute for Strategic Studies was recently decorated by the Serbian Orthodox clergy for his contribution to Russian-Serbian dialogue. Reshetnikov is a propagator of the organic unity of church and state, and spokesperson of an adjusted version of Huntington's idea that "orthodox civilisation" is the counterweight to the West. He is one of the most prominent bandmasters of this orchestra.

Unfortunately, the activities of the Putin orchestra in Serbia have brought fruit. In early August, The Office for EU Integration announced the results of its regular survey of support for EU integration. For the first time in years this support dropped down below 50 per cent. Only 46 per cent would vote yes on a referendum on EU membership of Serbia this time, which is a drop of five per cent since December 2013.

## Strengthening mutual ties

Intensified attempts to strengthen mutual ties between Serbia and Russia were initiated by the Kremlin as soon as the Council of the European Union announced in late 2013 Serbia's readiness to start negotiation talks with the EU. At the beginning of 2013, Serbia received from Russia a loan for 800 million US dollars for the modernisation of its railways. Later that year it received an additional $500 million loan to plug budget holes and stimulate economic growth. The turning point was a visit to Serbia by Nikolai Patrushev, who has been Secretary of the Security Council of Russia since 2008. Unfortunately, the media did not pay much attention to this significant visit. It resulted with the establishment of a number of organisations and websites in Serbia whose primary goal is to spread pro-Putin propaganda in the country. They do not have direct support from top state officials, but their existence would not be possible without the government's invisible hand. The main hub of Russian propaganda appears to be the University of Belgrade.

In mid-November 2013, the Serbian and Russian ministers of defence signed an important military agreement. During Sergey Shoygu's trip to Belgrade, Vučić stated that "Serbia is not going to join NATO but it is not going to join a Russian bloc either", but since then, the dynamics of military co-operation with Russia have significantly increased. Serbia's military sector, deeply compromised by war crimes, arms trafficking and political assassinations, needs major reforms if Serbia is willing to join the EU. The process of integration with NATO would be very helpful in this field, but Belgrade remains militarily neutral and thus does not pursue some of the security sector reforms demanded for NATO membership. The Serbian "neutral" position has been broken up by numerous military contacts with foreign partners, but gradually switched to predominantly a bilateral level with a disproportional emphasis on relations with Russia since the Ukraine crisis. Serbia was the only European state that participated in the "Dance of Tanks" military show in Moscow

in August 2014. Earlier this year, Serbia held its largest military exercise with only the presence of Russian officials. Serbia's military trade with Russia, as announced by Serbian and Russian officials, will grow in the near future, which will surely have a negative impact on the dynamics of integration with the EU, in particular due to the new set of sectoral sanctions imposed by the EU against Russia.

In the energy sector, after the comprehensive gas and oil agreement from 2008, Serbia and Russia recently signed three deals on the construction of the South Stream pipeline. A clear lack of transparency of these agreements, as well as a poor information campaign, in particular about warnings that have been coming from the European Commission and the Secretariat of the Energy Community of the South East Europe of which Serbia is a member, raises alarm about this extremely expensive project. In the case that the South Stream is not built, Serbia will find itself in a very precarious position, which is not the case with other EU member states involved in the project. Belgrade stands to receive no compensation for the costs already connected with the South Stream construction. Furthermore, Serbia has to indemnify Russian companies that are involved in the project on Serbian territory if the project continues. The Russian Federation has already become, irreversibly, a majority owner of Serbia's largest oil and gas company, the Petroleum Industry of Serbia (*Naftna Industrija Srbije*).

> The main goal of "Putin's orchestra" in Serbia is to undermine public support for European integration and delay Serbia's rapprochement with the West.

Despite Bulgaria's announcement on the cancelation of construction until the EU and the EC rules on South Stream, Serbian officials recently informed the public that the construction of the first 30 kilometres of the pipeline with Russian companies will be completed by the end of the year. The good news is that the route has been changed and now heads towards Hungary, which actually means that the pipeline will connect to the existing one from Ukraine, not a hypothetic one from Bulgaria.

## Loyalty check

Belgrade's indecisiveness in the Ukrainian conflict additionally highlighted its dependence on Russia. Although it backed Ukraine's territorial integrity, it immediately issued an official statement underlining its everlasting friendship with Russia. A grotesque comparison between the annexation of Crimea and the Kosovo issue was used first by Vladimir Putin and then repeated by many Serbian officials, including foreign minister Ivica Dačić. Both of them deliberately failed to

mention the peace talks that took place over Kosovo before the NATO bombing, the drastically different position of Kosovo Albanians in Kosovo than those of Russians in Crimea, best illustrated by several mass graves of civilians, or the peace process under the auspices of the international community after the NATO bombing. All of these factors make comparisons between Kosovo and Crimea impossible. A slightly more assertive position on Ukraine's territorial integrity "even with Crimea" was presented by Aleksandar Vučić. In fact, the way in which Crimea broke away is very dangerous for the Western Balkans because it creates space for the further disintegration of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Republika Srpska), Serbia (Sandžak) and Macedonia (the western part of the country), something that is rarely mentioned in Serbia.

Štefan Füle and Catherine Ashton paid a visit to Serbia soon after the new government was formed in May 2014. At the same time, Belgrade rolled out the red carpet for Sergey Naryshkin, Chairman of the State Duma, who came to Belgrade to check its loyalty. Naryshkin who is on the list of EU and American sanctions was welcomed by President Nikolić, gave a speech at the Serbian National Assembly and at the University of Belgrade. Not a single media mentioned that Naryshkin was targeted by western sanctions.

In July 2014, the Serbian prime minister visited Moscow. He came back with a mouth full of promises regarding the possible liberalisation of the Russian market for the Serbian car industry. Although it is officially denied that Serbia's co-chairmanship in the OSCE in 2014 and 2015 was discussed during talks with Putin, it is worrying that two former Serbian ministers of foreign affairs, both members of "Putin's orchestra", Ivan Mrkić and Vuk Jeremić, will be in charge of this task. Russia's priority is to put the Transnistria issue high on the agenda and to remove the Ukrainian crisis from it. Despite the cooling of relations between Russia and the West, Vladimir Putin is expected to visit Serbia in October and take part in the pomp-filled celebration of the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Belgrade. If the invitation was sent by the Serbian side it does not speak well of Serbia's willingness to comply with EU policies. If Putin invited himself – it perhaps is an even worse sign for Serbia.

## Time for reflection

The way in which the downing of the Malaysian airliner and a set of new sanctions against Russia were interpreted by Serbian officials and the media suggests that Russia has the Serbian political elite over a barrel. A short-term and pretty far fetching injection of Russian money may be very tempting for Serbian politicians who are

struggling with poor economic conditions. It would bring effects sooner and could be more profitable for the elite than the long-term reforms demanded by the EU.

The question on how the West perceives the activity of "Putin's orchestra" remains open. Yet, any means to counter them are unknown. The good news is that the international community recently took a more realistic view on what is going on in Serbia. One of its biggest concerns turned out to be the suppression of media freedoms and the disappearance of critical opinions towards the government. Additionally, the donors' conference called "Rebuilding Together" held in July for Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina on the floods that hit the region this year showed that the EU and the West in general is, unlike Russia, prepared and willing to help.

Despite all the weaknesses of the Serbian opposition and the silence of the civil society, the ball is in their court. It would be good for Serbia if they realise there were people in Serbia like those who were present on the EuroMaidan in Kyiv in February 2014. They should reunify once again and explain to the society the disastrous consequences of the Russification of Serbia. If Serbia continues to maintain a relatively high support for the integration with the EU, there is hope that the process of further democratisation will not be endangered.

One of the most important tasks for Serbia's security in the coming years is a serious reflection on the diversification of energy resources and on increasing energy effectiveness. It is also crucial for Vučić to pick co-workers more carefully and exclude from his inner circle those who put economic interests with Russia before their own country. Unfortunately the drums of the Putin orchestra are getting louder and louder, this time openly presenting Russian counter-measures towards the West as a development option for Serbia, openly calling for actions that would maximise benefits for them. The EU and the genuine pro-EU forces in Serbia should immediately warn about the pitfalls of this short term and immoral path.

*Translated by Bartosz Marcinkowski*

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# The Kings of Donbas Where are they now?

SERGII LESHCHENKO

Following the escape of Viktor Yanukocych to Russia, many of Ukraine's oligarchs followed. But some of the clans who benefited under the Yanukovych presidency are now building new strategies and alliances which will ultimately benefit their interests and undermine the success of the Maidan protests.

Until 2014, Ukrainian state officials, oligarchs and pro-government politicians had only one public holiday – the birthday of President Viktor Yanukovych. Members of Yanukovych's inner circle spent considerable time deciding which presents would surprise and please the president the most. Since Yanukovych was driven from office, some of the gifts he received have been found in his tasteless residence. One can find everything – from an American military Studebaker to Faberge gold and silver utensils for eating caviar.

During a recent interview for Ukrainian Channel 5, Ukrainian oligarch and Dnipropetrovsk governor, Ihor Kolomoiskyi, described Yanukovych's birthday celebration in Ukrainian Crimea last year. "There were two parts of the celebration. The first one was for all the invited guests. A special bus collected the guests at the helicopter platform. One did not need to bring gifts to the president directly as they could be left on the platform, and, while congratulating the president, you could just show the picture of the present. The second part included a party for his narrow circle of friends. A well-known showman conducted the party. I was there for the first time…"

## Total corruption

This story illustrates the striking transformations which have happened in Ukraine in 2014. This year, Yanukovych's birthday on July 9th was celebrated in a

completely different atmosphere and environment. He celebrated his 64th birthday for the first time in years without throngs of officials and oligarchs surrounding him, hoping to pay their respects. Since February 2014, Yanykovych and his family have been under international sanctions and live in exile in Russia. Some of the oligarchs who attended his birthday party last year, following his dismissal as president, have joined the interim government as saviours of the nation. Another group of oligarchs, who were sometimes called the "Kings of Donbas", have lost control over the situation.

Following Viktor Yanukovych's departure from office his clan was destroyed, with the major actors fleeing to Russia.

Ukrainian oligarchs emerged from the ruins of state property. When the Soviet Union collapsed and the process of privatisation began, different business groups appeared and gradually gained strength. The common feature for this process was the enrichment of certain individuals under the purview of corrupt politicians. One of the first oligarchs, Yulia Tymoshenko, made her fortune in the mid-1990s due to the support of then prime minister, Pavlo Lazarenko. Tymoshenko founded the United Energy Systems of Ukraine, a company which was the largest supplier of natural gas from Russia. For his political and economic support, Tymoshenko had to pay Lazarenko 50 per cent of her income.

These corrupt schemes of "50 to 50" proliferated under Yanukovych's presidency. He became the shadow shareholder for many oligarchic groups. To cover up his wrongdoings, Yanukovych tried to destroy all the documents by tossing them in the Dnieper River, which surrounds his grand residence. The luxury of his personal residence, as well as the documents which were later found in the river, revealed the total corruption of his presidency.

Three big oligarchic clans surrounded Yanukovych and took advantage of their connections with the president. All three clans now have different destinies. The most important clan during his presidency, the so-called Family, is broken. The corruption money they earned was not from the privatisation of state enterprises. The Family took advantage of illegal currency speculation, smuggling, grain exportation, the alcohol industry, coal industry, energy industry and the telecommunications industries. Even this is not a complete list of the corruption of the Yanukovych clan.

Following Yanukovych's departure from office, his clan was destroyed. The major actors of the clan fled to Russia, including the ex-president's eldest son Oleksander, ex-First Vice Prime Minister Serhiy Arbuzov, ex-Revenue Minister Oleksandr Klymenko and the wunderkind oligarch Serhiy Kurchenko. Kurchenko was born in 1985 and, with the help and protection of his friends, he earned huge sums of ill-gotten assets. Today, this clan has managed to save some art of their assets. For

example, in the banking sector, banks such as Kurchenko's BrokBussinessBank, Oleksandr Yanukovych's Ukrainian Development Bank and Klymenko's Unison Bank still function.

The clan has saved their media assets as well: six months before the Maidan, Kurchenko acquired Ukrainian Media Holding for 370 million US dollars. This holding includes several dozen newspapers. Among them is the Ukrainian version of the Russian newspaper *Komsomolskaya Pravda* and even the Ukrainian version of *Forbes* magazine, which is published under an American license. Interestingly, the seller of this media holding was Boris Lozhkin, the current head of the Administration of the President of Ukraine. Presently, this media group continues to operate in Ukraine, although *Forbes* has demanded that the license be revoked.

However, one of the most influential mass media groups is the Vesti media holding. It includes a radio station which is run by journalists from the *Echo of Moscow*, the magazine *Vesti Reporter* and the free newspaper *Vesti*, which is run by the ex-editor of *Moscow News*. Even in post-revolutionary Kyiv, one can see long queues of people at the metro station waiting to get free copies of the publication produced by members of the Yanukovych clan. Indeed, Ukraine's Office of the Prosecutor recently confirmed that Klymenko, who had a close business relationship with Yanykovych's son and Kurchenko, finances the newspaper.

## The uncrowned king

Members of Yanukovych's former clan are currently under EU sanctions and live in Moscow and Russian-occupied Crimea. The offices of Oleksandr Yanukovych in Switzerland were searched and his accounts frozen. The same happened with the rest of the clan. Recently, they began to hire international lawyers and lobbyists for the lifting of sanctions. Klymenko personally confirmed with the author of this article that he has hired the Israeli law firm Lone Star Communications for the removal of his sanctions from the West. In addition, he has made no secret of his intentions to negotiate with the new government and return to Ukraine.

The other two powerful clans which were beneficiaries of President Yanykovych have had similar problems. One of these was the clan of Rinat Akhmetov, Ukraine's richest person according to *Wprost* magazine. Akhmetov stood in solidarity with Yanukovych until his last moments. He did not stop supporting Yanukovych until the protestors started be the objective of a bloody safari on the Maidan in February. Even after Yanukovych fled, Akhmetov, who for many years was considered the so-called "uncrowned king of Donbas", didn't show much enthusiasm for discouraging separatism. Ukrainian journalists listened to live broadcasts of negotiations between Akhmetov and the separatists. He tried to persuade them to negotiate with Kyiv,

but conducted no action except for organising small siren-protests by his factory workers.

The General Prosecutor of Ukraine, Vitaly Yarema in a discussion with the author of this article, recalled how Akhmetov behaved in the negotiations with the separatists: "We sat until 4 am in the Donbas Palace and negotiated," he said. "Akhmetov said only one phrase in the beginning, 'guys, Donbas is Ukraine and that's it. Now let's start the conversation'. But they didn't listen to him. They left me and Akhmetov at the negotiating table to call someone, probably their patrons in Moscow, for consultations. After they came back, they told Akhmetov: 'No, we do not agree.'"

Many oligarchs are already engaged in creating new political projects in Ukraine.

Meanwhile, the former head of the presidential administration, Serhiy Pashynsky, said that Akhmetov has not created a battalion of volunteers yet, as the governor of Dnipropetrovsk region Ihor Kolomoiskyi has done: "Local elite didn't support us in Luhansk or in Donetsk. I have no facts of Akhmetov supporting the separatists. But on the other hand, while volunteer battalions of the Ministry of Internal Affairs were being establishing throughout Ukraine, there was not a single unit created in Donetsk. Akhmetov withdrew from the process, even though we asked him to help us."

The separatists and Akhmetov probably have a pact of non-aggression. This comes from the fact that during months of looting and robberies conducted by the militants, they have not touched Akhmetov's luxurious palace in the city's botanical garden or the stadium of his football team, Shakhtar. After Yanykovych was driven from office, Akhmetov, in tandem with the Party of Regions, supported the appointment of Arseniy Yatsenyuk as prime minister. Meanwhile, Yatsenyuk guaranteed that he would not pursue a policy of property redistribution. The government did not attack the financial interests of the oligarchs. It increased rents for iron ore, which is the basis of the financial wealth of the oligarch, but did not dismiss the people in the National Electricity Regulatory Commission who were loyal to Akhmetov.

## Trouble abroad

The early parliamentary elections in Ukraine, which will most likely be held in October 2014, contradict Akhmetov's plans. This is because in the territory where Akhmetov's companies are located, where his dedicated employees live, the election may not proceed due to the situation in the region. After the separatists rose up in Donetsk, Akhmetov moved to Kyiv. He advised his son and wife to stay in London

where he owns the most expensive apartment in the world at the One Hyde Park complex, which he bought for more than 200 million US dollars. Akhmetov himself does not travel to Europe anymore, as he is afraid of the same trouble that oligarch Dmytro Firtash encountered.

The founder of the scandalous gas mediator between Ukraine and Russia, RosUkrEnergo, Dmytro Firtash was a member of the third clan that earned benefits from the Yanukovych presidency. Political support for his business dealings was provided by his partner Serhiy Lyovochkyn, the head of the presidential administration for almost four years during the Yanykovych presidency. The third actor of the clan, Yuriy Boyko, as vice prime minister and minister of energy, guaranteed his interests in the oil and gas industry.

During the Yanukovych presidency, Firtash managed to return 12 billion cubic meters of gas, which was confiscated by the Tymoshenko government. With the financial aid of Russian oligarch Arkady Rotenberg, Firtash purchased chemical factories in Sievierodonetsk, Horlivka and Rivne on the secondary market. He privatised the regional gas company in a questionable auction and grabbed the Zaporozhye Titanium and Magnesium Combine plant through creating a joint venture with the state. When Yanykovych used violence for the first time on the Maidan on November 30th 2013, this clan protected themselves from possible international consequences. Lyovochkyn resigned as head of the presidential administration. But trouble awaited them abroad. On March 8th 2014, Firtash celebrated International Women's Day at a French ski resort at Courchevel together with his wife and later went to Vienna, where the office of his company Centragas is located. He was arrested there by the Austrian police upon the request of the American FBI, which was investigating a criminal claim against Firtash.

Ihor Kolomoyskyi became popular in Dnipropetrovsk because he blocked all attempts of separatism and personally insulted Putin.

According to WikiLeaks, Firtash admitted in a conversation with the ambassador of the United States to Ukraine that he used the services of crime boss Semion Mogilevich, who is one of the FBI's top ten most wanted criminals. But the official version of Firtash's arrest by the Americans was in regards to another case. He was accused of bribing Indian officials to obtain permits for the exploration of titanium in India which was then sold to the American aircraft company Boeing. The investigation showed that since 2006, there were approximately $18.5 million worth of bribes to Indian officials and that the annual profit from the project potentially reached $500 million. Firtash personally held negotiations with Indian officials and gave the order for the allocation of funds in exchange for preferential treatment.

Finally, after spending almost two weeks in jail, the court allowed Firtash to await extradition to the United States on bail. The oligarch was released after Russian oligarch Vasily Anisimov paid a record 125 million euros for Firtash's bail. The arrest and no entry permission status to foreign countries destroyed the game of the clan – Firtash had to hire a large number of lawyers, among whom was the former minister of justice of Austria along with lobbyists who could help clean up his reputation. These lobbyists include the British company of Lord Bell, Bell Pottinger, and also the American consultant Lanny Davis, who helped former US president Bill Clinton during the Monica Lewinsky scandal. Firtash's PR managers sent information reports to the British Parliament and reported that their client is vital to Ukraine. For good PR, Firtash made a deal to provide financial support to the Saatchi Gallery in London (Firtash has a house in London).

Meanwhile, the Ukrainian government is looking to confiscate part of his titanium assets. The Fund of State Property warned the oligarch that they will not lease deposits of titanium to him. Trying to secure the loyalty of Petro Poroshenko before the presidential elections, Lyovochkyn and Firtash both supported his candidacy. In fact, the gas-clan of Firtash and Lyovochkyn are more prepared for the early parliamentary elections of 2014 than Akhmetov's clan. They own the TV channel Inter, which is very popular among Russian viewers in southern and eastern Ukraine. The presence of such a powerful tool already makes their chances for success during the election campaign quite high. In addition, they can use the TV channel to target political rivals. Earlier, this Yanukovych media asset was a faithful mouthpiece of government propaganda. After the EuroMaidan revolution, Inter targeted Kolomoiskyi's oligarchic clan.

## Face of the counter-revolution

The "gas lobby" has a few political projects in development. They have some influence over UDAR, the party of Vitali Klitschko, who became mayor of Kyiv in 2014. Two close friends of Lyovochkyn, his neighbour and the former assistant to his sister, became deputies of Mayor Klitschko. Lyovochkyn's second project, the Development Party of Ukraine, is headed by his former deputy in the presidential administration. A third project, the Radical Party, is headed by a member of the parliament, the scandalous Oleh Lyashko. Lyashko started his political career in the party of Yulia Tymoshenko, but later quit the party. In the midst of the EuroMaidan Revolution, when everyone was more honest than in peacetime, the famous journalist Savik Shuster said that he regularly invited Lyashko to be a guest to his TV talk show upon the request of the presidential administration, which was then headed by Lyovochkyn. More evidence to support that Lyovochkyn backs

Lyashko can be found in the phone records of another Ukrainian oligarch, Ihor Kolomoiskyi, who instructed his TV manager to start a campaign against Lyashko.

Kolomoiskyi was another beneficiary of the Yanukovych regime, although on a smaller scale. During the years of Yanukovych's reign, Kolomoyskyi managed UkrNafta, one of the largest Ukrainian companies, a majority of which belongs to the state. Obviously, this was not possible without the support of the former president. Kolomoyskyi already admitted that in previous years within a court trial with another oligarch, Viktor Pinchuk, politicians forced him to share the profits from UkrNafta to keep his people in management positions in the company.

Kolomoiskyi also owns the largest bank in Ukraine, Privatbank, and the popular TV channel 1+1, which he uses in the political struggle against Firtash and other oligarchs like Lyovochkyn. Kolomoyskyi illegally has citizenship in a few countries – Ukraine, Israel and Cyprus – and became a civil servant in March 2014, when he became the governor of Dnipropetrovsk to secure the region from separatists. Initially, it was assumed that he would be a temporary governor, but he succeeded and quickly expanded his influence, appointing a close ally, Igor Palitsya, as head of the Odesa region.

In the summer of 2014, a deputy of Kolomoiskyi began to outright blackmail the Ukrainian government, warning that their supporters might burn down the building of the regional administration if President Poroshenko removed Kolomoiskyi from office. Kolomoyskyi became very popular among residents of Dnipropetrovsk because he blocked all attempts of separatism and personally insulted Russian President Vladmir Putin by calling him a "schizophrenic". This brought him quick support in social networks. He also organised the formation of a battalion of volunteers, Dnipro-1, which fights in Donbas and provides security in Dnipropetrovsk. In addition, he achieved the maximum financial support for his bank from the government. Kolomoyskyi also received concessions from Yatsenyuk to reduce tariffs from the government by one-third when he introduced the excise tax on bioethanol gasoline, in which he specialises.

Kolomoyskyi realised that it makes no sense to pay politicians for defending his interests if the money can be invested in their own promotion and lobbying interests without intermediaries. Therefore, Kolomoyskyi is interested in holding early parliamentary elections and his popularity is high due to the Russian aggression. Due to this support, he could obtain good results in the elections. Without a doubt, after the EuroMaidan revolution, the rise of oligarchic clans is a challenge for Ukrainian society. Protests from last winter emerged not only because of the authoritarianism of Yanukovych, but also because of the total injustice in the distribution of public goods – when a few families control Ukraine's economy. To some extent, Kolomoyskyi is the face of the counter-revolution because his being a

governor is a snub to the Maidan, which fought for an honest government without corruption.

President Poroshenko also used to be an oligarch. During the 16 years of his political career, he changed parties several times and worked as the secretary of the national security council under President Viktor Yushchenko and as the minister of economy in Yanukovych's government. He amassed a fortune of $1.3 billion, was the owner of the Roshen chocolate corporation, sugar factories, the TV channel 5 and the fashionable Fifth Element sports centre.

Therefore, it seems that Poroshenko does not fully meet the requirements of the ideals of the modern European type of politician as the people on the Maidan demanded. However, the revolutionary events did not produce a single leader and Poroshenko capitalised on the losses of other politicians. Now Petro Poroshenko has a chance to fulfil a historic mission – to become the first successful president of Ukraine. For this, he has to remove all oligarchic influences from politics. His first priority should be the public interest, not the desire to enrich a few oligarchic clans who might quickly adapt to changes in the government and leech off Ukrainian politics. NEE

*Translated by Lisa Yasko*

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# The People's Battalion of Ukraine

MILAN LELICH

Following the ousting of the Viktor Yanukovych regime many had hoped now was the time to focus on reforms and European integration. Those hopes, however, quickly faded to the background as Ukrainians were forced to fight for their very existence. It soon became clear that, as was during the Maidan, help from politicians was not going to suffice. Instead, the people had to rely only on themselves. As a result, Ukrainian society made another colossal step in its evolution.

Immediately after the victory of the EuroMaidan and the escape of former president Viktor Yanukovych from the country, Ukrainian society faces a new challenge – fighting off the external aggression from Russia and the separatism in the east of the country. In late February, the pro-Maidan part of society believed that the major mission had been accomplished: the semi-dictatorial criminal and corrupt regime fell and now the priority task would be to reset post-Maidan Ukraine and assist in carrying out reforms towards European integration. However, the imperial ambitions of the Russian President Vladimir Putin changed the agenda dramatically.

The Russian invasion of Crimea was a total surprise for Ukrainians. Ukraine, which had not had a single war during its 23 years of its independence, turned out to be completely unprepared to repel the military aggression. Overwhelmed with grief after the funerals of dozens of their fellows countrymen from the "Heavenly Hundred", patriotically-minded Ukrainians expected that the uniformed services and the army would be able to do something against the external aggressor. They hoped in vain, as Ukraine lost Crimea with much humiliation. This story nearly repeated itself several weeks later in Donbas when a few armed separatists and

Photo: ВО Свобода (CC) commons.wikimedia.org

Current volunteer organisations emerged on the basis of the structures functioning at the time of the Maidan: self-defence, mobilisation, fund-raising, medical services, etc.

diversionists from Russia, although enjoying substantial support among the local population, managed to rapidly gain control over the territories of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts.

## Degradation of the state

The major reason for this situation is the fact that the state apparatus, rotten to the core during the years of independence, was unable to perform even the basic functions of safeguarding the country. Starting in 1991, funding for the Ukrainian army decreased year after year. Nobody ever considered that one day there would be a need to fend off military aggression from a neighbour. On one side, we share a border with generally friendly NATO states and on the other with Russia, which, according to Soviet mythology, continually treats us as a "fraternal country". As a result, the degradation of the Ukrainian army was extremely high. The top brass became exclusively preoccupied with its personal enrichment and the distribution of army property. No one trained the conscripts. Instead, they were given meaningless duties or involved in building dachas for the same top brass. The situation in the

other uniformed services was similarly poor. Officers of the special services and militia, from the executives to the rank and file, were concerned only with their personal enrichment, racketeering and corruption schemes – each on his level of the career ladder.

Let's add here that many of the Ukrainian officers genuinely despised the EuroMaidan and the new authorities that came to power as a result. They felt affection to Russia and some despised Ukrainian statehood. Almost all the top authorities, starting from the ex-president Yanukovych to the ex-head of the Security Service Oleksandr Yakymenko, fled from Ukrainian justice to Russia and most certainly transferred all army and intelligence secrets to the Russian special services. On top of that, many agents of the neighbouring state have been working (and probably continue to work) in the top and middle ranks of Ukrainian uniformed services, making any effective defence strategy nearly impossible.

Many Russian agents work in the top and middle ranks of Ukrainian uniformed services, making any effective defence nearly impossible.

Soon after the outbreak of the Russian aggression in Crimea, the then-acting minister of defence, Ihor Tenyukh, confessed that Ukraine could put only 6,000 soldiers on the ground against the aggressor. According to estimates by military experts, the real number of combat capable units was even smaller – several hundred people. The anti-terrorist operation (ATO) declared in the middle of April, soon after the separatists occupied most of the settlements in the Donbas region, unveiled all of the problems faced by Ukrainian officers who were suddenly forced to fight: a total lack of necessary supplies such as footwear, protective gear, food, medicines and fuel. The patriotic part of the Ukrainian population realised that it was once again time to take matters into their own hands as the new stage of fight for Ukrainian statehood began.

## The Maidan continues

To a large extent, the current volunteer organisations emerged on the basis of the horizontal structures functioning at the time of the Maidan: self-defence, mobilisation, fund-raising, medical services, etc. Instead of contributing to the development of a peaceful, European Ukraine after the revolution, their members were forced to reorient themselves to aid the Ukrainian soldiers and refugees from Crimea and the occupied territories in the ATO zone. The scope of tasks facing the activists increased many times over. During the time of the Maidan, they all worked to facilitate the protest actions in the centre of Kyiv (only being distracted to help the local EuroMaidans in their hometowns), whereas today the fates of

tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of Ukrainians who are fighting or fleeing from the war are in their hands. Numerous volunteer structures actively co-operate with each other, exchanging their experience and sharing useful contacts.

Without a doubt, the main activity of the volunteers is to supply the Ukrainian soldiers fighting on the front lines with everything they need. It is hardly possible to count the total number of vests, helmets, combat boots, glasses, kneepads, uniforms, binoculars, packages of medicines or food and other ammunition and equipment that the activists have provided to the front. The fundraising scheme used during the Maidan, which has proven itself, is used now to collect funds for the soldiers. Ukrainian social media such as Facebook is full of announcements like "the fighters of X brigade are in urgent need of helmets (optical sights, bandages, underwear, food, mineral water, gasoline, etc.)". For those few not using social networks, there are posters being hung or advertisements on TV. According to the co-ordinators of the large volunteer networks, within several hours they can collect sums equal to several hundred thousand hryvnias in their accounts. In spite of the economic crisis, reduction in salaries, and a rise in unemployment and prices, Ukrainians keep on donating their hard-earned money for the needs of the army. Not unusual are very small anonymous donations in the amounts of 10 or 20 hryvnias (less than two US dollars), apparently sent by the most low-income Ukrainians, including pensioners. The volunteers' accounting is absolutely transparent; they regularly publish printouts of all their bank accounts, receipts of the purchases made and photos of the purchased goods online, so that the sponsors would not have a single doubt that their money was used for the intended purpose.

The fundraising scheme used during the Maidan is now used to collect funds for the soldiers on the front lines in the east of Ukraine.

The scale of the donations has increased. At first, Ukrainians supplied their soldiers with food and minor protection equipment, like helmets or vests. Over time, the prices and range of the purchased items increased. Today the fundraising operation is used for purchasing optical sights and thermal cameras, which cost tens of thousands of hryvnias (thousands of US dollars). The volunteers have an inside joke saying that soon they would have to initiate the "people's tank programme", by collecting funds to purchase up-to-date tanks and weapons abroad. This joke is not much in error – several armoured personal carriers that previously belonged to Ukrainian businessmen have already been sent to the front lines, and mechanics are adjusting regular trucks for military needs by plating them and erecting turrets for machine guns. In order to diversify the fundraising methods, the volunteers developed various campaigns like selling bracelets, pictures, t-shirts, etc., and the money received is used to purchase military goods.

The attention is focused not only on logistical support, but also on the morale of the Ukrainian soldiers. There are a number of initiatives which encourage Ukrainian children to draw pictures and send postcards with greetings to the soldiers on the front lines. The second activity is care for the wounded soldiers and the forced migrants from the occupied Crimea and ATO zone with the number of the latter already mounting to hundreds of thousands. People offer free rent in their homes via social networks, offer jobs for refugees and provide them with clothing and food. Care in hospitals for the large numbers of wounded soldiers are provided by professional doctors and owners of clinics offer medical services free of charge. Several Ukrainian media outlets have launched special projects to help the soldiers, many of whom lost their arms or legs, to collect money for expensive prosthetics and medical treatment.

Finally, one of the major manifestations of patriotism among Ukrainians during the Russian aggression is the wide-scale volunteering to the army. The common trend of evading army service at any cost has changed to the exact opposite: in some instances, in order to join the troops, Ukrainians had to pay substantial bribes to the respective state officials. The total number of volunteers that are being trained in the rear or already fighting on the front lines is unknown, but in any event it is not less that tens of thousands of people.

## Who needs the state?

Sometimes amazing stories occur. For example, in western Ukraine an 80-year man stood for several hours in line at the military registration office in order to sign up for the army and later argued with the medical commission that he was still fit for service. A woman of the same age with similar persistence tried to sign up for the medical service as she had vast experience working as a nurse in the past. Everyone is going to the fight: residents of villages and cities, students, ideological nationalists and patriots without any political views, the poor and the rich. The perfect example is the famous Ukrainian multimillionaire Vyacheslav Konstantinovsky, who joined the army as a volunteer and put his luxurious Rolls-Royce Phantom on the market in order to use the proceeds to support the army.

> What will happen after the war ends in victory and the thousands of volunteers return from the front lines?

Russian aggression and the outburst of separatism effectively finished the process of the formation of the Ukrainian political nation which started on the Maidan. The external threat turned out to be a factor which made millions of previously inactive

citizens feel that they are Ukrainians, irrespective of their ethnicity, religion, place of residence or income level.

"Why do we need the state at all if we do everything on our own?" a volunteer exclaims with bitterness and irony. There is a grain of truth in these words, especially taking into account that the volunteers and activists now fight not for the state in the sense of the state apparatus, but for the country and their land.

In the course of the current conflict, the state structures have not presented themselves at their best. The activists excel enormously by their level of self-organisation, discipline, responsibility and co-ordination. The gap between the progressive civil society and the fragile state, which was already demonstrated during the Maidan, became even more evident. The bureaucratic apparatus, which during peacetime was mainly concerned with its self-enrichment, could not readjust itself to respond to the new challenges. Even the positive initiatives of the national leaders are encumbered at the middle and lower levels, settling down in bureaucracy and corruption. What's worse is that many public officials view the war as a way for their own enrichment.

The vivid example of the impotency of the public authorities is the army helpline 565 set up by the government. Ukrainians sent millions of text messages to this number, transferring 5 hryvnias for each message in order to aid the army. In total, more than 120 million hryvnias (over 10 million US dollars) were raised through the helpline during only two months. However, as it was soon discovered, the funds were not spent for the priority requirements of the troops – either due to the lack of professionalism of public officials or because the latter wanted to somehow make money out of this scheme.

Ukrainians quickly drew conclusions from this story and formulated a maxim: "If you want to do something good for the army, then do it yourself". In this case, the state acts not like a partner of proactive citizens, but rather as their enemy. Supplies of ammunition for troops and medicines for hospitals continually face obstacles artificially created by public officials. If the activists do not personally take the vests, helmets or food supplies directly to the units on the front lines and instead leave those items somewhere at the staff headquarters, there is a high probability that such donations would never make it to the soldiers.

Sometimes this rigidity of the state mechanism leads to very sad consequences. Recently an embassy of a Central European state, a member of the European Union, offered to the Ukrainian authorities a proposal to send medical professionals to the country and to accept civilians who were badly wounded during the conflict for medical treatment on the condition that everything would be free of charge and processing of all necessary documents would be at its own cost. Yet the Ukrainian Ministry of Health turned down the proposal, saying that there were

enough doctors in the country and that they can manage on their own (which is not completely true). The request to take wounded persons to the EU for medical treatment remained without a response for several weeks. Later, the employees of the embassy contacted the volunteers and a couple of days later they received a list of Ukrainian children who had been harmed during the conflict and were receiving medical treatment in hospitals in Donetsk and Luhansk, which were occupied by the separatists. But it was too late. The leaders of the self-appointed republics refused to deliver anyone and the wounded Ukrainian children now suffer in hospitals without necessary medical treatment.

## What comes after victory?

Certainly, saying that the Ukrainian state does absolutely nothing for the victory over the separatists would be an exaggeration. Weapons, armed vehicles, ammunition supplies, gasoline, a substantial part of medical supplies and the overall control over the anti-terrorist operation are the concern of the Ukrainian authorities. Of course, ordinary civil activists are not able to direct several thousand combat units. Every day around 70 million hryvnias (nearly six million US dollars) from the state budget are spent on the ATO, although there are huge questions as to the proper use of these funds. There are also critical comments to the quality of the leadership of the armed forces on the battlefield. As the captain of the volunteer Donbas Battalion, Semen Semenchenko told me, (incognito, without taking the balaclava off his head and concealing his real name) the best co-ordination is achieved between the leaders of small units directly and not through the General Staff or the bureaucracy of the military, which works very ineffectively.

What will happen after the war ends in victory and thousands of the volunteers return from the front? This is the question that Ukrainians are now asking themselves more and more often. These people who faced death would have to face a bureaucratic apparatus which has not changed at all during the time they had spent at war. Corruption continues to flourish. Kickbacks, nepotism, raiding, the passivity of public officials, and venal militiamen, prosecutors and judges have not disappeared since Yanukovych fled.

"Soon the veterans of the ATO will return from the front lines and they definitely will not sit by silently," the head of the Lustration Committee Yehor Sobolev told me. His words reflect an idea which is popular among the people. Tempered by battle, these veterans will return and eradicate all these inadequate public officials from their cabinets, thus finally opening the way to a happy, democratic and European future for Ukraine.

However, this opinion is erroneous. The Maidan was necessary to oust Yanukovych's authoritarian regime, but it is unable to become an instrument of quality, long-term transformation. For this purpose, the systematic and at times tedious work of the civil society is needed, and not the heroism on the battlefield. It is a big question whether Ukrainians could manage to organise themselves as effectively as they do now by helping the army. For now, it can be definitely said that Ukrainian society has at least passed this test with success. NEE

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# Rebuilding the Engine of Co-operation

ANDRZEJ SZEPTYCKI

The Ukraine-based Motor Sich is one of the key global manufacturers of engines for military and civilian airplanes and helicopters. With the majority of sales to Russia and the ongoing conflict between the two countries, how will Motor Sich manage to navigate between politics and business?

The Zaporizhia-based company Motor Sich is one of the leading defence companies in Ukraine, playing a key role in the field of aviation industry. In 1991, it inherited the lion's share of this sector from the Soviet defence industry. Like the majority of the other industrial Soviet enterprises, it was significantly affected by the collapse of the Soviet Union. The number of orders declined dramatically and a need to find new markets appeared. The company, however, managed to overcome most of these problems and Motor Sich is now one of the major global manufacturers of engines for airplanes and helicopters, both military and civilian. The company produces turbojet, turboshaft and turboprop engines as well as auxiliary power units. They are installed in about 90 types of airplanes, helicopters, rockets and missiles used in more than 100 countries worldwide. In 2013, the turnover of Motor Sich reached one billion US dollars and its profits were around $165 million.

## Engines for Russia

Motor Sich is one of the few Ukrainian defence companies not owned by the state. One of its major shareholders, as well as its CEO for more than two decades, is Vyacheslav Bohuslayev, who is also a member of parliament representing the

Party of Regions (the party of the ousted president Viktor Yanukovych). Other major shareholders of the company include the Bank of New York Mellon and Business House Helena. It seems that there are no hidden Ukrainian and Russian investors standing behind these shareholders.

Russia is the main purchaser of Motor Sich's products. A few years ago it bought nearly 80 per cent of its production; in 2011, 68.8 per cent; and in 2012, 55 per cent. Motor Sich works with a number of Russian defence companies including Rossiyskiye Vertolyoty and its subsidiaries, UMPO, Klimov, Sokol and Salut, and it also owns several smaller plants in the Russian Federation. Russia is largely dependent on the supplies from Motor Sich, but has shown an interest in changing this situation. In 2007, for example, approximately 95 per cent of helicopters produced in Russia were equipped with Ukrainian engines. In 2010, the figure fell to about 70 per cent.

Several engines were designed and built in collaboration with Motor Sich and its Russian partners including the D-436T, mounted on the Tu-334 commercial airplane, the TV3-117 for An-140 passenger planes and the MS-500V for Ansat helicopters. There were even attempts to jointly produce airplanes and helicopters. The most famous example is the An-70 military transportation plane, a project that has experienced serious problems since the early 1990s. The plane successfully passed technical tests in the spring of 2014, but time will tell if production will be possible in the current political context. Other joint ventures include passenger planes An-140, An-148, An-150 and the An-124 "Ruslan" cargo plane.

Motor Sich is present in Russia not only because of its production. The company provides maintenance service for the engines of a number of civilian airlines (Russia Airlines, Polet Airlines, Angara Airlines, Yakutia Airlines). In 2006, its market share in Russia was at the level of 22 per cent. Motor Sich's dependence not only on the Russian market, but also on Russian supplies is one of the weaknesses of the company and an effect of the Soviet legacy. The lack of closed production cycles at the level of individual republics was a specific feature of the Soviet defence industry, which still stimulates the relationship between former republics of the Soviet Union. In 2006-2008, for example, approximately 80 per cent of parts (excluding electronics) and 38 per cent of materials for production used by Motor Sich came from the Russian Federation.

## Business and politics

Co-operation between Motor Sich and its Russian partners depends on the political relations between Ukraine and Russia. After the Orange Revolution in 2004, when the new Ukrainian authorities declared their desire to join NATO, Russia threatened to break bilateral co-operation in the defence industry. This

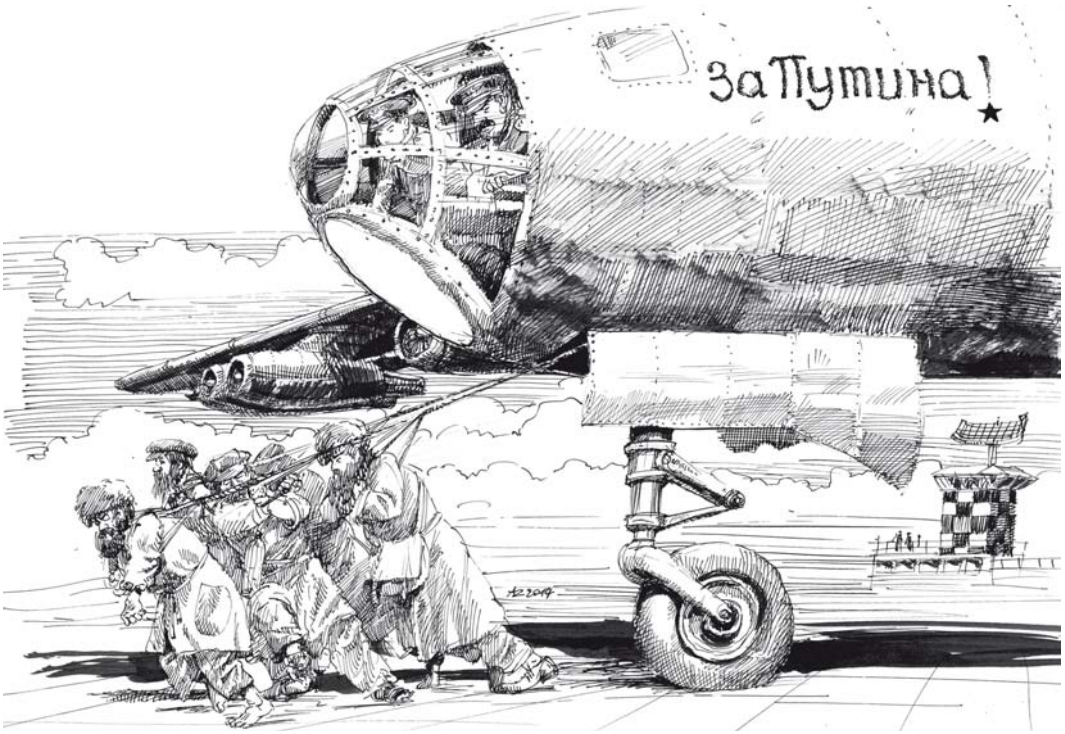
threat referred particularly to Motor Sich. Russia stopped importing R-95 (RDK-300) engines for missiles. Since that time, they were modified to be equipped with engines manufactured in Russia. Additionally, there were threats that the Klimov and Sokol plants could stop buying Ukrainian engines. In practise, however, co-operation soon resumed. Economic gains remained the most important for the Ukrainian side. Hence, after the 2004 Orange Revolution, Motor Sich did not use the opportunity to find new markets, especially in the West. Additionally, it came to the conclusion that gaining independence from the Russian suppliers would not happen overnight. Then, in 2006, Viktor Yanukovych, then prime minister, announced that aspirations to join NATO were off the table, calming the Russians down. By 2007-2008, new orders began flowing in to Zaporizhia once again.

After the establishment of Yulia Tymoshenko's second government (the end of 2007), Ukraine renewed its desire to join NATO. Vladimir Putin then declared that the Russian air force could no longer depend on the uncertain situation in Ukraine, leading to a significant challenge for the Zaporozhia company. Motor Sich declared openly that the policy of the Orange coalition had impeded the development of co-operation with Russia. Therefore, Yanukovych's election to the presidency in 2010 was greeted with joy and the conviction that the production would not be compromised under his leadership. Moreover, in June 2010, the Russian prime minister declared that there was no alternative to co-operation between the two countries with regards to the aviation industry.

More than 55 per cent of Motor Sich's production is directed towards the Russian market.

Russia, however, has its own understanding of this relationship. Due to Ukraine's political instability and Russia's dependence on production, taking over of key elements of the Ukrainian defence industry seemed to be the most reasonable solution. The initial plans appeared in 2008-2009, but at the time Vyacheslav Bohuslayev rejected the Russian proposal. One of the reasons was the fact that the parties could not come to an agreement on the price that the Russians would have to pay for a controlling interest in Motor Sich. After the Russians failed to take over the company, they decided to gradually reduce its role in the Russian market. In 2011, Rossiyskiye Vertolyoty terminated its contract for the VK-2500 engines used on Ansat helicopters, which had been signed one year earlier. Instead, they decided to equip the machines with Canadian engines. Since 2013, the Russian Klimov plant has also started production of its own engines to replace Ukrainian production.

Despite the growing political and economic difficulties, the Russian market, however, remained extremely attractive for Motor Sich. Therefore, it became more open to proposals for closer co-operation with the Russian defence industry. The change




of power in Ukraine also played a certain role here. Yanukovych's team decided to start closer co-operation with Russia in many fields and Motor Sich benefited from this policy. The Zaporozhia company also supported Russia's critical position on the issue of Ukraine's rapprochement with the European Union. Bohuslayev advocated for Ukraine to join the Customs Union co-created by Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan. He declared that it would allow the development of trade between Ukraine and Russia, as well as reduce the costs of the Ukrainian aviation industry. According to Bohuslayev, accession to the Customs Union was a better option for Ukraine, while the association with the EU could damage the Ukrainian defence industry because of the need to adopt the standards of the *acquis communautaire*. At the same time, he asserted that the association of Ukraine with the EU would not affect the co-operation of Motor Sich with its Russian partners.

## If not Russia, then who?

Motor Sich has benefited significantly from Russian arms exports. For example, Russian Mi-17V5 helicopters with Ukrainian engines were ordered in 2012 by the

United States to be used in the war in Afghanistan. In 2006-2008, approximately 39 per cent of Motor Sich's export revenues came from engines supplied for Russian airplanes and helicopters produced for Russian export needs. However, co-operation with Russia hinders the development of contacts with other international partners. Russia considers Ukrainian companies as competitors and has attempted to block their entry in other markets.

According to Russia, Motor Sich has no right to export engines for R-95 (RDK-300) rockets because back in the Soviet times these were produced by the Moscow-based company AMNTK Soyuz. Therefore, that equipment is covered by the Ukrainian-Russian agreement on the protection of classified information. According to Motor Sich, however, these engines have been modified since 1991 in Zaporizhia. Thus, they should be allowed to be sold freely. Ukraine's exports of these engines to other countries could have been one of the reasons that made Russia stop their imports from Ukraine.

Due to problems with Russia, Motor Sich has sought to strengthen its presence on the global market, especially in China.

Due to problems with Russia, Motor Sich has sought to strengthen its presence in the global markets, especially in China, which imports and maintains several models of engines. A contract with the Chinese group Hongdu on engines for L-15 training airplanes was signed in 2011. Theoretically, Motor Sich has to supply 200-250 such engines, but this amount will probably not be reached as the Chinese have shown interest in buying the license to start their own production of these engines. Motor Sich, however, does not plan to sell the license to the Chinese. Nevertheless, thanks to its co-operation with China, Motor Sich has entered the markets where China exports its own weapons, such as Zimbabwe and Sudan. During the Yanukovych presidency, co-operation with China had an additional political dimension, as he was seeking a third route beyond the two-sided choice of "Russia or the European Union". As a result, Motor Sich has increased business in countries like India, Algeria and the countries of Southeast Asia, Latin America and the Middle East.

By the beginning of 2012, Motor Sich bought 60 per cent of shares of an aircraft repairs plant in Orsha, Belarus, for approximately $1.1 million. This plant maintains and upgrades primarily Mi-8, Mi-8MT, Mi-8MTB-1, Mi-17, Mi-24 and Mi-35 helicopters. From the perspective of the Belarusian authorities, privatisation became the plant's salvation from bankruptcy. For Motor Sich, the purchase will provide a possibility to enter new markets, maintain a relationship with the Russian market and, finally, launch its own programme of helicopter production.

## Conflict with Russia

The conflict between Russia and Ukraine has become a major challenge for economic cooperation between the two countries. In March and April 2014, Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk and the Ukrainian defence company Ukroboronprom decided to stop all supplies of military equipment to Russia. Bohuslayev declared that the Ukrainian authorities were trying to shift the responsibility for the annexation of Crimea to companies involved in Ukrainian-Russian co-operation. In May 2014, Motor Sich reported that Ukrainian-Russian conflict did not affect its co-operation with partners in Russia. Furthermore, the Russian Ministry of Industry and Trade declared a willingness to continue co-operation in the field of aircraft engine production. The cost of orders for 2014 received by Motor Sich has reached $950 million, which is five per cent more than the previous year. This increase is ensured by contracts with Russian and Chinese partners. In the first quarter of 2014, the company's profits increased by 51 per cent. Experts believe that Motor Sich, being a private company, will supply 400 engines to Russia and the value of the company's shares will increase, despite the war.

Despite the conflict with Russia, Motor Sich's profits increased by 51 per cent in the first quarter of 2014.

However, the conflict between Russia and Ukraine raises five key challenges for Motor Sich. First, it may lose access to the Russian market. Approximately 40 per cent of the 1,000 engines to be produced in 2014 should be allocated to the Russian market. Second, an interruption of supplies from Russia would hamper the execution of orders to other countries. Third, the conflict with Russia threatens joint projects, both military and civilian. Ukraine has declared a willingness to continue these projects even without Russia, but it remains uncertain whether it is possible in the current difficult economic situation. Fourth, Motor Sich could be regarded by the Ukrainian authorities as a company that delivers weapons to an aggressor. The company counters these accusations by saying that 90 per cent of the 400 engines ordered by Russia in 2014 will be installed in airplanes or helicopters that will be exported later. Out of the remaining ten per cent, 30 pieces will be installed on civilian aircrafts and only ten pieces in military machines. Fifth, some experts fear that Russia could try to take over key elements of its defence industry, including Motor Sich, by force.

Ukraine has made efforts to find alternative partners, especially in Europe. The country hopes to obtain certificates that would allow it to sell new engines on that market. Even before the Ukrainian revolution, Motor Sich was interested in co-operation with Poland. Currently it is negotiating with the Polish company PZL

Swidnik. The Polish Air Force Technical Institute and Military Aviation Plant could join this co-operation. Bilateral co-operation would include the production of Mi-2 and Sokół helicopters as well as modernisation of the Mi-8, Mi-17, Mi-24 and SWS-3. Motor Sich and its Russian partners could also try to circumvent the restrictions on bilateral co-operation through Belarus. The plant in Orsha, for example, could play the role of an intermediary in such a situation. In the current situation, the Belarusian authorities do not see any reason to break collaboration with Motor Sich.

Russia is likely to accept this solution because of the importance of supplies from Ukraine. It is currently unable to produce a sufficient amount of engines needed by the Russian army and for export on its own. One study showed that Russia's current capacity of production is at the level of 50 units, while it needs as many as 3000. It is clear, however, that Russia will continue to develop its own capabilities in this area in order to become independent from the "uncertainty in Ukraine". NEE

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# Through the Neighbours' Lenses

JĘDRZEJ CZEREP

The Ukrainian revolution and Moscow's subsequent hostile actions towards the country had a significant impact on Russia's closest neighbours and economic partners – Kazakhstan and Belarus. Even though the citizens largely accept the point of view promoted by the Russian media, the elite have become nervous about the perspective of destabilisation on their own territories.

When the leaders of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan gathered in Astana on May 29th 2014 to sign the founding act of the Eurasian Economic Union, one would expect grand celebrations. It was the three presidents who are nostalgic for the Soviet era making a step forward towards restoring closer ties between the former USSR members.

To the surprise of many, there was nothing but silence around the summit in Kazakhstan. Two days prior, a group of journalists was arrested, including members of the Radio Azattyk, the Kazakh branch of Radio Free Europe / Radio Svoboda. On the day of the summit its website was attacked and articles about the presidents' meeting were inaccessible.

## Ambiguous support

The authorities reacted nervously for two main reasons. First, since the fatal and bloody crackdown on the oil workers in Zhanaozen in December 2011, they will not allow any more uncontrolled demonstrations. The detained journalists were trying to report on the small protests against the country's entry into the new inter-state structure. Secondly, there was nothing certain about the signing ceremony itself. For Kazakhstan and Belarus, the negotiations were all about exhausting the cycle

of bargaining on how to pay a smaller price for integration and reflections of their tensions with Russia. In the background, there was Vladimir Putin's expectation that his partners would support his policy towards Ukraine and fear that Belarus or Kazakhstan could be infected by the "Ukrainian flu". Therefore it was better not to show off one's own troublesome position.

Kazakh reactions for the developments in Ukraine were ambiguous. Officially, the authorities declared support for Moscow's steps, especially the annexation of Crimea. On March 10th, Nursultan Nazarbayev stated that Kazakhstan "understands Russia's actions undertaken to support the rights of minorities in Ukraine". It happened despite the fact that in the previous month, outspoken Duma member Vladimir Zhirinovsky proposed the annexation of the five Central-Asian states and the creation of a new subject of the Russian Federation with the capital in Almaty (he used the old Tsarist name of the city, Vernyi). Soon after this scandal, Nazarbayev called a meeting with the Ministry of Defence where he suggested strengthening borders and boosting the combat capabilities of the army.

It was the escalation in the east of Ukraine, however, that really frightened the Kazakh elite. They are very aware of the pro-Russian sentiments among the Russian minority, which is largely concentrated in the northern regions (Slavic Russian-speakers compose nearly 25 per cent of the country's total population). The community could potentially be a detonator of another Russian-supported rebellion. It was no coincidence that the Kazakh authorities released a project of the new criminal code, revealed in early April. It included new punishable crimes: seven years in prison for calls against the territorial integrity of the country and ten years if such calls are made by a public officer. The laws were clearly projected to tighten control over the local authorities in northern Kazakhstan. As the weeks went on, the fears appeared to have been over-estimated. There was no growth of tensions noted among the Kazakh Russians. However the authorities still organised drills of the security services near the Russian border. A particular show of strength was organised in the predominantly Russian city of Altaysk, where security officers marched across town.

The escalation in the east of Ukraine brought significant fear to the Kazakh elite.

Independent from the current reactions, there is a growing understanding for adopting a long-term strategy that would balance the Russian domination in the north of the country (moving the nation's capital to northern Astana back in 1997 was already seen as such a step). To encourage Kazakh settlement, the authorities lowered the required term of residence for the diaspora returnees (*oralman*) from seven years to one year in order to obtain full citizenship. There are some three million ethnic Kazakhs living beyond the borders of the 17-million-strong state.

## Hold your horses

Even though the northern provinces remained calm, there was worrying news that Kazakh citizens were fighting alongside the pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine. The self-declared mayor of Slovyansk, Viacheslav Ponomariov, told *Time* magazine that there were fighters from Kazakhstan among his ranks. The leader of the Eurasian Youth Union told the Russian newspaper *Izviestia* about Cossacks from eastern Kazakhstan who travelled to fight in Donbas. Similar to the situation with the local Islamists fighting in Syria, Kazakh authorities feared that the returning fighters could find followers in their communities.

In early May, Nazarbayev's fears caused crises during two major summits. During the Customs Union summit on May 5th 2014, three weeks before the expected signing ceremony of the Eurasian Union, it was Nazarbayev who was "holding the horses". He declared it was best to sign an empty treaty and to fill in the content at an unspecified time in the future. As a result, the timeframe for the signing was agreed, but there was still no consensus about what they would be signing.

After the annexation of Crimea, the official Belarusian media did not have the same level of enthusiasm as the Russian propaganda.

On May 8th 2014, Nazarbayev boycotted a summit of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) in Moscow. The organisers had to find a new framework for the meeting of leaders of Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, who had already gathered in the Russian capital. The reason for Nazarbayev's absence was his fury for a statement by Vladimir Shtygashev, head of the parliament of Khakassia (a federal republic of the Russian Federation) and a prominent United Russia politician. Shtygashev claimed that Russia has certain "historical rights" to some areas of Kazakhstan. Nazarbayev was given a pretext not to show up in Moscow, where he could have felt uncomfortable if pressured into signing a pro-Russian declaration on the current events in Ukraine.

With the Ukrainian crisis deepening, Kazakhstan, like Belarus, unsuccessfully tried to become a mediator. Kazakhstan felt that the escalation of the international crisis would harm its budget. Sanctions against Russia could potentially affect the Kazakh oil industry, which is largely dependent on transporting crude across the Russian territory. Astana increased efforts to further develop alternative export routes (to China, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Iran).

Nevertheless, the Kazakh public opinion remains under the overwhelming influence of the Russian mass media. There is general unanimity in the public perception of Russia's actions in Ukraine (especially in relation to Crimea) that have prevented deepening divisions between the Kazakhs and Kazakh Russians.

Muratbek Ketebayev, the former minister of energy and a dissident, noted the influence of the language of propaganda on the conditions in which the opposition movements work. Labelling anyone who does not accept the authorities' policies an "enemy of the state" came from Russia and took root in Kazakhstan when the Donbas conflict escalated. Such perceptions have deepened the isolation of Nazarbayev's critics, making it difficult to project any social consensus for a transition after the expected end of Nazarbayev's rule.

## Pride of the conquerors

Belarus, as Ukraine's direct neighbour with strong cultural and economic ties, was particularly affected by the crisis near its southern border. Ukraine is Belarus' second-largest trading partner. In 2013, 13 per cent of Belarusian exports went to Ukraine. For Belarus, stronger ties between Ukraine and the EU could mean the weakening of the trade dynamics with Ukraine. On the other hand, the possible accession of Ukraine to the Customs Union, which was Putin's strategic plan during the Yanukovych regime, would have made Ukraine, not Belarus, the most important member of the economic space built around Russia. These were the reasons why in 2013 Belarus supported the maintenance of the status quo in Ukraine's geopolitical position: the optimal solution would have been neither Europe, nor Russia.

To keep Kyiv at a distance from Moscow, Alyaksandr Lukashenka helped Ukraine fulfil the formal criteria in order to sign the EU Association Agreement. In June 2013, he ratified the bill on the demarcation of the common border. The protests on the Maidan did not scare Lukashenka very much; he was confident that opposition movements in his country were not able to bring people to the streets. The notable exception was made for the football fans from Borysov who published a photo of themselves holding banners supporting the Maidan activists. The authorities reacted harshly and immediately arrested many members of group. But when 20 well-known intellectuals (from the "old" opposition) published a similar photo, supporting the football fans, they were ignored.

The situation changed after Russia's takeover of the Crimea. The official Belarusian media did not uphold the enthusiasm of the Russian propaganda. In an article published on March 11th 2014 by the state-owned Belta agency, Eduard Pivovar wrote: "Do Russians want war? It is sad to admit, but if you listen to what people say on public transport or what they write in the social media, you will come to a sad conclusion: even these Russians, who describe themselves as intellectuals, stop analysing anything when they hear 'Russian Crimea'. They become ecstatic like children when they hear about Chekov's house in Yalta, or Pushkin's fountains of Bakchysarai. And it is not only a result of the mass TV propaganda… The collective

consciousness expresses a strange mix of the complex of imperial thinking and pride of the conquerors. Nobody thinks about the consequences of the annexation of Crimea. Illogically they take for granted that one can simply cut off pieces of a Ukrainian but Ukrainians would still be our brothers."

The tone of the article was closer to what was being discussed in Poland rather than in the post-Soviet space. It was only after a while that Lukashenka said Crimea became de facto a part of Russia. However, Belarus supported Russia in the United Nations vote on March 23rd 2014, when the General Assembly adopted a resolution supporting Ukraine's territorial integrity. From the former Soviet Union, only Armenia and Belarus voted as Russia preferred. Still, the gesture did not have any practical consequences and was rather exceptional. Its goal was to keep the balance of relations with Russia. In a more important move, Belarus let Russia house more Su-27 fighter jets on a base in Baranovichy. But Lukashenka declared that no troops would be sent to Ukraine from the territory of Belarus.

More than 60 per cent of Belarusians supported the annexation of Crimea as an act of historical justice.

Staying "in between" the West and the East has always been Lukashenka's favourite position, as it gives him plenty of space for manoeuvring. The role of a mediator, an intermediary between a pro-western Ukrainian government (which he was fast to fully support) and Russia, allows him to rebuild his international position. Many circumstances indicate that the Ukrainian conflict could let him re-open long-forgotten channels of communication with the EU. The release of human rights defender Ales Bialacki was the most significant gesture in this direction.

## Cautious and balanced approach

Despite the cautious movements of the authorities, the opinions among the general public and within the army remain largely pro-Russian. Military analyst Alexandr Alesin noted: "We are totally unprepared for any [possible] aggression from the East ... our army has Soviet-made equipment and is dependent on spare parts from Russia. And, most importantly, the military men are psychologically not ready to confront Russia. If any conflict broke out, the Russian troops would simply take over Belarus and the army would not resist. Even the retired generals who are known for critical views on Lukashenka are firmly on the Russian side when speaking about Ukraine."

In this context, it is interesting to note the quick decision to ban the "Ribbon of Saint George" during the Day of the Victory, on May 9th. In post-Soviet countries, it as a popular symbol of honouring the veterans of the "Great Patriotic War". In

the spring of 2014, the pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine took it as their brand. In the last minute, the pro-Lukashenka mass organisations of "Belaya Rus" and the youth union instructed their members not to use this symbol and replace it with the colours of the national flag. Similarly a network of supermarkets called Euroopt, which had announced the free distribution of the ribbons, cancelled its campaign.

The cautious and balanced attitude of the Belarusian authorities did not always correspond with the feelings of the "men in the street". A July anecdote from the Turkish hotel can illustrate this trend. A fight broke out between Ukrainian and Russian tourists; Belarusians, who were also on the scene, rushed to help the Russians. Polls conducted in July 2014 by the Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies indicate more than 60 per cent of Belarusians supported the annexation of Crimea as an act of historical justice. In the course of only half a year, Lukashenka's popularity increased from 37 per cent to close to 50 per cent. The chaos in Ukraine caused a reaction among a large section of Belarusian society towards "keeping with a strong leader in difficult times".

Both Kazakhstan and Belarus follow the events in Ukraine very closely. The two countries, Russia's closest allies, found themselves in a particularly difficult position. Today, there is a growing consciousness of the dangers which might come from Moscow. However, both of them are keen to seek ways to turn the situation in their own favour.

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# A New Chapter

KAKHA GOGOLASHVILI

Georgia is starting its association with the European Union at a very difficult time. The results of the implementation will lead to political and economic co-operation between the EU and Georgia to the highest possible level in both depth and scope and in a way not seen in any other agreement the EU has with other third states.

The political association model offered to Georgia through the European Union's Association Agreement covers two directions of co-operation: the process of establishing democratic political institutions and co-operation in the fields of foreign policy, security and defence. In reality, the European Union has never made a strong distinction between supporting democratic development (internally and region-wide), stability and security. Any framework agreement signed with third countries reflects this attitude, which is not an accident but an expression of the EU's fundamental mission.

The Treaty on European Union establishes the EU's external action on its guiding principles "which have inspired its own creation, development and enlargement and which it seeks to advance in the wider world: democracy, the rule of law, the universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for human dignity, the principles of equality and solidarity and respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law." According to the treaty, the EU will seek to develop relations and build partnerships with third countries and international, regional or global organisations which "share the principles" referred to above. The treaty promotes a high degree of co-operation in international relations with third states aimed at safeguarding values, fundamental interests, security, independence and integrity.

## Logic and spirit of EU integration

The EU's foreign policy aims to consolidate and support democracy, the rule of law, human rights while preserving peace and strengthening international security. In all of these, the EU acts in accordance with existing international conventions, charters and duly acknowledged obligations. At this point, we will not refer to other objectives of international co-operation laid down in the founding treaties, but resume with the affirmation that the two distinct directions of international action from which we started our reasoning are strongly interrelated in the logic and spirit of European integration.

From the EU's founding treaties, it becomes obvious why external co-operation agreements with third countries (or international organisations) always contain provisions establishing political dialogue aimed at respect and promoting democratic values, peace and security. Examples of these include the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (signed with former Soviet republics), the Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreement, the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA, for the Western Balkans) or the Europe Agreement. Even agreements signed with Chile and Mexico in 2002 and 2006 respectively contain the same provisions laying the foundations for political dialogue based upon the same principles.

There is still a difference among the abovementioned forms of agreements in terms of the depth of political co-operation and the obligations taken by the parties. The title of the agreement can sometimes be misleading. The term "association agreement" used for different international accords concluded by the EU may not equally mark the level of rapprochement in all areas. The Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreements signed in 1995 and beyond with the North African and Mediterranean Arab states, for example, established free trade areas among partners similar to the Stabilisation and Association Agreements or the Europe Agreements. Indeed, the political dialogue according to this agreement seems less ambitious than even under the Partnership and Cooperation Agreements concluded nearly at the same time with the countries that emerged after the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

No other agreement signed by the EU with third countries is as precise and ambitious as the current Association Agreements.

In order to judge the ambition of co-operation for the different agreements, we can compare the wording concerning the obligation of the parties' "converging positions on international issues". The treaty of the EU defines the task of co-ordination in external policies among member states as follows: "Within the framework of the principles and objectives of its external action, the Union shall conduct, define and implement a common foreign and security policy, based on the development of

mutual political solidarity among member states, the identification of questions of general interest and the achievement of an over-increasing degree of convergence of member states' action."

An "over-increasing degree of convergence" is one of the main characteristics of the purpose of political co-operation between EU member states. Reaching mutual political solidarity is also a much stronger benchmark, but the maximum level of the ambition for co-operation in foreign and security policy in general terms does not match the level of the ambition which the European Union demonstrates in other areas. Therefore, no one should expect an extension of similar provisions to an international agreement at a higher or even a similar degree.

## Focus on peace and security

The three different types of association agreements signed with Morocco, Chile and Serbia can serve as good examples for observing the difference between the different formats. The agreements with Morocco and Chile contain a more or less equal level of commitment covering co-operation in security issues. The co-operation, however, pursues relatively narrow objectives: co-operation in regional matters (Morocco) and the fight against terrorism (Chile). There is no mention of the convergence of positions, but parties "enabling to consider" (Morocco) or, "as far as possible, coordination of the positions". Obviously, a deeper co-operation approach is offered to Serbia calling for: "common views on security and stability in Europe, including cooperation in the areas covered by the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) of the European Union".

The implementation of certain provisions of Georgia's Association Agreement has already begun prior to its ratification.

Without a doubt, the agreement with Serbia provides for a much wider space in security co-operation than the previous two. Notably, the same provisions from the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the EU and Georgia (in force since 1999) provide for: "increasing convergence of positions on international issues of mutual concern thus increasing security and stability in the region … strengthening of stability and security in Europe." It is obvious that even the PCA, far from the above agreements in terms of trade liberalisation, shows an equal, and in some cases lower, degree of political rapprochement concerning co-operation in security matters. It is logical that Georgia was offered to join the EU's "common position" statements in 2007, which practically put Georgia's political co-operation on the same level with the one established with the Western Balkans.

Exploring the new Association Agreement between the European Union and Georgia further (similar for Ukraine and Moldova), we can observe a strong attempt to bring political co-operation between the EU and Georgia to the highest possible level in both depth and scope. The application of the Association Agreement extends to areas such as the promotion of international stability and security based upon effective multilateralism, the fight against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, international security and crisis management, addressing global and regional challenges and key threats, the promotion of the principles of territorial integrity, inviolability of internationally recognised borders, sovereignty and independence, peace, security and stability on the European continent, the field of security and defence and regional co-operation.

The signature of the Association Agreement is seen as a watershed moment in Georgia.

Seemingly, the Association Agreement with Georgia sets to: "strengthen respect for democratic principles, the rule of law and good governance, human rights and fundamental freedoms, including media freedom and the rights of persons belonging to minorities, and to contribute to consolidating domestic political reforms." A special provision concerns co-operation relating to conflict prevention, peaceful conflict resolution and crisis management, regional stability, disarmament, non-proliferation, arms control and export control. Co-operation in conflict prevention and crisis management embodies a truly pro-active objective of Georgia's possible participation in EU-led civilian and military crisis management operations.

No other agreement signed by the EU with third countries (excluding NATO allies) is as precise and ambitious in committing initiatives in the field of political co-operation and security. It is well demonstrated that even with the SAA, the EU did not go into such detail and left much space for the political format to decide upon the scope of interaction between the partners.

## The DCFTA

A similar comparative study about the provisions related to the establishment of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) between the EU and Georgia would indeed reveal that the EU's agreement with Georgia (and Ukraine and Moldova) are unique to EU foreign policy. The DCFTA is a relatively new and rare notion. The concept was developed in 2006 by the European Commission and applied first in negotiations with Ukraine. The EU Association Agreements with Chile (2002) and Mexico (2006) contain some elements of free trade, but the scope of the products covered (including services and agriculture) is much more limited.

Georgia's DCFTA with the EU is a comprehensive, detailed agreement providing the possibility for full liberalisation of trade and the lifting of barriers between them.

The philosophy of the DCFTA comes from the EU's internal market. The agreement on the European Economic Area (EEA) can also be considered a source of the DCFTA approach. Both are called to create a homogenous regulatory environment and eliminate barriers for the free movement of goods and people. In the past, the EU's demand for such a deep harmonisation with its legal and regulatory environment was directly related to the objectives of accession. The complete effect of the agreement will be observed in the medium and long term. In the short term, however, Georgia's state and businesses will bear some costs of the intensive transition of its regulatory environment.

A number of facts can be identified to prove that the implementation of certain provisions of the Association Agreement had practically already started prior to its signature and ratification. The EU's efforts to support Ukraine in its struggle to defend its territorial integrity, consolidate the state and avoid economic difficulties are already showing the results of the initiation of political association. If needed, Georgia obviously can expect the same treatment from the EU. After all, in the case of the continued occupation of Georgian territories by Russia, we can observe no downsize in the political support that the EU provides, especially with the "non-recognition" policy. On November 29th 2013, Georgia signed the Framework Agreement on participation in EU-led crisis management operations, which opens up the possibility for one of the respective provisions included in the Association Agreement. The EU and Georgia already carry close consultations on issues of regional security. Frequent high-level visits to Georgia have especially intensified in the last few months. Provisions relating to the free movement of persons set general conditions and commitments, but the practical work had already started in 2011 with the visa facilitation agreement between Georgia and the EU.

Thanks to its "provisional application", the DCFTA may become operational starting in September 2014, almost immediately (two months) after its signing. This will result in the immediate lifting of almost all tariff rates on both sides. Indeed, to largely benefit from trade liberalisation, Georgia still needs to bring its regulations and standards in compliance with the EU and Georgian goods will remain the subject of frequent and detailed checks while crossing EU borders, but the EU has committed to help Georgia in fulfilling its obligations. In addition, most of the provisions depicted in the Association Agreement have already been or will soon start to be implemented as a result of good political will and the interest of Georgia and the EU.

An important question remains how the Association Agreement can provoke changes in Georgia's internal agenda and if it will help the country to overcome any unpredicted developments. It seems that too much emphasis was put on the signature of the agreement on June 27th 2014. This was a show of over-optimism, as the agreement will only enter into force after its ratification by Georgian and 29 European Union parliaments. As mentioned above, the DCFTA, being a part of the Association Agreement, will become operational soon after the signature by the parties, but the political dialogue and other "non-trade" provisions will have to wait for at least two to five years.

In Georgia, however, the Association Agreement signature is seen as a kind of watershed moment where there is no turning back from European integration. This will obviously end all speculations about the possibility of joining the Russia-led Eurasian Union as an option for the country. This will also make the application of reforms in the political, economic, social and security spheres more demanding. The increase of public support for such reforms strengthens both the internal and external confidence of the country and, possibly, raises the sense of safety and stability. What still may affect the process? The consolidation of governmental institutions around the tasks to provide stability and economic growth, poverty reduction and support businesses and youth as much as possible are all considerations. The problems related to these spheres should be treated intensively. Otherwise, a negative connotation with the Association Agreement signature followed by a decline in real policy performance can damage the idea and lower public support for Georgia's participation in the European integration process.

## Shared responsibility

Georgia is starting its association with the EU at a very difficult time. The Russian Federation continues its annexation of territories of neighbouring states, thereby undermining the foundations of international law, destroying the European security architecture and stimulating the development of power politics in the wider region. All three countries who signed Association Agreements (Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova) with the EU are in conflict with Russia and have territories occupied by the country. It is difficult to formulate Russia's ultimate goal, but the attempt to detach the three countries from the path towards European integration and reel them into its sphere of influence is evident. The conflict in Ukraine's south-eastern regions may spill over into other parts of the country, but may also involve neighbouring states like Georgia. Instabilities in Syria, Iraq, Israel and Palestine cause additional problems for peace and security and drive away attention of the big players from this region to the Middle East. At the same time, Georgia's main partners, the

EU and the United States, have not fully recovered from the consequences of the economic crisis and their potential to defend the interests of their partners is not as high as before. The energy dependence and economic ties of EU member states with Russia, not easy to sever, should also be taken into account.

The mitigation of these problems and their risks are one of the strongest priorities for Europe and its partners. The momentum should increase in the newly "associated" countries in the sense of a regional responsibility which they must share together with the European Union. The security of Georgia or other Eastern Partnership countries will depend not only upon the will of the EU and their other friends, but will also come from their determination to stand for their own positions and be loyal to the chosen principles and values.

From this point of view, this is the proper time and opportunity for all of us – the partner countries and the EU – to build up a strong and purposeful political cooperation. This is a chance for Georgia to grow out of its infancy and step onto the international stage as a mature player.

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# There is No Ideology, Only Authority

An interview with Nikolai Malishevski, former head of the political science department at the Academy of Public Administration under the auspices of the President of the Republic of Belarus. Interviewer: Andrzej Poczobut

**ANDRZEJ POCZOBUT: Belarus is a state which has officially declared a one-state ideology. Can you tell me what this "Belarusian state ideology" is all about?**

NIKOLAI MALISHEVSKI: As of now, over 80 handbooks have been published on this topic. The authors are members of the Belarus Academy of Sciences, professors and academics. They all give their answers to this question. In 2010, I was at a meeting that included the participation of the President of Belarus, Alyaksandr Lukashenka. It was organised by the Academy of Public Administration, which is under the auspices of the President of the Republic of Belarus. Lukashenka said then that he himself did not know the answer to this question. Nor did he know then how to formulate Belarus's state ideology. Since then, nobody has rushed to provide an answer to this question.

**That is strange because there is a very large ideological apparatus that has specifically been devoted to this task. This apparatus also has very large sums of money at its disposal. Are you suggesting that it does not have a doctrine?**

Let me put it this way: there is theory and there is practise. In other words, there are priests and there are believers, but the doctrine in itself is very foggy and its details have not been finalised. When it comes to the practitioners, I would say that this is the apparatus, the media, the civil servants and the different agencies responsible for ideology within state offices. More and more often these are also private firms. Altogether, this is what we can call "the vertical of ideology". Its work reaches the entire society. Most importantly, this apparatus offers propaganda services for the Belarusian authorities. Now let me explain what I mean by this theory. A theory here is

a "confession" which is comprised of slogans such as "we are the centre of Europe", "there is no crisis in Belarus", "everything is the fault of the Poles, the Russians", etc. Such statements, which in fact make a stupid and wild propaganda, show the government's disconnection from society.

Those who cultivate this propaganda are responsible for the dramatic division within Belarusian society. It was they who, on election day on December 19th 2010, sold the national interests and later accused other countries, namely Poland and Germany, as if it was them who were guilty of the fact that on the last evening of the presidential campaign in 2010 thousands of people were arrested and beaten – which was shown to the entire world.

In the spring of 2011, as a result of some irresponsible actions of the government, Belarus faced an economic collapse. However, the ideological services, disregarding reality, were still lying to people and denying the fact that there was a crisis in Belarus. By so doing, the services that are responsible for propaganda, became stuck in ordinary lies and I must say here that these are the kind of lies that nobody believes in anymore. The youth, for example, do not read the state-owned newspapers, which is something that has been admitted even by Lukashenka himself. The ideological services should draw some conclusions from that fact, but they do not. And of course, there is no cohesive collection of ideological directives.

**Why? The state ideology was first implemented in 2003. Ten years is long enough not only to develop it but also to explain to the society this ideology. Today, when we ask Belarusians about the state ideology, we often see a smirk on their faces. They all know that there is an ideology but nobody knows what it really is. Why hasn't Lukashenka attempted to create some sort of a cohesive theory?**

The creation of such a theory would mean an obligation to provide clear and straightforward answers to the question on the location of our country. Here, we would need to make a clear decision of whether we are with Russia or with the West? Which direction we are heading? Such a decision would bring about some serious political consequences. Instead of a clear answer, something else has been chosen. Something which fits the Belarusian mentality.

In politics, we can see a tactic that is played by Belarus's authorities who want to outsmart both Russia (to have access to cheap energy resources) and the West (to have access to comfort and luxury – western cars, clothes and other beautiful things). What is at stake is the choice of the best of both worlds for the least amount of money. However, when you want to cheat everybody, you cannot provide clear and straightforward answers to simple questions. You have to use murky statements, which allow (depending on one's tactical goals) for different interpretations. And it is in this fog that people start getting lost and

recognising who the allies are today and why, and what are their goals. A cohesive ideology would have been created long time ago. The fact that it does not exist means that the authorities do not need it. The ideology could limit the authorities' freedom in making alliances or limit its field of manoeuvring. That is why there is no such thing as a one "state Belarusian ideology". If we were to talk about the main theses of such a theory, we could get them down to two main assumptions: the president is always right and Lukashenka should always be the president. These two sentences, however, get so tied up that they start to create the ideological whirl; Lukashenka should remain the president because he is always right, and Lukashenka is always right, so he should remain the president.

While everything in the government's rhetoric can change, including the different accents of media messages, political alliances and enemies, one thing will never change: the conviction that the president is irreplaceable. This remains. Hence, to a large extent the Belarusian state ideology is aimed at servicing the image of the president and constitutes an attempt to outsmart everybody else.

**How does one become an ideologue?**

There are different ways. You can be simply nominated for this position as some people see a career path and money in ideology. One example is Alyaksandr Ivanovsky, who in the early 1990s was in a group with Mikola Statkevich (one of the leaders of the Belarusian opposition, currently a political prisoner) and belonged to the Belarusian Association of Military People (*Беларускае згуртаваньне вайскоўцаў*). Now, Statkevich was convicted and almost at the same time Ivanovski was nominated as the first pro-rector of the Academy of Public Administration under the auspices of the President of the Republic of Belarus. For years he has been a person who ideologically services Lukashenka. And not only in the area of theory, but also as a person who is a member of a working group that develops anti-opposition strategy for the authorities. In this capacity, he developed, for example, a strategy of propaganda activities for the government that is aimed at the so-called "revolution in social networks", which organised mass protests in the summer of 2011. Hence, Ivanovski is an example of a person who currently is responsible for propaganda activities directed against the opposition and against the West or Russia, but whose background is, broadly speaking, rooted in the opposition. Should the situation change, Ivanovski would probably say that for the whole time he was fighting against the regime.

**But we know that in every movement there are people who adjust to the situation and want to use it for their own careers. I am more interested in those who sincerely believe that Belarus is the best country in the world. Those who believe that market socialism, as the economic system of**

**Belarus is called, is the best and the most just of all economic systems. Are such people among the ideologues?**

Yes, there are such people, but not in great numbers. The last of the spearheads of the ideological forces who convinced himself that he truly believes in the Belarusian model was Alyaksandr Zimovsky (the chairman of the National Television and Radio Company and one of the creators of the Belarusian propaganda who was dismissed in 2010 – interviewer's note). Now, I do not know anyone among the most important figures who would authentically be convinced that Belarus has taken the right track. This does not mean, however, that there are no people who sincerely believe in the Belarusian model. They of course exist. But they do not play a significant role. Some of them, after realising what is going on, are trying to put themselves in the shadows.

The lead posts are rather taken by cynics and careerists who are believers in the tactic of "outsmarting". Their real views can be totally contrary to how the Belarusian authorities are perceived in the world. At the same time, they are doing everything they can to turn Belarus into a Cuba in the centre of Europe. However, they also cannot really develop any competitive idea which would attract the masses mainly because everything is limited to squeezing out all that is possible from the Soviet propaganda model. There are no new ideas and there is nothing that suggests that new ones can even


Photo: Aleksandr Sayenko

emerge. There is no point in engaging in dialogue with such people, neither for the East nor the West. They do not keep their promises and simply lie to their partners. This is a group of people with a slave-like mentality. All they respect is force and this is what they solely treat as a serious argument.

**The ideologues are perceived as people who are mentally stuck in the Soviet Union…**

The ideological services are full of strange people with strange ideas. It is sufficient to look at their leadership. For example, Anatol Rubinau, who was the first deputy chief of the presidential administration, was for years responsible for the ideology. Today, this man, who is over 80 years old, is the head of the upper house of the Belarusian parliament and

publishes volumes of poems in which he confesses his love to teenage lolitas. Keep in mind these publications are paid for with public money. Another example is Gennady Davydko, the head of the state television who, because of the position he held, was indeed one of the lead ideologues. Davydko is a man who, for years, has been supporting and propagating the legalisation of prostitution and light drugs. Obviously, he also supports and promotes Lukashenka. Such a connection looks strange, but it is real and Davydko has a strong influence on Belarusian ideology as he heads a media group which includes three television stations and a few key radio stations.

**What do the ideological services do? What do they deal with?**

The ideological vertical exists in a few forms. Formally, there are ideologues who are present in every enterprise, in every state office, in security departments, etc. Another example here are the media products, meaning the state media whose aim is spreading the ideology. With regards to the press, the main ideologue is Pavel Yakubovich. He is editor-in-chief of the daily *Sovetskaya Belorussiya*, published by the president's administration. In terms of radio and television, the responsibility of creating and spreading ideology lies with Davydko.

These people are responsible for setting up the mainstream of propaganda. In addition, there is the ministry of information and partially people who are employed in the intelligence agencies but who also have influence on media messages. The entire propaganda work of the media is overseen by the presidential administration, specifically the president's advisors – Vsevalad Yancheuski and Natalia Piatkievich. However, an important role here is also played by the first deputy of the head of the administration – Alexander Radkov.

Another, equally important, side of ideological work is education and culture. Here, those in charge of the ideological work are the ministers of culture and education and the structures subordinate to them, including different school boards and cultural departments in different local state agencies. Education and culture are the two most powerful instruments for forming the thinking of the masses. Ideological activities are carried out on behalf of the government by Vice Prime Minister Anatol Tozik. The ideological apparatus is centralised. The presidential administration provides directions which are passed down in the structure. The work of the ideologues is limited to promoting presidential policies. To fulfil this obligation, the ideologues speak to people, organise propaganda actions, deliver lectures, etc. They are also often present in the media.

**What effect brings the ideological work? How effective is it?**

Theoretically, if we were to take seriously the reports of the ideologues, their work is very effective. But what needs

to be distinguished here is the rubbish which nobody believes in anymore and the reality. Today, the Belarusian state ideology, a concept which in many ways is being praised by the theoreticians from the Lukashenka camp, is a form without content. What, then, can be the result of its implementation?

**You speak as if you were an oppositionist. However, it was not that long ago when you yourself were one of the creators of this ideological work.**

Not entirely. If you consider the political science lectures that I was delivering for the authorities during which we discussed, among other things, contemporary ideologies such as liberalism or socialism to be ideological work, then indeed you could call me an ideologue. The Academy of Public Administration is a place where the bureaucrats (from the county level to the central government) can receive a higher education. The lectures are attended by the ministers, heads of security departments, chief editors of state-run media, etc. I lectured there for six years and taught such topics as the Belarusian system of political management, but keep in mind that I also discussed its flaws.

Once, I conducted a broad survey among my students (state employees) and its results I used in my work. However, I did have one thing used against me. The academy, as it turned out, is not Oxford or Harvard. Gaining knowledge is not the most important thing. What is necessary is to justify the actions of OMON, which beats its co-citizens, or the actions of the leadership of the academy, who take money from the state budget to create subsequent "models of the Belarusian state ideology". I did not do this. I have my own code of conduct, I believe in education and the value of reason. I am against boorishness and the rule that "I am a chief here, so sign everything I give you to sign".

I never hid my attitude in this regard and I even wrote about it to our president. Not only did I not get an answer, I was also accused of being an oppositionist. What is interesting is that nobody was interested in what proposals I had to offer as to how to improve the situation, but everybody was very interested who among the other lecturers or my students thinks like me. In other words, who is of a conviction that things are bad and need to be improved. There were a few controls carried out at the university by the presidential administration and the special services. The department where I worked was reduced. I did not accept the new position I had been offered and I quit my job.

**What is the place of the ideologues in the Belarusian system? How influential are they? What do you think of the statement that in Lukashenka's closest circle, the most influential are the security forces?**

In Belarus we do not have a structured political class or elite. Instead of the state, instead of the government, we have a clan dictatorship that is based on the bureaucrats, but also on the pseudo-opposition controlled by the special forces. It does not aspire to go forward or look into the future and is only reaping the remains of the old Soviet system. There is no ideology or politics in the classical meaning of the word.

We have authorities and that is all. In this sense, in Belarus there is no civil society. Instead, we have a process of the degradation and decomposition of the Soviet society. And everybody wants to escape from answering the question: around which values will the new Belarusian society be built, a society which, sooner or later, will need to emerge from the rubble of the post-Soviet mentality.

*Translated by Iwona Reichardt*

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# Looking Out Over the Danube

A conversation with Krzysztof Varga, a Polish writer of Hungarian descent. Interviewer: Grzegorz Nurek

**GRZEGORZ NUREK: You are an author of books dedicated to Hungary. They all bring Hungary closer to foreign readers and tell a lot about its turbulent history. Your father was Hungarian and your mother was Polish. In your opinion, these two nations have at least one thing in common: they both gloat over their misfortunes. Sometimes you even joke that as a Hungarian Pole you have to shoulder a double weight of disasters and defeats. Why do the Poles and Hungarians still come back to these defeats? What fuels such attitudes?**

KRZYSZTOF VARGA: It is said that the fate of Poles and Hungarians is parallel. We have never fought against each other but it happened that we fought side-by-side against common enemies. But that is not necessarily the whole truth. Although we had similar problems with our neighbours: Poland was occupied by Austria, Prussia and Russia; Hungary by Austria and the Ottoman Empire, Hungary had lost its independence much earlier. At the time when the forces of the Kingdom of Hungary were defeated by the Turks at the battle of Mohács in 1526, Poland was one of Eruope's greatest powers. It is also difficult to compare Polish and Hungarian captivity since the Emperor of Austria, Franz Joseph I, transformed Austria into the dual Austro-Hungarian monarchy. This was the golden age in Hungarian history when culture and the economy were flowering. Back then Poland simply did not exist.

Unfortunately, the loss in the First World War pushed Hungary to sign the treaty of Trianon, which was the most traumatic event in the contemporary history of the country. In 1920, Hungary lost two-thirds of its territory, which mostly came under control of Czechoslovakia, Romania and Serbia. For Poland, on the other hand, that very same year was one of the most glorious years in the 20th century – Poland defeated the Bolsheviks and defended its young independence. Hungary was one of the very few countries which gave strong support to Poland during these hard times by sending arms and military equipment. Another interesting period in Polish-Hungarian relations is the Second World

War. Although Poland was a member of an anti-Nazi coalition, Hungarian soldiers who were deployed on the Polish soil during the war did not fight against the resistance movement. Instead, they were providing the Polish fighters with weapons! Hungary, which had been a client state of Germany since the late 1930s, was a shelter for Poles fleeing from their occupied state. Nowadays, Hungarian national identity is being built on the Trianon trauma, as well as on revisionism or at least sentimentality for the Lands of the Crown of Saint Stephen, which consisted of present-day Slovakia, Trans-Carpathian Ukraine, Transylvania, Vojvodina and the Croatian coast of the Adriatic Sea.

However, the memory of the great past and the lack of successes in the present encourages a rise in nationalism, radical movements as well as a sense of historical injustice and the feeling of being betrayed by the West. This is actually a Polish affliction as well. A strong focus on the past and not much interest in the future is one of the most obvious features that Poles and Hungarians share. This perception of the world can be put simply as: "Things were good years ago, now we need to restore the past." This is this fuel that you have mentioned.

Hungarians have also some other problems with their identity that are unknown in other European states. Their culture and especially their language are quite different from what we find in any other European state. This, plus the anti-European politics of Victor Orbán, who leans towards Russia in his diplomacy and the strongly anti-Western Jobbik party, make Hungarians feel alienated in Europe. The extreme right sympathisers in Hungary do not even consider themselves Europeans since they praise their Asian roots (Hungarians came to Europe from Asia in the ninth century), paganism and the runic alphabet.

**How often do you visit Hungary? Why, after all, have you decided to live permanently in Warsaw and not in Budapest?**

I regularly travel to Hungary and in particular to Budapest. There, I feel fantastic; I have friends, favourite pubs, shops, etc. But I also try to visit other sites in Hungary as often as possible. I live in Warsaw because I was born there and I have my life, work and relatives. I used to live for some time in Budapest and I know that city well enough to become a tour guide after reading a few more books on the history of architecture. I would be more than happy to live in these two cities simultaneously because they complement each other and I need them both to live life to the fullest.

**You write that your father was a Soviet prisoner of war and he was transported to a prisoner-of-war camp in Kazakhstan. How did that happen?**

My father was mobilised in the final stages of the war. Then, fascists from the Arrow Cross Party were in power in Hungary after the fall of Admiral Miklós Horthy, who promised Hitler


to fight till the last soldier fell. Everyone was forced to join the army. My father did not join the army before because he was a sportsman, he was a wrestler and footballer but he eventually ended up in the air defence forces. After the defeat of the Axis powers he was imprisoned by the Soviets and taken to a prisoner-of-war camp in Kazakhstan. He survived mostly thanks to his career in sport, which made his body strong and better prepared for the harsh conditions. He came back to Hungary a few years after the war and started a new life as an engineer in the large Hungarian company Medicor, which produced medical equipment for the whole Eastern bloc. All these Medicor incubators and X-ray machines were being sold in Albania, Mongolia and my father travelled to all these places. In 1966 he came to Poland… and stayed for good.

**In titles of your books we can find names of animals, *Csárdás with Mangalitza* and *Turul Goulash*. The Turul is quite an intriguing animal. It is a mythical bird which is attributed to shaping the fate of the Hungarians. However, it is also sometimes considered to be a symbol of Hungarian far-right movements. Who places flowers at the statues of the Turul? Are these Fidesz supporters? Or maybe right-wing extremists from Jobbik?**

There is a different issue here. According to the legends, the Turul brought Hungarians from Asia to Europe

centuries ago. For a very long time, it was a politically neutral symbol of morale, strength, tradition and Hungarianism. The sign of the Turul is present on the insignias of the Hungarian army and it is not linked to any kind of right-wing connotation. But it is somewhat natural that these types of symbols are always willingly absorbed by far-right political movements. Today, if someone wears a T-shirt with the image of a Turul, there is a very big chance that this person has far-right views.

**In the May 2014 elections to the European Parliament, Jobbik, an antisemitic and racist party, received nearly 15 per cent of the votes and will be represented in Brussels by three deputies. Not that long time ago Hungarian Prime Minister Victor Orbán appealed to the Ukrainian government to guarantee the autonomy for the ethnic Hungarians who live in western Ukraine. Was it an attempt to attract Jobbik's supporters at home and make them vote for Fidesz? Why did Orbán decide to do this, as it has worsened his already tainted image in Europe?**

Orbán does not seem to care at all about what Europe thinks about him. His playground is Hungary and what he says is addressed to Hungarians, not to "Europeans". Actually the worse image he has in the EU, the more popular he is at home. In case of the tensions between Brussels and Budapest, he can always use a narrative of dignity: "no one will ever tell us what to do", "Hungary deserves respect" or "we should get up off our knees". Orbán simply takes advantage of Hungarian Euroscepticism.

However, the truth also is that Jobbik has been growing for years not only because of the antisemitic or fascist sentiments which are still present in society, but mainly because of the party's strong anti-Roma narrative. Jobbik's results in the European Parliament elections was lower than its score in the national parliamentary elections that took place in April 2014. Then Jobbik won over 20 per cent of the vote, which means that one-fifth of Hungarians voted for a neo-fascist party! Of course, Fidesz and Jobbik fight against each other for the far-right electorate and now Jobbik is the harshest opposition to Fidesz in the Hungarian parliament. But Orbán is not doing anything shocking by taking care of a few million Hungarians living in neighbouring states. It is a very important issue for every Hungarian politician and it cannot be ignored. This is a specific feature of Hungarian politics.

Another worrying fact, however, is that Hungarian foreign policy is obviously taking a pro-Russian direction. We have plenty of examples to prove it: trade agreements with Russia, increasing dependence on Russian hydrocarbons and anti-Ukrainian statements made by top Hungarian officials. The government calls it pragmatism and emphasises that it is far more important than the imaginary European solidarity. It is sad, but after all, Hungary turns out to be like Slovakia or Bulgaria, the Kremlin's "Trojan horse"

within the EU and Central Europe in particular. In the eyes of the Hungarians, such a thing as European solidarity has never existed and will never exist. Even the solidarity within the Visegrad Group does not exist anymore and this project is completely dead in my view.

**Have you noticed any real moves towards authoritarianism in Hungary since Orbán took power? Or is this critical approach to his rule just an exaggeration full of ungrounded concerns?**

Orbán's dream is to get as much power as possible. All his actions comply with this goal and he is determined to do anything in order to achieve it. Yes, it is a sort of authoritarianism but within the rules of democracy, I would add. The best example of this is the constitution. The new one was introduced two years ago by Fidesz and since then it has been changed many times by the same political party. Fidesz has a supermajority in the Hungarian parliament, so if there is any article that could be uncomfortable for the ruling party, it is simply changed. This type of politics will be continued in the future because Orbán's second term as a prime minister has just started and he will enjoy four more years of undisturbed power.

I would add that he has also a high chance for re-election in 2018. So Fidesz will probably have a monopoly over Hungarian politics at least until 2022. What could come after that? I do not know; my imagination does not reach that far into the future. So far, however, there is no real opposition on the horizon that could be a threat to Orbán. The socialists and liberals are a total mess, Jobbik is strong but it will never outdo Fidesz. There is simply no alternative to Orbán and his party.

**What does the debate about dark sides of Hungarian history look like? Do you have an impression that everything has been already said about the Arrow Cross Party, the extermination of Hungarian Jews and collaboration with Nazi Germany? Or is it a task that still needs to be completed?**

Not everything has been said yet, but a lot has already been uncovered and discussed. One of the most important voices in this debate was a novel called *Fatelessness* written by Imre Kertész. He was even awarded the Nobel Prize in literature for this book. It is a story of young Jewish boy taken to Auschwitz, so it is based on Kertész's war memories of surviving the Holocaust. The Holocaust started in Hungary "for real" in 1944 when the fascists came into power. The Hungarian gendarmerie rounded up Jews and organised their mass transport to concentration camps. However, I think that Hungarian responsibility for the Holocaust has been denied by the wider public or at least swept under the carpet. On many occasions, I have heard well-educated and respected people who said that Hungarians did not do any harm to the Jews during the Second World War. Of course, there is the Holocaust Museum

in Budapest, there are documents and undisputed historical materials but – just like in Poland – the victim discourse is dominant and according to this narrative the Hungarians could not do anything morally wrong because they were victims. They were victims after the war indeed when Yugoslav partisans killed thousands of Hungarians in Vojvodina, or when they were persecuted in Czechoslovakia and Romania. But as an ally of Hitler, they were unquestionably co-responsible for the Shoah. Meanwhile in Budapest a memorial to the German occupation is being built with a purpose to present Hungary as an innocent victim of Nazism. And this conviction does exist in a society which obviously falsifies history.

**In your opinion, which Hungarian writers and intellectuals are worth reading today?**

Undoubtedly I would propose Péter Esterházy. He is not only an excellent writer, but also a very interesting and friendly person. His *Celestial Harmonies* is a compulsory masterpiece, as well as its bitter sequel *Revised Edition* about his father's collaboration with the communist secret police. There is of course György Spiró, who is very critical towards Hungarian social and political life. His opinions are often expressed in a provocative way, so he is hated by many "true Hungarians" who do not tolerate views other than those that are nationalistic and racist. I met him two years ago during a literary festival in Budapest. One large website published a press report from this event and one of the commentaries was "Jew and Jew, two good friends" which was a paraphrase of popular proverb "Pole and Hungarian, two good friends" concerning the traditional friendship between two nations. Last but not least, I would suggest Péter Nádas, who is widely known in Hungary but not so much outside. It is too bad because his works are excellent too.

*Translated by Bartosz Marcinkowski*

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# How to Win the Hearts and Minds of Donbas?

EDOARDO DA ROS

Ukrainians in Donetsk have enjoyed a much higher living standard than the rest of the country. Donetsk used to be the region with the second highest earnings per capita outside Kyiv. Many now fear that things will get worse after the EuroMaidan in February. The pro-Russian separatists may offer hope, but not all locals are convinced they can provide the solution to this region's growing problems.

At the end of May 2014, Ukrainians gave Petro Poroshenko the most challenging task a president ever had since the country became independent from the Soviet Union. Poroshenko's fellow citizens called on him to tackle corruption, to save their country from bankruptcy and bring it in line with European standards in many areas. But his clearest priority was to save Ukraine from disintegration, first of all by gaining the confidence and respect of the many who support separatist forces in Ukraine's easternmost regions. If he fails, history will judge him as the man who put an end to Europe's last multinational state.

When my plane lands in Donetsk, a thick fog covers the city, suggesting that perhaps there is something hiding in this city of one million in Ukraine's "wild east". That very day, pro-Russian separatists occupied several state buildings in Sloviansk – until then an unknown town in the north of the Donetsk region. Just five days earlier, pro-Russia demonstrators had occupied the Regional State Administration building in Donetsk, kick-starting what some have called the "Russian Spring".

## It's about money

Oleg – a big, bald Ukrainian in his 40s – welcomes me at the airport. He shakes my hand, takes my suitcase and drives me home. He is a volunteer for the NGO I will be working for during the next year. Oleg is more than dissatisfied with the state of Ukraine's politics. Recently, a pro-European government replaced one that in November 2013 turned away from signing the Association Agreement with the European Union. His dissatisfaction is neither due to values, nor to the protection of the Russian language. It is about money.

According to separatists, the nationalisation of large enterprises would provide them with sufficient resources to offer a Soviet-styled stability.

"We do not trade with Europe," says Oleg, sitting behind the wheel of his Chinese car, discussing the possibility of Ukraine signing the agreement with the EU. "What we have here is coal mines," he continues, "and our coal goes to Russia, not to Europe." It is widely known that Donbas factories and mines receive countless more orders from Russia than Europe. Economic relations can change, though. So I ask him if he sees the possibility for Donbas industries to become less reliant on Russia in the future. He thinks about it for a while, then replies: "We would need huge investments, but no one wants to make them here... honestly I think that this region is lost."

He drives me by the barricades that surround the Regional State Administration building where pro-Russian activists fighting the new government in Kyiv have installed their headquarters. Pointing at some guys in camouflage equipped with automatic rifles, he says: "I understand them. I do not really trust them, but they are fighting for stability in our region."

During that time, separatists were still gaining power day by day, occupying state buildings throughout the whole region and attracting new volunteers to their cause. Through a referendum, they created the Donetsk People's Republic (DPR), a state independent from Kyiv where Russian would be the official language. Locals especially appreciated its pledges to improve the state of the local economy. According to separatists, the nationalisation of large local enterprises would provide the new state with sufficient resources to offer a Soviet-flavoured stability and more money in their wallets.

Until recently, locals have enjoyed a much higher living standard than the rest of Ukraine. Before the "Russian Spring" started, Donetsk used to be the region with the second highest earnings per capita outside Kyiv. Many are afraid that things will get worse with the economy in the near future, after what happened on the Maidan in February.

According to international institutions, such as the World Economic Forum, most of the mines and factories that made Donbas so prosperous are doomed. International competition is pushing them out of the market. The locals fear that implementing the Association Agreement with the EU could aggravate the crisis that Donbas companies are already facing.

## No prospects

Miners and blue-collar workers for large enterprises make up a relevant proportion of the active population, but they are not the only ones in trouble. The EuroMaidan revolution and the "Russian Spring" made it impossible even to run a small business.

Pavel's story is a perfect illustration. In September 2013, after a six month-long exhausting hurdles race with Ukrainian bureaucracy, he finally opened his own company: they traded tasty fruits and vegetables from Spain. In February, Ukraine's then-President fled the country. Ukrainians who know when it is time to cut on spending, stopped buying expensive European products. Pavel's company registered huge losses and in March 2014 closed down, as there are no real prospects for improvement in the foreseeable future. After all that, he has lost almost everything he had.

The Donetsk economy is choking in the tight embrace of those who want to save it from European competitors.

"I share the same desires as the guys who stood on Maidan for months" he says, "no one wants corruption and oligarchs to rule the country, but I believe that nothing will change with the new government. Tymoshenko, Poroshenko... Oligarchs before and oligarchs now. So what was this revolution useful for?"

Pavel shares the fate of the thousands of Donbas entrepreneurs who have gone out of business during the first months of 2014. Official Ukrainian statistics show that already in mid-May, some 60 per cent of local small and medium-sized enterprises have closed down in the Donetsk region. According to Pavel, "traders from outside the region fear losing money in transactions with Donetsk retailers as the judiciary system here is all but working."

As unemployment is growing, demand for non-basic goods is plunging. This is visible in the city. The many small shops that made life on Artema Street so vibrant in peaceful times show no sign of life in the first days of June. The Donetsk economy is choking in the tight embrace of those who want to save it from European competitors.

Since the referendum was held in mid-May, things have gone from bad to worse. Police officers have disappeared from the streets. "They do not want to intervene

in the conflict as they do not know yet who is going to win," suggests Oleg. Others argue that policemen are on the payroll of those who are financing separatists.

Elena, a 38-year-old professional in the field of international co-operation, vents out her frustrations with the government in Kyiv: "They have abandoned us. They have left the peaceful Donbasians here alone." She has two children and fears that the events will take Donetsk twenty years back, when gangsters ruled the city and imposed their order. "Kidnappings, murders, robberies, shootings, we hear about this stuff every day. It is a nightmare, it looks like we are back in the 1990s," she complains.

The greatest challenge will be to find a balance between demands for stability and the flexibility that Ukraine's economy needs to reform.

Common criminals are not the only threat to the safety of Donbas's people, though. Mariya, a 63-year-old pensioner born in Russia who has been living for decades in Mariupol, an important port in the Donetsk region, has personally witnessed what happened to her city on May 9th, when the Kyiv-loyal National Guard opened fire on peaceful protesters who tried to prevent them from attacking armed separatists occupying the local police headquarters. Since then, peaceful citizens like Mariya feels threatened by the pro-Kyiv forces.

"I want to leave Mariupol as soon as possible. I used to like living on the seaside. The climate is warmer. But after what happened on May 9th I do not feel comfortable even going to a shop." Mariya reminds me of the threatening words that Yuliya Tymoshenko had been heard saying about ethnic Russians living in Ukraine during a leaked telephone call: "we should hit them with a nuclear weapon."

## New opportunities?

Although many fear for their future, others see the birth of the DPR as a source of new opportunities. Katya's parents consider the DPR a great chance for her unemployed daughter.

"Why don't you join the Republic?" she says to me jokingly, quoting her parents' words: "you see yourself that Kyiv is not going to win here! In this moment the new government [of the DPR] needs guys like you!"

Katya is a well-educated 25-year-old girl from Donetsk. "Volunteering for Euro-2012 opened my eyes on what I want for Ukraine and for myself," she says. Working for the new authorities in Donetsk is not on her list. "They are unprepared and inadequate," she adds, "but at least they will not last long."

Among well-educated youngsters, not all share Katya's view on Donetsk's new authorities. Discontent with present Ukraine is widespread, but opinions diverge on


Photo: Wojciech Koźmic

Winning the war against Russia-backed separatists might indeed be long and exhausting for Poroshenko. Restoring Kyiv's reputation among the people of Donbas will prove even harder.

the cure for the country's diseases. K.K. is a 22-year-old foreign languages lecturer. She speaks French and English fluently in addition to Russian and Ukrainian. She has a distinguished European taste for clothes and reading and is hard-working and ambitious with high career expectations. Definitely somebody you would not expect to be a fierce supporter of the DPR.

K.K.'s parents live and work in Russia, just beyond the border with Ukraine. She fears that visiting them might become troublesome in the future. As of now, Ukrainians can easily cross the border with Russia, but Moscow has already made clear that if Ukraine signs the Association Agreement, visiting relatives living in Russia might become harder for Ukrainians. "Donbas must unite with Russia as Crimea did," she affirms, "I know well how much better people live in Russia compared to here. Even my boyfriend (who comes from western Ukraine) would move there tomorrow had he not his family in Ukraine."

Some weeks later, I meet Dasha, a 21-year-old journalist, at a party. "We are celebrating my future departure to Russia," she says sipping her Armenian cognac. "My father is arranging a new life for me over there. I will be living in Crimea, either in Simferopol or in Kerch," she affirms, trying to hide her satisfaction. "Things over there are much more peaceful than here. Some Crimean friends told me that pensions and salaries are about to be raised to the Russian level. They say you can see that everything is getting better day-by-day".

It is hard to know how things really are in Crimea. Even those who visited the peninsula came back with very different impressions. Ukrainians demand that Poroshenko brings it back under Kyiv's sovereignty, but the new President's priority is restoring peace in Donbas.

## Many more challenges ahead

Until now, Poroshenko has wisely been moderate towards the separatists. He has put forward measures that might be sufficient to persuade some DPR supporters to give up their weapons and deescalate the current crisis. But if he plans to win over separatism in the long run, he will need to listen to the many concrete demands of the Donbas people.

Peace, first of all, then good jobs and welfare, whatever direction Ukraine will take. Listening to this is not the hardest: after all, Ukrainians from Lviv to Luhansk ask for the same and this already makes up a relevant part of Poroshenko's programme.

The hardest will be to find a balance between demands for stability and the flexibility that Ukraine's economy will require in order to integrate into the global economy, which is the real goal of the agreement signed on June 27th with the EU. As cuts to the state budget are just around the corner, Poroshenko will have to make clear to miners and factory workers that they need to find new work, since the government cannot afford to keep Ukraine's decrepit metallurgical sector alive. It will also have to explain to people like K.K. that visiting their parents in Russia will be much harder, since Ukraine is integrating into the EU's single market and Russia will make cross-border movements more complicated.

Keeping the word of those who support European integration will also prove challenging. People like Pavel demand a reduction in bureaucracy and the fight againstcorruption, just as Katya dreams about a more efficient state. Is the Ukrainian elite ready for this?

Poroshenko will then have to explain to people like Elena and Mariya why Kyiv's government has been so inept in opposing violence in eastern Ukraine and what measures they will take to prevent such events from occurring again. Gaining their confidence will be essential to spread the idea that Kyiv is defending all Ukrainians, not just those in the west.

Winning the war against Russia-backed separatists might indeed be long and exhausting for Poroshenko. Restoring Kyiv's reputation among peaceful people of Donbas will prove even harder. NEE

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# In Search of a Brighter Future

STEFANIE GLINSKI

Armenian migration to Russia began shortly after the collapse of the Soviet Union and continues to grow year by year. Most leave their native state for better work opportunities in the north. Yet, with estimates of 1.5 million Armenian migrants in Russia, the exodus of Armenian males has started to take its toll on the society.

Benik Aleksayan's life compares to a Russian version of the American dream, yet with the long-term outcome still in limbo. His dark hair and summer-tanned skin make the 57-year-old truck driver look unmistakably Caucasian, but he is one of the estimated 1.5 million Armenian migrant workers who have looked to Russia for a brighter future. With a general population of 2.96 million people, this means that one-third of this small South Caucasus country has bid their homeland farewell in order to make a living in the Russian Federation.

Benik left his home two and a half years ago, but was forced to return to Armenia due to visa issues this past summer. "What I missed most while in Russia was the cosy atmosphere with my family and my wife's dishes," he reminisced.

Together with his wife and two sons, the former migrant lives in Ashtarak, a small town on the bank of the Kesagh river and in the foothills of the tree-covered Caucasus Mountains, just about an hour's drive from buzzing Yerevan, the capital city.

"I became a driver after graduating high school. A few years ago, I left for Moscow to work for a construction company that was owned by a Russian-Armenian entrepreneur." Over the next two and a half years, Benik would drive a truck transporting construction materials to and out of Moscow alongside 150 other, almost exclusively Armenian, drivers.

## Russian compatriots

"We lived, slept and ate at a dorm that belonged to the company which employed us under good living conditions," Benik explains. Surrounded by people of his nationality who shared the same destiny, Benik felt encouraged in his choice, even on those days when he missed his family most. During the work year, Benik's visits to Armenia were sparse and accumulated to no more than an annual two weeks to see his family, update his work permit documents and bring home some of the money he made – significantly more than he would in Armenia.

"I would be in heaven if I lived here and earned 500,000 Armenian Drams (1,200 US dollars) per month for a family of four," he adds. During his last visit to Armenia, Benik's fear of not returning to Russia due to several traffic violations came true and his work permit was denied. His dream has been put on hold, but the hard-working trucker will not give up. "I regret to say this, but I would love to return to Russia."

Forty per cent of Russians believe that immigration is bad for the country's economic development.

Just like Benik, many Armenians look to the north for employment. Migration started just shortly after the collapse of the Soviet Union, but really picked up in the 21st century. The year 2011 saw the largest number of migrants, many of whom entered the country through the Compatriot's Programme. The Kremlin recorded the arrival of more than 32,500 compatriots, including many Armenians that year.

Russia's Federal Migration Service was eventually established following the fall of the Soviet Union; with it, the Compatriot's Programme became a primary migration policy. Designed for member states of the former Soviet Union, it enables a flow of constant migration to Russia as it offers a three-year work permit, employment opportunities and financial assistance to set up a life. Simultaneously, it helps Russia recruit a great number of workers in sectors that need them the most. Arriving compatriot workers are distributed throughout the country to wherever labourers are needed.

The initiative experienced trouble in 2008 due to the financial crisis, but has picked up steadily in recent years. On January 1st 2011, new tax regulations came into effect in the Russian Federation, giving the compatriots the same tax rights as the Russians have and resulted in the 2011 migrant boom. Nowadays however, only around two to three thousand Armenians arrive in Russia by means of the programme, explains Stepan Grigoryan, Chairman of the Board of the Analytical Centre on Globalisation and Regional Cooperation. While expatriates from Ukraine and Belarus still heavily rely on the platform, many Armenians take matters into their own hands.

The Compatriot's Programme, somewhat comparable to the green card initiative in the United States, has received both praise and criticism. As the Soviet Union collapsed and many people turned their back on Russia, the country has found a new way of attracting migrants, offering fair remuneration and living conditions while profiting from the flow of skilled workers.

"Armenians are hard workers," says Grigoryan. At the same time, it has put a burden on the native Russians who are struggling with the rush of newly arriving people, especially in bigger cities. For Armenia, the programme has helped boost the country's GDP by ten per cent, as most migrants send money back to their families. But with a continuously shrinking population, the Armenian government considers the implementation of such an initiative "unacceptable in its present format."

## Home away from home

According to the Migration Policy Centre (MPC), the Armenian population has been on a constant decrease. Even though the national census has claimed around three million Armenians in the country, the unofficial estimate is far from it. The same is true for the number of Armenians in Russia, says the MPC: Officially, there are 59,351 Armenian migrants in Russia, yet this number does not include the Armenians who hold a Russian passport, nor does it take into account the thousands of undocumented Armenians. Experts, including Stepan Grigoryan, estimate that their number exceeds 1.5 million.

"Several years ago, when Armenians would arrive in Russia by plane, tracking down the numbers was easier. Today, many take busses or trains, which makes it impossible for the Russian Federation to collect the full numbers," the expert explains.

Over 78 per cent of Armenian migrants to Russia are male.

While the Compatriot's Programme is one way into Russia, many Armenians opt for attaining a work permit or travel to Russia on a 90 day business visa. Today, around 75 per cent of the Armenians in Russia are contracted on a private basis, creating additional problems such as corruption and inadequate payments. "Some expats live in refugee-type camps, paying bribes to local employers and making just ten per cent of the 1,000 US dollars they had been promised upon arrival," Grigoryan explains.

In the 1990s, those Armenians who arrived in Russia came to stay with family members already living there. In recent years, a greater number of independent employment seekers have arrived in the Russian Federation. Still, "migration is highly gender-based," states the MPC. Their research shows that 78.5 per cent of migrants to Russia are male and usually arrive in their mid-30s. The strongest

motif for leaving their homeland comes down to a lack of employment (40 per cent), but 33 per cent of Armenians say they leave because they expect to receive a better pay in Russia.

Irina is one of the few females who stayed in Russia after her family migrated 15 years ago: "They decided to leave because of the continuing tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan," she recalls. Back then, Irina was still a student and after spending many years in the densely Armenian-populated Krasnodar region in the Northern Caucasus, the young woman moved to Moscow and got married to an Armenian migrant. She now shares a one-bedroom apartment with her husband and his family; all seven people live in one room.

Official unemployment in Armenia is only at seven per cent, yet estimations of unofficial unemployment are at around 30 per cent.

"It is hard to live with my husband's family. I have to clean and cook and my husband refuses to leave his mother," she says. In Moscow, the now pregnant Irina works as a talented beautician, giving manicures to the wealthier Russian middle-class and earning a maximum of 30,000 roubles (880 US dollars) a month. Irina remembers her first job in Russia was like a cold shower. She worked at a beauty salon with fellow migrants, receiving neither a labour contract nor holiday or sick leave. She dragged herself to work even on days when she should have rather stayed at home.

"My life in Moscow is hard. My family remains in Krasnodar, but I do not want to go back there now that I have a family here," she explains. Before arriving in Russia, Irina did not speak Russian and her family still mainly interacts with other Armenians. Full integration into Russian life has never been achieved.

Regions such as Krasnodar and, to some extent, Moscow, have become beehives for Armenians. Here they find a support system in families who share a similar fate and cultural heritage. Armenian churches, schools and kindergartens have been established and many villages in Krasnodar are predominantly Armenian. With more than one million settlers, it is a home away from home.

## Cultural differences

But for many Russians, migration has become an unwelcome subject, even though Armenian immigrants apparently differ from other settlers. Generally most migrants come to Russia from Central Asia. Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan are especially high on the radar. People tend to stay in Russia for a few years, saving up money for their family and, during their time in Russia, often experience discrimination.

"There is a big difference in culture, customs and mentality and the local population takes it badly," explains Alla Konstantinova, a deputy general director from Moscow. Both Ukraine and Moldovan nationals also migrate to Russia in large numbers, many profiting from the Compatriot's Programme. A study conducted by the Russian Public Opinion Research Center shows that 40 per cent of Russians believe that immigration is bad for the country's economic development while more than half of the population believes that migrants take away jobs from local people. In addition, 65 per cent of Russians believe that crime rates have increased due to immigration.

While Armenians used to face a lot of discrimination, this has now shifted to migrants from Central Asia: "As for the Armenians, the Russians are used to having them around for many years," explains Konstantinova.

When the Soviet Union collapsed, numerous Armenians with high-paying jobs such as doctors, architects and engineers, stayed in Russia and fully integrated. These "new Russians" now often recruit other Armenian residents to join them. For some, the move to Russia has turned out to be a success story.

Anna Harutyunyan is an accomplished 29-year old who has started her successful career in Moscow, now working as an event organiser at the international department of a local Russian company. Born and raised in Yerevan, the young businesswoman with a background in marketing got married and decided to move to Russia with her husband to explore the city's professional opportunities.

In Russia, Anna and her husband Tigran rent a tiny apartment, just a 40-minute commute from Anna's office: "We made it our Armenian corner, based on warm memories and experiences we had back in Yerevan. We are recreating our customs, play Armenian music, tell jokes and watch films," she says. At the same time, Anna is immersed in the Russian culture and fully embraces it. A dual citizen of both Russia and Armenia, Anna came to Russia three years ago. She loves her challenging job and the work with an international audience. Constantly meeting people from other countries has opened her eyes to new adventures.

Anna's family will not join their daughter's Russian adventure, but their relationship is strong. "We have always had the habit of helping and supporting each other in all circumstances, and this continues as my husband and I live in Russia." For Anna, this includes sending financial support back to Armenia at least twice a year.

Just like Anna, many other Armenians living in Russia send money back to Armenia, which constitutes a significant contribution to the country's economy. In an economy where a minimum monthly salary averages 150 US dollars and an average salary of around $350, contributions from labour migrants who are making $500 in Russia are an important contribution to family income. Estimates show that between 1.5 to 2 billion US dollars are being transferred to Armenia annually.

## High price

Migration becomes a problem when it creates a situation in which the selling a family's home is necessary in order to purchase a plane ticket. This, according to the head of the Analytical Centre on Globalisation and Regional Cooperation, has been used as a solution for some Armenians: "Some sell their houses and all belongings for $1,000 just to get the money for a flight to Moscow. When they arrive, they do not know what to do, often they just want to go back home," he describes.

For many, seeking employment in Russia automatically means living separated from the rest of the family. With 78.5 per cent of migrants being male, this means that women and children often stay back in Armenia, a widely accepted solution throughout the country –even in the capital city – as it provides the family with the chance to raise their standard of living.

Gagik Yeganyan, head of the Armenian government's department for migration says that "the problem of absent males due to migration is not only a problem in Armenia, but in the surrounding region as well." Men leave between the age of 15 and 50, which creates problems in child education both at home and in school. Most Armenian teachers are female and boys often lack role models to look up to throughout their upbringing. Especially in Northern Armenia, where migration is an everyday topic, another phenomena can be observed: villages almost entirely populated by women, as men seek to find work abroad. In a country with traditional values and roles it would be wrong to speak of a western model of emerging feminism, but it is essentially what it comes down to: women are running the villages, raising the families, handling the finances and working in the fields. They do their own work, plus the additional work their husbands would usually do.

Out of this situation and a desperate wish for change, some of these women welcome job offers as a cleaner or maid abroad, only to realise later that they have been trafficked into the sex industry. A study at the Boston University quoted Susanna Shahnazaryan of the Goris Press Club in Armenia, saying that, "over the last several years, new economic relations in Armenia have had their impact on the status of women, who have become the most sensitive targets of social tensions; against the background of general unemployment and mass labour migration of men, women have been left with the responsibility of taking care of the entire family. Poverty has made many women seek ways of somehow improving their families' well-being. In such circumstances, women often answer ads for jobs abroad. Many women get caught in a net of violence, are deceived, kidnapped, sold or forced to prostitute themselves."

Besides the fear of being trafficked, many Armenian women worry about their husbands establishing a second family in Russia, effectively living a double life. Living



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Officially, there are 59,351 Armenian migrants in Russia, yet this number does not include the Armenians who hold a Russian passport, nor does it take into account the thousands of undocumented Armenians.

in Russia almost all year and working hard, some migrants look for a balancing factor in their lives and thus establish a second, Russian family.

## Government assistance

"There are alternatives to migration, but it is not easy. First of all, the factors that push people away from Armenia, such as unemployment, the economic situation or psychological issues, have to be eliminated," explains Yeganyan. Armenians worry about their future and they want to secure it. According to Yeganyan, the Armenian government is putting its resources into macro programmes that span over the next years to remove these factors. "It needs time, but the government is working on it."

There are currently two types of programmes to help families and especially to reintegrate migrants who come back to their home country. The first programme takes a simple approach and offers advice to families and returning migrants, while the second and more complex initiative assists in establishing new businesses in the country and helps both returning migrants and children to catch up on their academic education. In addition to the many NGOs that work with migrants, the government has established a new service called Tundardz, an initiative to help

migrants. The programme's website offers practical advice to families and even publishes success stories of migrants who have returned. Most information is provided in a simple Q&A style, easy to understand for all people and translated into Russian and English.

Tundardz established the rule that every ministry in Armenia has to provide the contact information of one civil servant. This person has to be available by phone and even by text message to answer any questions a migrant or a returning migrant might have. "Reintegration is the most important," says Yeganyan, "because right now a lot of returning migrants leave Armenia again within a year, as they have trouble integrating and establishing a life in their country."

Armenia has gone through a lot of changes in the last year. Most of all, the country announced that it will join the Russian-led Customs Union which put aside any talks of signing the Association Agreement, including a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement with the European Union. While Armenia has not joined the Customs Union yet, there have been a lot of predictions of what will happen to labour migration once Armenia is a part of the Union, which currently only consists of Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus. Yeganyan claims that joining the Union will not have much of an effect on labour migration. For him, he could even see Armenians returning home once the Union is set in place. However, Stepan Grigoryan sees the opposite: with the possibility of open borders, Armenians will have even easier access to Russia and migration numbers will once again shoot up.

Official unemployment in Armenia is only at seven per cent, yet a majority of the population does not register their employment status, which makes the numbers much higher, with estimations of unofficial unemployment at around 30 per cent. Today, Armenians make up four per cent of the Russian population, a number that sounds small, but that is comparatively high when linked to the Armenian population. Grigoryan is sure that "when a country loses one-third of its population to Russia, something needs to be changed." NEE

Stefanie Glinski is a Brussels-based journalist reporting on the EU, as well as the media relations manager for the European Friends of Armenia, an NGO based in Brussels.

# The Geopolitical Lessons of Poland's Partitions

ANTHONY RINNA

As a result of the three Polish partitions, the Polish state ceased to exist on the map of Europe for 123 years. The tone was set, however, much earlier through the unfortunate combination of geopolitics of an emerging Russian Empire and the anarchic political system of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth that specifically positioned the state for its demise. Nevertheless, this lesson of history provides insight which is valuable in today's context.

The 18th century was a period in which the fate of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was decided by partition due to the geopolitical competition of the great Central and Eastern European powers of the time: the Russian Empire, Austria and Prussia. The partition of the Commonwealth was largely a result of the geopolitical ambitions of an emerging Russia and the reactions of Austria and Prussia to this change in the European security landscape at the end of the 18th century. The specific issue in the greater context of regional geopolitics was the nature of Poland's democratic government, which opened the country up to influence from the outside and turned it into a pawn in the European geopolitical game.

The rising powers of the time saw a vast swathe of territory with a somewhat freewheeling system of governance and sought to take advantage of what has often been described as "anarchy" to suit its own purposes. While the partitions can be understood through the prism of modern geopolitics (a concept which did not exist in the 18th century) the actions taken against the Commonwealth constituted a tripartite land divide.

## Dictates of geography

Modern Poland's political history has largely been defined by its relations with Russia. Whether Russia acted alone or in conjunction with regional associates, the presence of the Russian shadow has been a constant in Poland's contemporary political reality. The beginning of this era is marked by the Silent Sejm of 1717 when Poland became a *de facto* protectorate of Russian interests. Russian demands came to play a greater role in Polish domestic politics than the needs of the Polish citizenry itself and Russia's protectorate over Poland reduced the country's politics to deep corruption and paralysis. This state of affairs came about largely because of Poland's system of elective monarchy, particularly the election of August II Mocny who was the immediate successor to Jan III Sobieski. He was elected because of external influence, and thus it was Poland's enjoyment of its "Golden Liberties" that ultimately aided in its downfall.

The hostility of Austria and Prussia did not necessarily emerge from an enmity towards Poland, but rather recognition of the threat posed by the Russian Empire.

While Poland's system of government was largely unique to the world at that time, the dictates of geography would not allow for it to survive. Unlike Great Britain, blessed with geographical isolation from its neighbours by sea that allowed it to develop its Westminster-style of parliamentary government, Poland had the misfortune of being surrounded by three powerful countries from which it was not protected by natural barriers. The hostility on the part of Austria and Prussia did not necessarily emerge from an inherent enmity towards Poland. Rather, it was recognition of the threat posed by the Russian Empire to the European security landscape and a consequent recognition that national self-interest on the part of Central European powers would mean that Poland's independence would have to be sacrificed. Western and Central European leaders recognised a threat from Russia not long after Peter the Great's ascendancy to the throne of Russia. The expansionist actions and the vast modernisation schemes prompted fear in Habsburg Emperor Charles VI as well as in the British, who had been watching Russia's merchant marine warily.

British historian Norman Davies described the period between the death of Jan III Sobieski (r. 1674-1696) and the last king of the Commonwealth, Stanisław-August Poniatowski (r. 1764-1795) as being "the most wretched and the most humiliating" period of the whole of Polish history. It is frequently called "the Saxon Era" because it began with the election of August II of the Saxon House of Wettin, an election which was achieved through conniving, bribery and violence. It was during this era that the emerging powers in Central and Eastern Europe began to assert their

interests in the geopolitical context of Poland-Lithuania. In fact, the precedent had been set for foreign intervention in Poland's affairs even before the reign of Jan III Sobieski. The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth signed treaties with Austria, Prussia and Russia in 1667, 1675 and 1686 respectively. While none of these treaties provided explicitly for the direct intervention of external powers in Poland's affairs, they set the stage for such involvement in the workings of the Polish state later on, rendering the Commonwealth's role in European affairs dependent upon its ability to modernise and reform itself in time to stave off further intervention. In 1701, Frederick III, Elector of Brandenburg, declared himself to be King in Prussia as opposed to King of Prussia. Likewise, twenty years later, Peter the Great declared himself "Emperor of all the Russias". Their actions were taken as a demonstration of their influence over various areas of Europe, unrestricted by boundaries of smaller polities and regions.

Political instability in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth provided an opportunity for exploitation from the outside.

## Democracy's failings

Poland's democratic system was, unfortunately, what made this geopolitical competition possible. The term that was often used to describe it was "anarchy". Indeed it was precisely this democratic and decentralised system's presence among the other forms of governance, characterised by centralised power and absolutism, that made it susceptible to external influence. This state of affairs became the source of external derision, such as Montesquieu's comment that "Poland makes poor use of her liberty and her elections so that she gives satisfaction to none but her neighbours."

Poland's elective democracy actually played right into the hands of those who had territorial designs on the country. When Russia's position in Poland strengthened, the former actually promised to preserve the latter's system of governance. By preserving an elective monarchy, Russia was able to manipulate elections in its favour while maintaining a façade of liberty in Poland. The more powerful monarchical states of Europe used their centralised power to train highly effective diplomatic services, able to navigate the complexities of European politics. The anarchic system in Poland, however, prevented such a skilled and sagacious foreign service from developing. During the congruent reigns of August II and August III, the task of conducting diplomacy was increasingly delegated to Saxon ministers and the number of foreign missions sent abroad increasingly dwindled, despite protests from Polish diplomatic officers themselves.

Directly connected with the political shortcomings which led to Poland becoming a sort of geopolitical pawn for Russia is how the decentralised nature of Poland's government led to careerism among its politicians. This careerism was not the kind experienced by modern democracies where political fortunes are determined by special interest groups *in patria*, but rather was dependent upon the largesse of foreign patrons. Russian backing of Polish politicians and officials was so strong that Russia was the primary dispenser of "favours" in the 18th century. Russia's stranglehold became so strong in this regard that a Polish official's career was eventually determined by his ability to gain the goodwill of the Russian ambassadors – any who defied the Russians invariably risked their careers. This practice became so entrenched that public service was seen not as a virtuous example of patriotic duty, but rather an act of betrayal.

An unstable and anarchic neighbour is not something a state desires and it is almost always in the best interest of a nation-state to promote a smooth and stable government in any neighbouring polity, lest its own national security be threatened. In the case of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, however, such political instability provided an opportunity for exploitation from the outside, rather than a fear that anarchy would spread across national borders.

The final blow to Poland's sovereignty was the overthrow of Stanisław Leszczyński.

After the war of the Tarnogród Confederation when the Sejm was unable to come to an agreement on the settlement of terms, Peter the Great offered to act as a mediator. In retrospect, it is discernable that this offering was not a form of conflict resolution to promote stability and security along Russia's borders, but was rather an opportunistic grab at a chance to dictate Polish affairs. This "mediation" took the form of a large number of Russian troops surrounding the Sejm. In order to see to it that Poland would be incapable of providing for its own defences, the Russians imposed certain restrictions on Polish military strength and guaranteed the presence of Russian troops on Polish soil. Russian policy imposed the limitation of the number of Polish troops to 18,000 in Poland and 6,000 in Lithuania and also designated specific sources of funding for the Polish military. Under this stipulation, the number of Polish soldiers would be further reduced since at least one-third of all the tax revenues levied from this already-restricted base would go to maintain the officer corps.

All this effectively meant that the Commonwealth essentially ceased to be a sovereign state in 1718 and that Russia could intervene in Polish affairs at will, making it a Russian protectorate. Russian troops moved around the country as if it were a training ground. Austrian and Prussian troops used the Polish territory at their convenience as well, either as a transit corridor or a staging post. In 1720, Austria and Russia reached an agreement to see to the maintenance of Poland's

"liberties", so that this anarchic system could be maintained until the two powers could come up with a more lasting solution for Poland's fate.

## Second Northern War

The first incident of foreign military intervention in Polish affairs came following the Thirty Years War (1618-1648), when foreign armies marched across Polish territory and large numbers of gentry deserted the king in favour of the invaders. Later, the electoral system in the Commonwealth provided the opportunity for foreign powers to intervene in the country's internal politics, sometimes even culminating in open battle over who had influence over Polish affairs. Poland was unable by law to enter into treaties under August II, but King August II himself was able to enter treaties in his capacity as a Saxon monarch. Thus in 1699, an agreement was signed between Denmark, Russia and Saxony to ally and wage war against Sweden. Despite the absence of the Polish Crown as a member of the alliance, Poland proved to be a pawn in the fighting between Sweden and the alliance.

The ensuing conflict was known as the Second Northern War (1655-1660) and Russia and Sweden fought each other for influence over Poland. As the Swedish army delivered swift defeats to the Danes and the Saxons, August decided to sue for peace, but Sweden's King Charles XII would not agree to this and instead used it as an opportunity to invade Poland. Russia had installed August II as king, and when King Charles invaded the Commonwealth, the invading Swedish soldiers enjoyed a large amount of support from certain members of the Polish-Lithuanian elite to the point that Sweden was able to install a king that was geopolitically loyal to them, Stanisław Leszczyński. Thus, Poland was ruled by two kings simultaneously, one backed by Russia, the other backed by Sweden and neither one having a clear mandate to rule the country. Yet, after Russia delivered a crippling blow to Sweden during the war, Russia was able to restore August II to the throne, ensuring Russian primacy over Poland for the time to come.

The presence of a large number of ethno-linguistic and religious minorities in the Commonwealth allowed for the intervention on the part of foreign states, as other states were able to claim the role of "protectors" for the minorities. In modern geopolitics, this could be considered to be using these minorities as a "fifth column". In reality, this was actually a pretext for extending influence over the internal affairs of the state as a whole. In 1719, Russia essentially forced Poland to sign a treaty promising the protection of the Orthodox Christian minority in Poland. While Russia under both Peter the Great and later Catherine the Great most likely could have conquered the Commonwealth lands occupied by the Eastern Orthodox population through the use of force, Russia's vague pretences of protection actually enabled it to exert a veiled influence.

## A land up for grabs

The final blow to Poland's sovereignty and the ultimate sign that the Commonwealth was an independent state in name only was the overthrow of Stanisław Leszczyński, the legally-elected successor to August II and his replacement by August III. All of this occurred by the connivance and efforts of the Russians in 1733. The Russian Empire had agreed with Austria and Prussia to combine forces to see to August III's election and when Leszczyński was elected instead, 20,000 Russian troops were amassed to force the 1,000 electors to vote again. This time the election was won by August III. A war soon broke out, known as the War of the Polish Succession (1733-1738), as France was interested in seeing Leszczyński elected king. France, however, made peace with Austria after gaining Austrian land in Italy. Hence, August was confirmed king of Poland. During his 30-year rule he spent only two years in Poland and the Sejm completed only one session. Russia had secured its man in Poland who was an absent and apathetic ruler, further ensuring that the land of the Poles would be nothing if not a vast tract of land for Russia's taking.

As a result of the three Polish partitions in 1795, the Polish state ceased to exist on the map of Europe for 123 years. Although the partitions themselves would only start nearly a full forty years after the beginning of August III's reign and while much had occurred in the previous century to set the tone for Poland's fate, it was the unfortunate combination of geopolitics of an emerging Russia and the anarchic political system of the Commonwealth that specifically positioned the country for its demise. The lack of strong leadership in Poland and Russia's territorial ambitions solidified Poland's fate during the reign of August II, and from there it would only be a matter of time before the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth would see its final dismemberment. It is possible that the circumstances could have been inevitable and that an emerging Russia and weak Poland would eventually have taken the routes they did at some point, but it is to this precise instance for these specific reasons that the Commonwealth had met its fate.

What is more, as Russia today more boldly asserts its hard power in Eastern Europe, the lessons of history can provide valuable insight into this region and help us better understand the risks and potentialities of a resurgent, expansionist Russia: in particular, the presence of rival claimants as the legitimate government of a state as well as a loose interpretation of laws and norms that caused a great deal of consternation; just as it does in today's current situation. NEE

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## What Europe?


*Is The EU Doomed?*
By: Jan Zielonka.
Publisher: Polity Press, Cambridge, United Kingdom, 2014.

The debate over the post-crisis shape of the European Union is the topic that Jan Zielonka takes on in his most recent book *Is the EU doomed?* Although the debate per se appears to be very much in place right now, most of the solutions offered by an ample and diverse body of experts fall short of sustainable answers. They draw from historical, often outdated, ideas and develop inconsistent projects which suit particular national interests or cater to limited groups of the European population. But most of all, they oftentimes appear to be disconnected from the day-to-day EU reality to such an extent, that their reading ought to be loyally shelved as political fiction. Zielonka's ambitious attempt to provide an all-encompassing solution to the EU crises (as he, rightly, points out that there are multiple crises the EU is suffering from at once), although fresh and ideologically neutral at face value, unfortunately falls victim to the same shortcomings, particularly imprecise predictions and risk of uneven development.

From the first words of the book, Zielonka challenges the conventional way of thinking about the European Crises. Specifically, starting off by analysing and subsequently deconstructing the primary factors that led to the 2008 financial recession, he rightly recognises the complexity of its causes and the multiplicity of the culprits. At this point, it is necessary to give credit to the fact he dedicates a large part of the book's first chapter to explain that the Greeks, the Spaniards and the Irish mismanaged their domestic economies, but the faulty EU financial system, embodied by the Eurozone, was originally designed and orchestrated by the French and the Germans. Providing evidence of previous crises in EU's history, ranging from the 1965 Empty Chair crisis to the 1999 Commission corruption scandals, he does a good job in reminding the readers that even the current saviours of the EU from Berlin, Luxembourg to Paris used to, and to a certain extent still are, be blamed for the institutional, financial and societal deadlocks of European integration. It is important to highlight that Zielonka's unorthodox description, as in the times in which, quoting Polish Foreign Minister Radek Sikorski, German inactivity is most feared in Europe, it seldom occurs in public debate that European actors are depicted differently than in black and white.

Unfortunately, after a promising start, Zielonka moves on to a solid body of very obvious and oftentimes poorly argued or questionable drawbacks of the EU. Given the relatively thin size of the book, dedicating almost two-thirds of it to an extended introduction that somehow resembles the EU's own laundry list seems unnecessary. The author makes a number of interesting observations, such as prioritising "cohesion, imagination and trust" instead of budgetary affairs as the heart of the EU crisis, but those remain undeveloped and lose space to obvious claims such as high-profile politicians being led by domestic opinion polls instead of long-term visions of Europe. It is also sometimes difficult to give credence to

the authors' reasons for Europe's fall in certain categories, for instance in global political and economic importance. Zielonka's claim that Europe stands little to no chance against the BRICS and the USA because Europeans know nothing about extra-European competition is very hard to defend.

*Is the EU Doomed?* seems to also be written from a perspective of an old-Europe persona (although Zielonka, a Polish national, stresses his European objectivity in the book's preface). What prevails throughout the book is oftentimes a strong feeling of nostalgia for grand ideas of European integration. Again, using the example of Europe's supposedly faded glory on the global arena, the author on a number of occasions appears to synonymise the EU with Europe as a continent, controversially implying a unanimity of views that European nations used to share once upon a time. Furthermore, perhaps due to space constraints, he makes a number of simplified comparisons, for instance by classifying next to one another the Greek Syriza and the Dutch Freedom Party as political entities that share the same aim of returning decision-making powers to national governments. In point of fact, these principles might be of some resemblance, however in the case of these parties, as well as the True Finns or UKIP, they all serve completely different purposes (ethnic clarity versus different labour policies to the restoration of old colonial links) and ought not to be analysed within the same category.

Finally, however, Zielonka moves towards his own project of saving the EU, which he presents under the label of "neo-medievalism". After first, again rightly and accurately, dismantling the most popular alternatives to the present-day EU, such as the United States of Europe or *Bundesrepublik Europa* with its centre shifted from Brussels to Berlin, he proposes a project based on "divided sovereignty, overlapping authorities, differentiated institutional arrangements and multiple identities". In his view, the remedy for institutional deadlock of the EU lays in more horizontal, pluri-central structure of issue-specific networks and clubs. Drawing from the works of David Mitrany, a committed critic of Ernst Haas' neo-functional theory of European integration, Zielonka envisions a sort of Europe of cities, based on four main principles: inclusion of new, chiefly non-state actors; development of functional instead of territorial integrity; polycentric, not hierarchical integrative scheme; and flexible and diversified governance. Again, these new pillars of Europe sound very noble (although are far from innovative, as similar projects have been already published by Charles de Saint-Pierre in the early 17th century), but carry a number of inconsistencies. First, a shift towards functional networks would only be ostensible and actually deepen the inequalities between the "Europes of different speeds". Simply speaking, some countries, due to their size, population and geographical or geological location have by default more dimensions of interest and would be naturally involved in more networks. Moreover, it is indispensable to note that the EU is already suffering from democracy and legitimacy deficits – Europeans struggle to identify bodies responsible for particular issues on the EU level and the introduction of "polycentric" and "diversified" governance would only make things worse in this process. Eventually, these aforementioned deficits already impede societal accountability through

media or third sector actions – already existing bodies, such as Debating Europe or similar NGOs, struggle to hold EU officials and institutions publically accountable and with even further dispersed authority their mission might become virtually unmanageable.

Zielonka concludes with a good Oxonian habit of enclosing a vast, diverse list of recommended further reading on the matter, which certainly invites readers to at least attempt to develop their own projects for post-crisis Europe. The suggested positions vary from historical volumes to economics and political science handbooks, suiting readers with all backgrounds and interests. In fact, one of the biggest strengths of this book is that it is written in a straightforward, approachable manner and explains the context rather well, thus becoming a good background reading for pretty much everyone with even vague knowledge of European Affairs.

Nonetheless, the proposed solutions for post-crisis European Union sound more like wishful thinking and certainly like Europe of not two or three, but several speeds. Years ago, during the early days of post-war Europe, Charles de Gaulle, commenting on the creation of East Germany, sarcastically said that he loves Germany so much that he actually enjoys having two of them at once. And what de Gaulle thought of Germany back then, Zielonka seems to be willing to do with Europe tomorrow. Will his proposal come into being? NEE

*Mateusz Mazzini*

## Far From Being Mr Perfect


*Mr. Putin: Operative in the Kremlin.*
By: Fiona Hill and Clifford G. Gaddy. Publisher: Brookings Institution Press, Washington DC, USA, 2013.

The revolution in Ukraine, annexation of Crimea, war in Donbas and the downing of a Malaysian airliner have led many of the world's leaders, political analysts and ordinary people start wondering: "Who is Vladimir Putin?" or "What is going on in Putin's head?" For many of them, Putin has become a symbol of evil. Comparisons between Putin and Hitler have been made by such prominent figures as Zbigniew Brzeziński, Hillary Clinton and Prince Charles just to name a few. Thus, the policymakers in the West, entangled in multilevel, profitable interests with the Russian Federation, are having a hard time when Moscow's foreign policy has, once again, revealed its aggressive nature. In this context, the recent publication of *Mr. Putin: Operative in the Kremlin*, written by two senior fellows at the Brookings Institution, Fiona Hill and Clifford G. Gaddy, is very timely and can be helpful to the reader with similar questions.

*The Man without a Face* was a title of a previous Putin biography. Hill and Gaddy, however, show us something completely different: the Russian president does indeed have a face. In fact, he has six faces – or, if you like, identities – and these are faces of the statist, the history man, the survivalist, the outsider, the free marketeer and the case officer. The authors conclude that the political system of

today's Russia is highly personalised. That is why dealing effectively with this country requires gaining an insight into Putin's personality as well as the knowledge of "who is who" in the Kremlin.

Each chapter is dedicated to a different "face" of Vladimir Putin. His life is not presented in the book in a chronological order, but rather organised in a thematic way. The authors of *Mr. Putin*… picked up the most important facts from Putin's professional career. The book certainly should not be considered a source of information about the private life of a Russian president. Only such events as the siege of Leningrad during the Second World War, which directly affected his family and shaped his world view (the survivalist), are mentioned in the book. But if you want to find out about Putin's daughters or former wife, *Mr. Putin*… will not be very helpful mainly because they have little, if any, influence on Putin's political choices. The question: "what did Putin do?" is not what matters the most in this case. "Why does he do so?" is the key question here.

A great value of the book is also the deep analysis of how Putin's career in the KGB helped him in becoming a skilful backroom operator, which eventually brought him to the presidency (the case officer). Although this experience is not the only factor that has influenced Putin's style of governing, it is, without a doubt, the most important one. Putin's leadership is linked to a large degree with the spy craft that he learnt while working for the infamous Soviet secret service. After a reading of *Mr. Putin*..., the impression that Putin did not joke when he said "there is no such thing as a former KGB man" is unavoidable. The difference between Putin the KGB officer and Putin the president is that now Putin is no longer the recruiter for the individuals (like he was during his service in the German Democratic Republic), but his target now is the entire Russian nation. Putin, unlike most politicians in the West, does not need to listen his electorate. It is the electorate that listens to him. He recruits it for his cause using various tools such as public relations and history. He creates fear as well as the needs for ordinary people and then effectively fights or satisfies them.

However, Putin is a much more of a complex personality than just an ex-KGB operative: he is a learned man with great knowledge of history (particularly Russian history) and his professional experience includes a wide range of positions in the state administration since the collapse of the Soviet Union (the statist). Putin is not a 19th or 20th century man. In fact, he is a master of public relations in the most modern sense. His well-documented leisure activities, such as half-naked horse riding, hunting and fishing, may seem funny to western audience but not to certain segments of Russian society. These are not spontaneous actions but staged performances which are perfectly planned by the Kremlin spin doctors.

Another reason why the book should be praised is for its analysis of the intellectual foundations of what we call the "Putin doctrine" – his key speeches and writings as well as the intellectuals who have had an impact on him. And indeed Putin's statements are very important for all the observers of political life in Russia because, as Gaddy put it: "he says what he means and he fulfils what he says." *Mr. Putin*… shows that the Russian president is a man with a mission, someone who sees himself not only through the prism of upcoming

elections but also someone who reaches far beyond that. This is one of the most important menaces of the system he has created, but also one of the most significant advantages over his counterparts in the West.

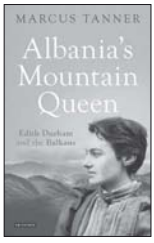
The book, however, does not picture Putin as "Mr Perfect". The authors recall many examples of his failures and situations which call his outright popular support into question. It is crucial to remember these facts, as Putin is sometimes described by the western media as a "bad guy who never loses". He fails, too. What probably is more of a problem at the moment is that the EU, and the West in general, lack any charismatic leaders of their own who could respond properly to Russia's actions in Ukraine. This, however, does not mean that Putin is an extraordinary individual or a genius. His moves can be analysed, sometimes even predicted, if analysts only make an effort to think critically, having in mind that for Putin history does not end with liberal democracy.

A question that comes to mind while reading the book written by two experts is: how much would a general reader learn about Vladimir Vladimirovich from it? As always, it probably depends on how much they already know about Putin and Russia. One thing is sure, however: this is not a book for beginners. The many names of Putin's former and current associates, bosses and servants appearing in *Mr. Putin*… illustrate his inner circle well, but may be uphill and simply not very interesting for all readers. Also, this is not a book for Russians, as Fiona Hill stated upfront. From its very first pages it is obvious that *Mr. Putin* was written for a western audience. The authors dedicate a fair part of the book to a detailed translation of some problematic Russian words. A lot of them, like *gosudarstvennik* (servant of the state, "the statist"), *silovik* (a person employed by law enforcement agency, intelligence or the army) do not have an equivalent in other (especially non-Slavic) languages.

One of the key assets of the book, although accidental, is its topicality. In fact, given the context of the dynamically developing situation in Ukraine, *Mr. Putin*... seems much more relevant in mid-2014 than it was at the moment of its release in early 2013. Without a doubt, the book co-authored by Fiona Hill and Clifford G. Gaddy is a very important voice in the ongoing debate on how to act towards Russia's crawling invasion in Ukraine. For this reason alone, this Brookings Focus book is a must-read for anyone who is professionally dealing with Russia, be it academics, experts or policymakers. We may even risk a statement that the publication is not a typical political leader biography but rather a guidebook on "how to deal with Putin's Russia". NEE

*Bartosz Marcinkowski*

## Vindicated by History




*Albania's Mountain Queen. Edith Durham and the Balkans.* By: Marcus Tanner. Publisher: I. B. Tauris, London, 2014.

The subtitle to Marcus Tanner's book is *Edith Durham and the Balkans.* By placing Edith Durham in this context, the author shines light on these crucial years in her life, where the relationship she formed with the Balkans was

the making of the woman. These countries, little known in Western Europe at the time and even less understood, galvanised her interest and energy. Her growing involvement with the Balkans gave her a focus, a commitment and a public voice. She knew from first-hand experience the practical difficulties of the region: no roads, no electricity, no home comforts, little sanitation, restrictions of work and diet, primitive forms of transport etc. Durham also had a good grasp of the convoluted politics, and was quick to pick up the languages with the intelligence and ability to write about them. She published several books and later lobbied the British Parliament on behalf of the Balkan countries, and particularly for the right of Albania not to be carved up by the Great Powers; to be a self-governing nation. She played a major part in securing the independence of Albania, in its retention of Korça as part of its territory and in its membership of the League of Nations.

Edith Durham initially set off for the Balkans as an antidote to her confined life caring for her mother. She never simply wanted to be a tourist and as soon as she disembarked in Dalmatia (then an Austrian province) in 1900, "she felt convinced that she belonged here in a way that she had never belonged in England." But in that first journey, she probably had no idea just how involved she would become. As Marcus Tanner notes in his introduction, between the years 1900-1914, to her career as a writer and explorer she added "humanitarian aid worker, diplomat, politician and national advocate". During the Balkan Wars of 1912-13 "she was possibly the first woman war reporter ever."

There were various uprisings in the Balkan countries, still under the Ottoman yoke or part of Turkey-in-Europe as it was then called. Reprisals, atrocities, burning of villages and crops and desperate, starving refugees became all too familiar sights to Edith Durham. She worked hard not just to raise money for these destitute people, but hands-on, in hospitals and relief centres. She knew first-hand the terrible price that people had to pay for conflict. After the outbreak of war in 1914, she sailed back to England (from Albania via Italy) on a boat full of returning Britons. She would later write in *Twenty Years of Balkan Tangle* that "none of them had seen a war. None knew what a burnt village or a rotting corpse...was like." She felt "shame and disgust" that Britain had entered the war.

Tanner writes of the politics and history of this time in a way that is both knowledgeable and engaging, focusing on some colourful characters such as Prince Nikola of Montenegro, with plenty of quotations from Durham's letters and other writings, so that we see these people with all the freshness and vividness of Durham herself. Her point of view was to depict what she saw. Often forthright and never flattering, Edith Durham was someone who spoke her mind and expressed her feelings. Her sympathy for people, particularly those suffering the ravages of war, hunger, poverty and displacement, is not coloured by any romantic idealism. Her years studying art at the Royal Academy honed her ability for detail and she carried this ability into her verbal descriptions, including the brutalities of war and its effects on civilians. From what she witnessed, she wrote in *The Struggle for Scutari* that war "showed up pitilessly all that is most base, most foul and most bestial in human nature".

But what strikes the reader of 2014 in this historical account of 100 years ago is the prescience of many of Durham's observations

on the Balkans; with its varied ethnicities and, as Marcus Tanner describes it, "competing narratives" particularly in Mitrovica in the north of Kosovo, which Durham called a "tinder waiting for a spark". After the Balkan Wars, the First World War, and the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the boundaries of the Balkan countries were redrawn and Durham felt that many of these had been ill-considered, not taking enough account of ethnic populations. But in her defence of Albania's national boundaries, her intervention was successful.

Tanner captures the excitement of Durham's race across Albania to send a telegram to the London Conference where diplomats were drawing new lines on the maps. Greece was trying to realise its old ambitions and claim Korça, a town in southern Albania, and its surroundings. Accompanied by Henry Nevinson, a journalist, Durham had to reach Berat, the nearest town that was not controlled by Greece. This journey "involved a three-day march across the mountains and two nights sleeping in the open air on bare ground". It had also apparently involved a Greek officer threatening to shoot her – her response was "You can't, I'm English." The telegram was sent, with Durham's assurances that Korça was indeed Albanian and its people wished to remain so. The diplomats duly included Korça in the territory of Albania.

Tanner makes the history of this part of the world which he knows so well not just comprehensible, but vividly interesting. He captures the human qualities at work in the fabric of history, when people juggle their values and ambitions, their sense of honour and pride, with their losses and disappointments. We understand Durham's sympathy for the old king of Montenegro's fading powers, we feel her deep sense of loss at the malicious destruction of Shkodra's old market by the retreating army and it would be hard not to share her feelings of disgust for war.

As journalist Tim Judah writes of this biography, "Durham, isolated and forgotten towards the end of her life, has been vindicated by history." NEE

*Morelle Smith*

## On the Good People of the Maidan


*Єлюди. Теплі історії з Майдану (Maidaners. Heart-Warming Stories from the Maidan)*. By: Kristina Berdinskikh. Publisher: Bright Star Publishing, Kyiv, 2014.

A book about ordinary people who on a daily basis created the 2013/2014 revolution on the Maidan Nezalezhnosti in Kyiv has recently been published in Ukraine. This book, just like the EuroMaidan revolution itself, is the outcome of a series of coincidences. Had Viktor Yanukovych signed the Association Agreement with the EU, the revolution in Ukraine might have taken place, but not right away. It would have probably happened much later, during the 2015 presidential elections. Had Serhiy Kurchenko, the Ukrainian oligarch with close ties to Yanukovych, not decided to start buying out Ukrainian media outlets and implement in them his rigid editorial policy, the author of the reviewed book, Kristina Berdinskikh, would have continued to work as a reporter and political

analyst with the most popular Ukrainian weekly, *Korrespondent*. Even Berdinskikh herself, if she was asked in December 2013 when she started her Facebook project titled "Єлюди" (translated into English as "Maidaners") whether she treated the Facebook page as a basis for a future book, would probably not have said "yes".

The book is a collection of stories. They were first published on Facebook as part of a project that Berdinskikh ran from the early days of December 2013. The first stories were, in fact, brief sketches posted randomly. This shows that at this early stage of the revolution Berdinskikh was still looking for both the format of her project as well as her own place on the Maidan. On several occasions, she confessed that what the heroes and heroines of her reports expected from her publications was practical help rather than informing the world on what they were doing. Now, many of them come to promotional meetings of the book and ask Kristina for her autograph, a hug or a photo.

Berdinskikh acknowledges that she was not interested in the stars of the EuroMaidan. Instead, she tried to understand the phenomenon of this revolution through the experiences of the different people who took part in it (even if they were at the Maidan for only a couple of days or hours). But the "stars" were also there. That is why, I would begin with them before I introduce the main heroes and heroines of Berdinskikh's book, namely the different people from different regions. The stars of the EuroMaidan were, in fact, the faces of the revolution until the tragic shootings of the "heavenly hundred". They were its first organisers and promoters. The first such star was journalist Mustafa Nayem. Nayem was the person, who on the day the Ukrainian government suspended the preparations for signing the Association Agreement with the European Union, called on the people to come to the Maidan and bring "umbrellas and tea". Another star was Ukrainian singer and Eurovision contest winner, Ruslana Lyzhychko, who established the tradition of singing the Ukrainian anthem at the Maidan every hour. This initiative has greatly contributed to the popularisation of the anthem among the people. There was also a businessman – Dmytro Bulatov. Bulatov became known as the leader of the AutoMaidan. He was abducted and tortured by the Yanukovych camp. He is currently the Minister of Youth and Sports of Ukraine.

However, first and foremost (and thankfully) the book is about ordinary people. It started with Berdinskikh's fascination with the story of two medics who came from other cities to Kyiv and became involved in the demonstrations. During the fighting at Bankova Street, near the building of the Presidential Administration, they ran to the heart of the action because they knew they would be needed. As I understand, she does not know their names even now. But she described their story. It is the first post of this project which appeared on Facebook and which was later translated into 17 different languages. The post was very short and it was followed by a somewhat unclear photograph. To Berdinskikh's credit, all the stories are enriched with photos even though, as she herself explains, they were not taken by professional photographers. To document her work Berdinskikh would simply walk around the Maidan and take photos with her own mobile phone.

The book is about people who simply made the EuroMaidan revolution possible. They took care of its physical, existential, artistic,

medical and gastronomic needs. While at the square, Kristina talked to professional cooks, artists, designers and construction workers all in order to find out how they happened to be there and what was their motivation to stay. As we find out from her book, some were there simply by accident. Like Volodymyr from Sevastopol who came to find out why Kyiv became so dirty and stayed there to help out. Or Mykhailo from the Chernihiv Oblast, who was implementing pro-Maidan policies in his own village but once the revolution had taken its first victims he headed for Kyiv to pay respect to the fallen.

In Berdinskikh's book we read both about people who spent days and nights on the Maidan, but also those who died there. In the first place, there is the story of Serhiy Nigoyan. Nigoyan was the Ukrainian Armenian whose parents had fled Nagorno-Karabakh. He was among the first victims of the EuroMaidan revolution; he died from four gunshot wounds on January 22nd 2014, the day of Ukrainian Unity. Before his death, on January 3rd 2014, Kristina Berdinskikh wrote about him on her Facebook page. However, he also appeared in the video project dedicated to the 200th anniversary of Taras Shevchenko's birth (more on the meaning of Taras Shevchenko during the EuroMaidan revolution can be found in *New Eastern Europe* issue 3/2014 – editor's note) where he recited an excerpt from Shevchenko's poem "The Caucasus" as well as made commentaries on Ukrainian TV.

Until today, Nigoyan is one of the symbols of the EuroMaidan. His Christ-like face is painted on the very many icons that are painted and sold in Kyiv. The time of Nigoyan's death, in fact, coincided with the killing of another EuroMaidan activist: 25-year-old Mikhail Zhiznevsky from Belarus, who was later remembered as a lean and courteous young man.

Once Nigoyan's death was reported by the media, his mother, living in a village in the Dnipropetrovsk oblast, told journalists only one thing: "the Maidan should stay". In her reaction to the tragedy, Kristina Berdinskikh also wrote a desperate post on her Facebook page. It read: "Not him! I will stay at home now, I am scared to go the Maidan!" The killing of Nigoyan was such a traumatic experience for Berdinskikh, at that time the author of the Facebook project, that she even made a promise to herself that if another of her heroes would die, she would close down the project. She almost did as soon after Olesya Zhukovska, who was a volunteer in medical services, was shot by a sniper in the neck and informed the world about it in her, now widely-remembered, tweet: "I am dying". Miraculously, Olesya survived and Berdinskikh could interview her and post the story online.

In the book many of the stories that were originally posted on Facebook have their follow-ups. Berdinskikh tells us about the activists' lives after the EuroMaidan. The only exception is Serhiy Nigoyan. Nonetheless, after his death, Berdinskikh decided to publish the full record of her interview with him.

In terms of the general atmosphere of the EuroMaidan protests, Berdinskikh's book includes stories of shop owners who came to the Maidan to pour tea for the demonstrators, the pensioners who shovelled snow in the evenings after they took care of their grandchildren during the day and the professional cooks who sliced sausages for several hours. There is a story about the owners of nearby offices who offered their premises to the demonstrators

so that they could sleep at night. There are stories of the car owners who served as taxi drivers offering rides to those willing to come to the Maidan at night during the fighting or to Yanukovych's residence after journalist Tetyana Chornovol had been severely beaten. And there are stories about the artists; those who were decorating the activists' helmets with different Ukrainian folk ornaments, those who performed the *vertep* (nativity scene) near the half-constructed Christmas tree as well as those who painted portraits of the people involved – the Maidaners. Along with Kristina Berdinskikh, several other people had made video-recordings or photographs of the people of the EuroMaidan. These people are also included in the book as "The Heart-Warming People from the Maidan". Berdinskikh presented their stories without a hint of rivalry.

The choice of characters suggests a very careful and thought-out attempt to present different spheres of activity of the EuroMaidan. From the reading we can, for example, learn about the people who organised the Open University of Maidan which offered practically uninterrupted daytime lectures on different topics and which were given by various lecturers. We can also read about those who went on stage and warmed thousands of people with their kindness and energy. One story that stood out here was that of Solomia Melnik (Dakh Daughters band) and Pavlo Gudimov, currently a gallery owner, who is a former member of the Okean Elzy rock band and who, despite his personal ambitions, agreed to perform with the old line-up of the band at the Maidan on New Year's Eve.

Also very moving is the story of those who organised the funerals for the deceased. Like the female history student from Lviv who poignantly told Berdinskikh: "Somebody has to do this" when they talked together in March, shortly after another wounded activists had died in a hospital. There also is a story about the volunteer hairdressers and stories about people who organised the EuroMaidans in Ukrainian communities abroad. Importantly, Berdinskikh did not ignore the annexation of Crimea. In fact, the book has several stories about people who supported the EuroMaidan revolution in Crimea. They included both those who had to flee from Crimea (for example to Lviv) or had to stay there (for example in Kerch) as well as those who organised the Crimea-SOS service modelled on the earlier created information service – the EuroMaidan-SOS. This service aimed at helping refugees. There are also stories about those who were not afraid to go to occupied Crimea and report on what was happening to the Ukrainian military forces and the Crimean Tatars the day before and after "the referendum" organised by Russia. Kristina Berdinskikh, who herself was born in the south of Ukraine (she was born and raised in Kherson and studied in Mykolaiv), admits that she cannot imagine Ukraine without Crimea.

Most of the final stories published in the book are devoted to those who were wounded. There were hundreds of them and many are still receiving medical treatment in Ukrainian and foreign hospitals. These stories are about people who survived but who will always remember those who died. Their suffering has been endured for the freedom of a European Ukraine.

It is impossible to embrace and describe the entire EuroMaidan revolution and all initiatives that compromised it. Kristina Berdinskikh's book, for example, does not mention the library of the EuroMaidan at the Ukrainian House, or the

Angelic Post, which brought good news to the Maidaners and the soldiers of the internal military forces. Neither does it talk about Yevhen Nyshchuk, who became the Minister of Culture, but is not present in the section "voice of the EuroMaidan"; nor is Dr Olga Bogomolets, who later ran in the presidential elections in Ukraine. Their stories will be read in other books about the EuroMaidan revolution or seen in films that are already being made about Ukraine's Revolution of Dignity. Berdinskikh's book is yet an important stream of warmth which has been created in Ukraine by the victory of the EuroMaidan.

*Roman Kabachiy*
*Translated by Olena Shynkarenko*

## What Connects and What Divides?

*Symetria asymetryczna. Badania terenowe stosunków polsko-ukraińskich (Asymetric Symetry. Field Research on Polish-Ukrainian Relations).* By: Łukasz Saturczak and Les Beley. Publisher: Tempora, Kyiv, 2014.

When it comes to Poland and Ukraine there is a lot that connects the two countries, but there is also a lot that divides them. While discussing the issue of Polish-Ukrainian relations we often point to Poland's engagement in the Ukrainian cause. Poland supported Ukraine both during the Orange Revolution in 2004 and during the last EuroMaidan revolution. Without a doubt, Ukraine plays an important role in Polish foreign policy. Poland also treats the situation of its neighbour seriously, perceiving it as an important aspect of the EU's foreign policy. Such engagement, however, cannot be seen from the Ukrainian side, which – to a large extent – influences the process of shaping the strategic partnership between the two countries. In the subject literature, it is often stressed that this co-operation solely has a formal face. Indeed, the Kyiv authorities often admit (and ensure) how important Poland is as a partner for Ukraine. They may even express their most sincere gratitude for Poland's involvement, which, nonetheless, has no ground in Ukraine's foreign policy concepts.

Anniversary commemorations of such events as the ethnic cleansing carried out by the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) in the regions of Volhynia or the 1947 Operation Vistula (*Akcja "Wisła"*) reveal what divides the two nations the most: a different perception of the common past. Time and again, the arguments of Polish and Ukrainian research are brought up as to who is at fault for the tragedies and who should apologise to whom. The greatest controversy, on both sides of the Polish-Ukrainian border, arises from the different interpretations of the events that took place in 1943 and which in Poland are regarded as the "Volhynian slaughter" (*rzeź wołyńska*) while in Ukraine are referred to as the "Volhynian tragedy" (*Волинська трагедія*). These two terms that are used to describe the same event have been coined not as a result of linguistic differences, but of different perceptions.

For the Polish side, the events that took place in Volhynia were an intentional ethnic cleansing aimed at the non-Ukrainian (primarily Polish) population performed UPA. For the Ukrainian side, this conflict, however, was a part of the Polish-Ukrainian war and the fight to retain its own territory. Without a doubt, these events are a very difficult part of the history of both nations and the process of creating today's Polish-Ukrainian relations should be accompanied not only by an effective political dialogue, but also attempts to forgive and understand the argumentation of the other side.

Such an opportunity is offered by the recent book by Łukasz Saturczak and Les Beley, *Symetria asymetryczna. Badania terenowe stosunków polsko-ukraińskich* (*Asymetric Symetry. Field Research on Polish-Ukrainian Relations*). The book is an attempt to show Polish-Ukrainian relations not from the perspective of politicians or researchers, but ordinary people. Already in the introduction, the authors write that "Poland and Ukraine are divided by 535 kilometres of border and connected by a common history, with all its light and dark sides." The book presents the analysis of ten points that are relevant for both sides of the border. They include: the border (Szeginie, Medyka); historical traumas (Volhynia, Operation Vistula); birth places of great poets (Krzemieniec [the place where Juliusz Słowacki, the Polish national poet, was born] and Nowica [birthplace of Ukraine's 20th century poet Bohdan Ihor Antonych]); the two Galicias (Lviv and Kraków); the centres of the diasporas (Zhytomyr, Lower Silesia); the capitals (Kyiv, Warsaw); the geographic centres (Cherkasy, Łódź); points in the north (Chernihiv, Szczecin); from sea to sea (Odesa, Gdańsk) and the furthest points from the border (Sverdlovsk in the Luhansk Oblast, Świnoujście in the West Pomerianian Voivodeship). To collect information on all these aspects one author, Saturczak, undertook the research, talking like a Pole with the Poles, while the other author, Beley, tried to find out, as a Ukrainian, what is the attitude of Ukrainians towards the Poles.

Their work shows that despite the common border, there are different perceptions of both sides. For Ukrainians, Poland is associated with the West, meaning a higher standard of living. This is why many Ukrainians go to work in Poland. Poles, on the other hand, look at Ukraine as the East, where alcohol and cigarettes are still cheap. The emigrants and immigrants of both countries (especially those living near the border) are aware of their common past, which both unites and divides them. For the most part, however, they base their opinions on what is happening here and now. In the book there are stories about those who "live off the border", they bring alcohol and cigarettes to Poland and grocery products to Ukraine, which explains the "love" of people in Ukraine for such discount supermarkets in Poland as Biedronka or Lidl.

Daily life pushes the trauma of the past to the background. However, past experiences are never forgotten as people on both sides of the border see them as an important stage in their country's history. The respondents often admitted that they remember what happened in the early 1940s, but also said that life goes on and attempts should be made to build friendly relations with neighbours. In this context, they often repeated: "such were the times". Kraków and Lviv as well as the two Galicias and birthplaces of great poets are used in the analysis of memories and what

has remained of Polishness or Ukrainianess in some regions. The centres of the diaspora, on the other hand, generate associations with people who while living in a foreign country still cultivate their own customs and traditions. The authors of the publication were curious to find out if this indeed was the case.

The role of the countries' capitals in shaping the national identity is also a very important issue. The authors undertook the task of analysing the ways in which Poland and Ukraine are perceived in the capitals of both countries: in Warsaw (dominated by Ukrainian foreign workers) and in Kyiv with its large Polish community, which in 1915 was estimated to be around 100,000 and today is around 7,000. The opposite situation characterises the city of Łódź, which is described by the authors as one of the geographic centres, where the number of people who declare Ukrainian nationality is 200 as compared to the end of the 19th century, when three times more Eastern nationals lived there. Cherkasy, the capital city of the Cherkasy Oblast in Ukraine, is an example of a small paradox. Tourists entering the oblast can see a billboard with the slogan: *Welcome to Bohdan's and Taras's Land* (the names refer to Bohdan Khmelnytsky and Taras Shevchenko). The Bohdan Khmelnytsky University located in the city has a Polish Centre, even though the city's inhabitants have very little attachment to history. They live their everyday lives and are less engaged in the political and historical debates than the Poles are. To a large extent, they are less knowledgeable about history, which also explains why they find historical experiences much less painful.

In the chapter titled *In the North*, the authors present their conversations with Ukrainians who live in Szczecin and Poles who live in Chernihiv. These interviews show the lives of ordinary people in a foreign country and their perception of the homeland. In a similar way, the chapter *From Sea to Sea* presents different reflections of Ukrainians living in Gdańsk and Poles living in Odesa who share their views on the everyday life, history and politics. The furthest point from the border on the Polish side is Świnoujście. However, the authors did not manage to find any Ukrainians to participate in the project there. Only one of the local priests told them that it is Szczecin which should be considered the furthest point from the Ukrainian border. The same applied to Ukraine's Sverdlovsk. Its inhabitants did not know much about Poland. This finding is not that surprising given the fact that it is difficult to find Ukrainian books in Sverdlovsk bookshops, let alone Polish books.

Interestingly, when the authors ask their respondents about their associations with Poland or Ukraine, it becomes very clear how little we know about each other. People of Polish origin who live in Ukraine (and this applies both to young people, including those who study the Polish language at university, and the elderly) have difficulties recognising famous Poles in pictures. For example, not all could recognise the portraits of Taduesz Kościuszko, Nicolaus Copernicus, Józef Piłsudski, Lech Wałęsa, Bronisław Komorowski, Frideric Chopin, Adam Mickiewicz or Juliusz Słowacki. Poles also did not have a very deep association with regards to their neighbours from Ukraine. Largely, these are negative associations as Poles think of Ukraine in terms of Stepan Bandera or base their knowledge on the recent political events that have taken place in Ukraine and

which include the 2004 Orange Revolution and the 2013/2014 EuroMaidan. Some Poles base their knowledge of Ukraine on Jerzy Hofman's film *Ogniem i mieczem (With Fire and Sword)* with the famous Cossack Jur Bohum who, paradoxically, was played by a Russian actor, Aleksandr Domagorov.

*Asymetric Symetry* is certainly worth reading as it presents, in a very unique way, the mutual perceptions of Poles and Ukrainians. Taking into consideration historical grievances and different interpretations of the common past that have been presented in its subsequent chapters, we can almost unequivocally agree that what we share in common in fact divides us. That is why the chapter on common history, to a large extent, depicts deep emotions on both sides of the border. The lesson that we can learn from its reading is that undertaking political dialogue in such a context is extremely difficult. Despite many proposals aimed at forgiveness and reconciliation, some historical events remain a hot spot in the bilateral Polish-Ukrainian relations. Equally important, however, is that while we can find those with extreme views among the ordinary people, the book shows an overall high level of empathy and tolerance towards what happened in the 1940s. The respondents are clearly very much aware of the fact that important events are taking place now with the process of establishing friendly relations between the two nations being one of them.

*Asymetric Symetry* is clearly an important source of information on the common past and how Poles and Ukrainians perceive each other today. What adds merit to the informative aspect of the book is the fact that it is a collection of conversations with ordinary people and presents personal understandings of the past and future of inter-state relations. NEE

*Maryana Prokop*
*Translated by Iwona Reichardt*

## A Very Large Country Called Russia


*Nie ma jednej Rosji* (*There Is No One Russia*). By: Barbara Włodarczyk. Publisher: Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków, 2013.

There is no such thing as only one post-Soviet man; there are only stereotypes. There is also no unity in a country steered by an iron fist, even if the media of the nation seems to glorify Vladimir Putin and his party with a telling name, United Russia. Contemporary Russia is a country which is both diverse and full of contradictions. Here, human stories just come to the journalist. It is suffice to open up and just take them as they come. Just like a Polish journalist, Barbara Włodarczyk, whose recently published book *Nie ma jednej Rosji* (*There Is No One Russia*), gives voice to the wide-ranging groups of Russians. Their stories build a fascinating, multi-voice picture. Because, indeed, there is not just one Russia.

Włodarczyk linked her journalistic career with Russia many years ago. Between 2004 and 2009 she was the correspondent of the Polish public TV in Moscow. During this time she also created a series of reports called *Szerokie Tory* (*Wide Tracks*) which received many awards. The book *Nie ma jednej Rosji* is in fact a collection

of stories from the different parts of this series. Why would anyone want to transfer pictures into words, we may want to ask. Thankfully, Włodarczyk is as apt with words as she is with pictures. Her texts offer to those earlier film material a new space of expression. They say a picture is worth a thousand words, but Włodarczyk's written word seems to be stronger than what is said in front of the camera.

Włodarczyk, however, does not hide the television origins of her book. In the texts she often talks to her colleague, the cameraman. We learn how she arranges the camera based on who the protagonist is. In fact, she reveals to the reader all the secrets of her journalistic profession. The most important, nonetheless, are the stories of these protagonists. They are fished out from a large Russian community, a mass that only on a superficial level seems homogenous.

The different stories in the book show Włodarczyk's attachment to Russia. Here she feels comfortable, even though she does not always understand the world she witnesses. But it amazes her as she is convinced that all realities can be described. Her heroes lead the reporter down dark alleys, dig out deeply hidden family secrets and set off an avalanche of priceless memories. Włodarczyk is inquisitive, asking the right questions.

The book starts with a trip to Mansurov, a small village near Kursk which within a day became a Potemkin village. The village was the birthplace of Dmitry Medvedev's grandfather. That is why, when his only grandson decided to visit it, the local authorities decided to make a quick and overall upgrade. The newly painted houses suddenly had plastic windows, while local women had to learn, in no time, how to wear high heels. It is thanks to this visit that Mansurovo got wireless internet even though the majority of inhabitants do not even have a computer at home. Those who are more cynical believe that Medvedev and Vladimir Putin should do nothing else but tour their country. At that rate, each city would be able to beautify itself the way Mansurovo did.

Politics is not the most important element of the book, but it is deeply rooted in the Russian psyche. Włodarczyk travels to Bolshaya Elnya, a village near Nizhny Novgorod, 400 kilometres from Moscow. There she meets a mother named Maria who believes that Putin is the next incarnation of Paul the Apostle. The believers of the sect treat Russia's president as a sacred person and a true Saviour. Of different view is Zhenya Chirikova, one of Russia's leading pro-democratic activists who accuses Putin of a lack of social and democratic reforms and forging elections. She organises meetings and demonstrations and fights for, as she says, a civil awakening and a "Russia without Putin".

From the book we also learn that the political surface of the former superpower has many layers. There is the "Russia for the Russians", a propaganda slogan disseminated by neo-fascist squads. Their popularity grows in proportion to the number of immigrants who come to the Russian capital for work from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kirgizstan. In the view of the representatives of Moscow nationalists, they do not fit the picture of contemporary Russia. "The mixing of different nations brings chaos and suffering on the earth," shouts one of the leaders during a party meeting. His words are repeated by the rest without much understanding. In the changing country, a unanimously expressed racist comment, "Russia for the Russians", is

becoming more popular. Much weaker is the voice of Galina, a resident of Smoleńsk who is fighting for telling the true story about the Katyń massacre. In 1940, on Stalin's orders, the Russians carried out the brutal murder of over 20,000 Poles, including over 10,000 soldiers, in the Katyń forest. Galina travels to nearby villages and writes down the stories of the people who, for years, were too scared to talk about this bloody event. For many years, the Soviets maintained that the murderers of the Polish officers were Nazi Germans and anyone who publically told the truth risked imprisonment.

"Here everybody knew about it," says one of Galina's interlocutors. The Katyń case is proof that, despite the initial belief that was shared throughout Europe, that Russia after 1989 underwent a democratic transformation, this country does not want to be held accountable for its past actions in front of an international audience. The best option is still silence. That is why Galina encourages us to listen to the silence of the Katyń forest. It tells us more than words do.

Thankfully, the protagonists of Włodarczyk's stories do not want to remain silent. They are not only willing to talk, but also tell stories about their lives and work. Just like the 19-year-old Kirill who shows the Polish reporter Moscow's nightlife as Russia's capital does not die with dusk. After midnight, people can go to a hairdresser, a gym or a swimming pool. At night, these things are even easier as there is no traffic. "Everything is possible here," the young driver concludes during the night excursion.

Many things were indeed possible for German Sterligov – Russia's first millionaire and founder of the Moscow Stock Exchange. A few years ago, however, he disappeared from Moscow's social life and was found hiding in a tiny village 100 kilometres from the Russian capital. A wooden house without any creature comforts can bring about associations of a bucolic life. However, every extreme is harmful, as Włodarczyk notices quite quickly. And this is probably the greatest merit of her book where the conversations are often accompanied by one, short and to-the-point commentary. In them, Włodarczyk does not hide her own feelings; she is emotional and just like her interlocutors gets deeply involved in the stories. This can be seen in the story about Vasha, a homeless child that Włodarczyk meets at the Yaroslavsky station. A moving report of mutual meetings was one of the most difficult professional tasks undertaken by the reporter. Seemingly, the world treats homeless children as it treats stray dogs. That is why to survive they need to grow up quickly; but all they want is love.

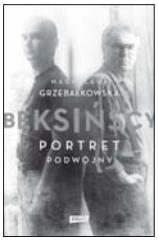
Escaping from the urban hustle of Moscow, Włodarczyk arrives in the Caucuses. There she accompanies Dagestani men in their kidnapping of the women whom they want to later marry. Travelling deeper into Russia, the journalist reaches Lake Baikal, a place where you can still meet Buryat shamans. The main hero of this report is a forest guard, he is supposed to be fighting poachers but he, himself, is a poacher. And that is what Russia is about as well.

Russia's people, in Włodarczyk's book, make a very diverse community. It is easier to find a difference between them than their common traits. Probably the only thing that really links them together is the fact that they live in a very large country called Russia. The rest is much

more complex; just as complex as every single story in this book. NEE

*Łukasz Wojtusik*
*Translated by Iwona Reichardt*

## A Family Affair




*Beksińscy. Portret podwójny (The Beksińskis: A Double Portrait).* By: Magdalena Grzebałkowska. Publisher: Znak, Kraków, Poland, 2014.

On the stage during the New Year's Eve celebrations in Warsaw, half-forgotten Polish starlets scream their lungs out while the crowd below goes wild. In the stuffy atmosphere of house parties filled with confetti and cheap champagne, couples swing to the rhythm of musical hits on TV. In numerous smaller cities throughout Poland, groups of boozed up teenagers are geared to set off fireworks. The city is ready to be swept away by a collective euphoria. Peeking through the windows into the dimly lit homes, one can also make out dogs cowering under the table at the noise of the fireworks. In some places, there are lonely figures curled up on the couch, staring blindly at the wall. The only thing they are still hoping for is some sort of Armageddon that is supposed to happen on the night of December 31st. Until recently, as lonely as ever, they would gather around the radio to listen to shows geared to social outcasts run by a forty-year-old radio host with a shady enunciation and an inclination for dark music. At times, he would put on plastic fangs and clothe himself in a red-lined cape – those vampire devices assured each of his listeners that they belonged to a larger group of vampires sucking the energy out of the night.

As it happened though, this legendary Polish music journalist, Tomasz Beksiński, spoke to his fans from the studio of the Polish Radio for the last time several days before the end of the year. On one fateful December evening, he locked himself in his flat in one of Warsaw's numerous tower block estates, wrote his last will, swallowed some pills, tossed the empty container and fell asleep. His radio fans were abandoned, maybe they even felt somewhat deceived, but more importantly they felt satiated in their desire for death; perhaps even more so than his father, Zdzisław Beksiński – the world-famous painter of ghosts and rotting meat.

The elder Beksinski had no choice but to accept his son's death long before it actually happened, being prepared for the inevitable by a series of failed suicide attempts. Several years later, the same mundane tower block estate would be the setting for the father's tragic death when he is fatally stabbed by a burglar. The only witnesses to the crime were his horrifying, anti-utopian paintings, one of which is featured on the cover of the Polish edition of George Orwell's *1984*. In 2014, both Beksińskis are chosen to be the main characters of yet another book.

Magdalena Grzebałkowska, a journalist associated with *Gazeta Wyborcza*, took it upon herself to put together in writing the unique double portrait of the two Beksińskis. She herself does not want to call the book a biography, which is quite understandable given that what the reader is presented with is not a detailed

recording of two parallel life stories. Instead, the reader is given a single story that allows for multiple voices in a patient attempt to access the well-guarded depths of the subconscious of the two men. For Grzebałkowska, it was not an easy task as both men were persistent in obscuring their self-image both in public situations and in their private correspondences. In an attempt to reach the truth of the protagonists' lives, which involves cracking the hard shell of the myths around that pair of unique monsters, Grzebałkowska assumes the role of the mythical Ariadne. The thread that the author unwinds over nearly 500 pages is supposed to ease the reader's journey through the labyrinth of immense materials – often discrepant memories shared by the artists' friends, co-workers, family members, lovers, art dealers and radio fans. In addition, the author scours court records, press materials, films, radio shows, and most of all the huge volume of correspondence and the journal that Zdzisław Beksiński painstakingly kept his whole life, first as a voice diary then in the form of video recordings and finally a written diary covering his last several years.

Despite the apparent ease offered by the author, getting through the maze poses a dreadfully difficult task, the thread gets tangled and there is not one but whole crowds of tragic monsters lurking behind each successive bend. There is nothing else that can be expected at the centre of the labyrinth, except the odd relationship between the two men and the woman who devoted her entire life to them as a wife and a mother – Zofia Beksińska. The book's most ambivalent character was initially meant by the author to naturally be the third character in the drama. Strangely enough, it is she who becomes the real mystery – a typical housewife coming from a small Polish town always at her men's service, fixed in the kitchen and tempering the household with a streak of normality. Her impenetrability is partly due to the strategy of the transparent presence that she adopts – which was a quite typical role assumed by women in the post-war period. That would be too simple, however. As an artist's spouse, she had to take on the role of a muse, to summon up the kind of masochistic love necessary to pose nude for the camera with her body bound with rope, shedding her strait-laced upbringing. And it all takes place in Sanok, a provincial town on the eastern frontiers Poland where life revolves solely around mundane tasks and where priests thunder from their church pulpits and people never miss an opportunity to gossip and condemn. This is the reality in which the protagonists of the book spend most of their lives.

The town of Sanok is where Zdzisław Beksiński was born to a respectable family with tradition. Raised in isolation mainly by his grandmother, he barely had contact with other children. He was sheltered in his childhood years by an old traditional upbringing, his noble background and the upper class that his family belonged to, until the bombs of the Second World War shattered that safe haven into pieces. The boy hates touch; when grown-up, he will avoid touching his son by all possible means. Long before that though, he disturbs his teachers with drawings scribbled in his notebooks. Fascinated with the cinema, he starts dreaming of becoming a film director. His father believes that engineering school would be a good solution and sends his son to university in Kraków where this strange, isolated young man meets the only woman ever able to get

close to him. He graduates, whereas she gives up her education for him and they move back to Sanok. After his father's death, Zdzisław tries to be the bread-winner in the family for a short while and takes on the position of a bus designer at a local factory. While none of his futuristic designs are accepted by the narrow-minded supervisors in the socialist state-owned factory, it is thanks to that bizarre job that he develops the two greatest passions of his life – one for the arts and the other for new technology.

When Zdzisław loses his job, he no longer has access to the art supplies that he would steal from the factory. The family, now living off his mother's pension and some temporary jobs taken on by Zofia, barely have enough to eat. Yet painting supplies, audio equipment and record albums (that the painter addictively collects) always remain the top priority in their budget. Soon enough, the self-taught painter starts creating pieces with various techniques, yet all depict his catastrophic vision of the world. Thanks to a growing network of friends, both at home and also abroad, he was able to exchange his art for goods that were unavailable in socialist Poland. This continued until the change of the political system, despite the fact that Zdzisław had been a renowned artist by that time.

Meanwhile, his son Tomasz, no longer the infant so revolting to his father, gets to use the artist's studio as his playground. In place of stuffed animals, he is offered discussions about paintings on the walls depicting decomposing bodies climbing out of their coffins. Regular daily meals cooked for him by his overprotective mother do not balance out these disturbing experiences and several years later, the desire to re-enter his mother's womb gives way to his longing for death. In the meantime, he tries to relate to his father through music, a passion that they both share and the only possible way for these two men to communicate.

That will also not change when they move together to Warsaw to make a name for themselves: as a world-renowned painter and a legendary Polish radio journalist, respectively. Thanks to the newest albums that his father received for his paintings, Tadeusz, in his shows with the Polish Radio, was able to open the window to the western musical world for the post-communistic generation in Poland. Tomasz's shows are spiced up with morbid monologues. He survives a plane crash. He repeatedly falls madly in love with psycho fans – the teenage *femme fatales*. He would then blacken their names in the newspaper features he wrote. His successive suicide attempts cause his parents to live in dread. In private an egotistic and pretentious person, a spoilt brat who never grows up and acts despotically towards everyone, Tomasz never bonds emotionally with anyone. He does not even feel any connection to the world. Finally, he hides himself for good in his coffin.

On reading *The Double Portrait* we find out that Zdzisław was a warm, friendly, kind-hearted person. The son, Tomasz, was a sensitive romantic and his mother Zofia an adored woman taking anti-depressants. The three absolutely complemented each other though each of them belonged to a different era – the son to the 19th century, his mother to the mid-20th and the father to the 21st. At home they tried to condense that vast period using art, music and film as their time machine. The author abstains from employing any apparent interpretative formulas in an effort to avoid the trap of sensationalism that the many other

journalists who took on this topic before fell into. She is also far from entering any sort of relationship with her protagonists.

The strength of Grzebałkowska's writing lies in her countering the vividness of the topic with a relaxed, careful objectivism. She was acutely aware that even the Beksiński family, well-hidden in their secure private world, could not help but be deeply rooted in the times they lived in. So the best way to reach their world is through depicting that period. For that reason, the author gives a detailed layout to her story by presenting the socio-political and cultural situation of both provincial and big-city Poland – from the pre-war period until the beginning of the 21st century and only then does she "paint" the family story. She not only strengthens the biography with all the necessary contexts, but also lightens it up by balancing the main topic with anecdotes from everyday life.

The thorough tale is told from the perspective of a person who already grew up in a free country, which is a fairly new phenomenon in Polish literature, which for years has been coping with the socialist reality. The sole outcome of that attempt is enough to make the book a mandatory read. The message of the book though is left to be found by the readers themselves. Similar to the most quoted passage of the book which says that "Zdzisław Beksiński will never hit his son. Zdzisław Beksiński will never cuddle his son", Magdalena Grzebałkowska in the biography of the Beksiński family will never provide us with ready answers.

*Magdalena Link-Lenczowska*
*Tranlated by Agnieszka Rubka*

## Commemorating the Traces and Absences

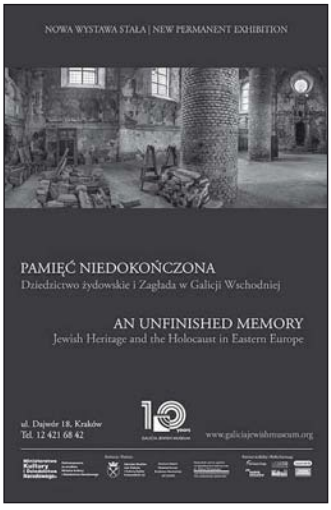
*An Unfinished Memory: Jewish Heritage and the Holocaust in Eastern Galicia*. New Permanent Exhibition at the Galicia Jewish Museum, Kraków, Poland.

"To speak of the Jewish in Galicia … is to speak of both a legacy and an enigma," writes Jason Francisco in his introduction to his exhibition *An Unfinished Memory: Jewish Heritage and the Holocaust in Eastern Galicia*, the new permanent exhibition at the Galicia Jewish Museum in Kraków, Poland. Founded in 2004, the museum aims to commemorate the victims of the Holocaust and celebrate the 800 years of Jewish history in Polish Galicia, presenting Poland's rich and complex Jewish past from a contemporary perspective through exhibitions, educational projects and cultural events. The museum's heart is its permanent exhibition, *Traces of Memory*, authored by British photojournalist Chris Schwarz and Professor Jonathan Webber, which presents photographs of the visible traces of Jewish heritage in the area of the historic Galicia province currently within Poland's modern borders.

However, for a museum with the name "Galicia" in it, the stories and experiences of eastern Galicia (today western Ukraine) have been missing from the permanent exhibition. Although Chris Schwarz, the museum's founder and director, planned to document the traces of the Jewish past in historic eastern Galicia, his premature death in 2007 halted the project. On the occasion of the museum's tenth anniversary, American photographer and academic Jason Francisco was commissioned

to continue Schwarz's legacy. The result was a new permanent exhibition, *An Unfinished Memory: Jewish Heritage and the Holocaust in Eastern Galicia*, which opened during the 2014 Jewish Culture Festival in Kraków.

Like *Traces of Memory*, *An Unfinished Memory* is divided into sections, representing different themes and questions the viewer must grapple with upon viewing the images. These in turn are divided into sub-sections, highlighting individual places and people. The four sections include: "Something and Nothing", "Reading Traces", "Interventions Against Tracelessness" and "Jewish Heritage in the Ukrainian Lifeworld". In each of them, Francisco's photographs illustrate the legacy and enigma of Jewish heritage in western Ukraine, highlighting destruction and absence, indifference and emptiness, but also a sense of hope for the building of new perspectives and the opening of a dialogue about the past – a process similar to the one on-going in post-communist Poland.




The first section, "Something and Nothing" consists of photographs of traces and absence of the Jewish past from several towns and villages. It is divided into three subsections: "Diptychs", "Varieties of Something" and "Varieties of Nothing". Francisco writes that this section "grapples with the core contradiction that defines Jewish heritage in eastern Galicia. It presents a dialectic of traces and tracelessness, ruined presence as against sheer absence, improbable survival as against blunt erasure, something as against nothing." The section of diptychs is perhaps the most powerful, as viewers are confronted with both the physical traces of the Jewish pasts of towns such as Bibrka, Sambir, Lviv and Ivano-Frankivsk and, hauntingly, their absence.

Unlike in *Traces of Memory*, where there are just as many photos of restoration and commemoration as there are of neglected and devastated sites, destruction and absence dominate in *An Unfinished Memory*. The surviving sites are almost all in total ruin – fragments of Jewish tombstones amid garbage in a cemetery turned into a dump in Sambir, the crumbling interior of the grand synagogue in Zhovkva, the remnants of the wall of the Golden Rose Synagogue in Lviv. The sites of absence have often been repurposed, with no marker as to what was once there: the Zhovkva cemetery turned into a market, a mass grave where 2,000 Jews were shot in Ivano-Frankivsk being built over for housing. The only "whole" trace significantly visible is a shot of the synagogue in Ivano-Frankivsk, which still serves a small aging Jewish community.

The second section, "Reading Traces" highlights what Francisco calls "the intermediary traces" that exist somewhere between the evident and the absent. It is here where we can see active ways of commemoration, such as a display in Buchach honouring three famous writers born in the town including the Hebrew-language author S.Y. Agnon (1888-1970) or a

memorial wall on the site of the destroyed Belz synagogue. But there are also traces of forgetfulness, or wilful distortion of history: the memorial to executed OUN/UPA fighters next to the synagogue in Ivano-Frankivsk. Taking on one of the most painful, and fraught, aspects of the Jewish experience in Ukraine during the Holocaust, Francisco notes "this monument is one of many instances in which public commemoration of ethno-nationalist OUN/UPA fighters involves dissimulation about the city's wartime history, including the role of the OUN/UPA and Ukrainian police in the genocide against the Jews." This repurposing and obscuring of history, probably the most painful for Jewish visitors, is a part of the dialogue that needs addressing. Another set of repurposed traces are those repurposed for practical uses. A photograph of magnificent and well-preserved Jewish tombstones being used to store hay in Burshtyn is probably one of the most striking images in the collection. Here too are positive traces of the past. The image from the Museum of Karaite History and Culture in Halych shows a positive example for future efforts in creating small museums dedicated to the Jewish past.

The third section, "Interventions Against Tracelessness", is devoted to reminding viewers that, as Francisco puts it, "looking into the remains of the Jewish past is not merely an exercise in studying loss". Despite the many challenges, there are initiatives in towns and villages in western Ukraine to stave off tracelessness and actively commemorate the Jewish past there. The section highlights four towns, Lviv, Busk, Rava Ruska and Rohatyn, where locals and people from abroad from all walks of life have come together to preserve the memory of the annihilated Jewish communities. This ranges from reclaiming tombstones from fields, gardens, walls and barns to combining cadastral map research and the latest technology to show the multicultural makeup of a town as well as how it has changed over the years. It also includes the small Jewish communities still existing in Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk and Kolyma. The participants in these interventions are Jewish and non-Jewish, Ukrainian and foreign, academics, artists and ordinary people. While a visitor, after seeing the rich variety of Polish initiatives featured in *Traces of Memory*, might find those in Ukraine paltry in comparison, these photographs in *An Unfinished Memory* point out that there is hope for a similar raising of interest and awareness in Ukraine.

The fourth and final section, "Jewish Heritage in the Ukrainian Lifeworld" looks at how people interact with the Jewish heritage they encounter in their everyday lives. These images show people interacting (or not interacting) with the Jewish past surrounding them. Once again, these are Jews and non-Jews, people who are interested and those who are indifferent, caretakers and researchers, activists and members of the Jewish community. Francisco challenges us, saying: "To read Jewish heritage well is not merely to ask 'What Jewish actualities still exist?' but to ask 'What are the Jewish actualities with which ordinary Ukrainians are living?'" Some of the images could have been more impactful with captions, telling who these people are and how they came to be photographed. However, they show the challenges faced by ordinary people living in a reality where a complex, painful and sometimes controversial history encroach upon their daily lives.

The photographs in *An Unfinished Memory* combine to form a picture of the state of Jewish heritage in eastern Galicia that engenders a variety of emotions. On one hand, there is a feeling of desolation and despair at the overwhelming scenes of destruction, neglect and devastation. There is also a feeling of optimism upon seeing the attempts to protect and preserve this heritage, but this is accompanied by the knowledge of how much work there is still to be done – something that can feel overwhelming taking into account the need for educational initiatives, resources and pure physical work that the future holds. The advances in commemoration made in Poland over the last 20 years, the restoration of synagogues and cemeteries, the promotion of awareness of Jewish culture and history, have not reached the Ukrainian reality on the same scale.

Unlike *Traces of Memory*, which ends on an optimistic note showing the many ways people "make memory" of the Jewish past in Poland – albeit including one last picture of the city limits sign from the town of Dobra, where no traces of the Jewish past remain, as a reminder of the challenges of preserving memory in places where nothing remains – *An Unfinished Memory* leads viewers to wonder about the challenges of preserving the Jewish past in western Ukraine going forward. The spectre of recent events in Ukraine also hangs over the exhibition. Thinking of the Maidan and the hope of building a civil society, perhaps a viewer could take an optimistic view that a discussion of the Jewish past in Ukraine and preservation of the remaining traces could slowly develop in democratic Ukraine. However, although the fighting is far removed from the area of the former eastern Galicia, the question of preserving heritage and opening a complex and painful dialogue in such a precarious situation remains open.

Overall, the exhibition is a timely and much-needed one. Just as *Traces of Memory* played and continues to play an important role in the Polish-Jewish dialogue by offering new perspectives on the past, *An Unfinished Memory* may play a similar role in western Ukraine. Never shying away from the difficult issues, particularly of wartime collaboration and post-war erasure of memory, the exhibition also provides much-needed counters to stereotypes held by both Jews and Ukrainians about one another. The only minor issue with the exhibition is its small physical space. Located in the Galicia Museum's educational room, the exhibition presents information and images of a similar scope to *Traces of Memory* – but in a space a quarter of the size of the main permanent exhibition. Jason Francisco has addressed this problem by making these and other images from his work in Ukraine, along with captions and commentary, available on his website(http://jasonfrancissco.net/anunfinishedmemory). Unfortunately, the small space can make the exhibition look overcrowded and the grouping of many differently sized images together gives it a feel more of a temporary exhibition than the permanent exhibition it truly is. However, the superb images and important content of *An Unfinished Memory* helps it break out of its limitations. It is a significant achievement and helps add to the Galicia Jewish Museum's mission of commemorating the past whilst also looking to the future.

*Gina Kuhn*

Ministry of Culture and National Heritage of the Republic of Poland

institute of music and dance

Kolberg 2014

# OSKAR KOLBERG AND THE MUSICAL FACES OF EASTERN EUROPE

The simple truth that folk music is not as much about songs as it is about people holds very true in Central and Eastern Europe. Here, "every village has its song" wrote Oskar Kolberg, the 19th century Polish ethnographer whose 200th birthday is being celebrated this year in Poland. Most importantly, Kolberg was the author of a multi-volume work *The People. Their Customs, Way of Life, Language, Legends, Proverbs, Rites, Witchcraft, Games, Songs, Music and Dances* as well as a large archive of manuscripts. His collection is, as **Łukasz Smoluch** writes in Kolberg's portrait in this section, the largest of its type in Europe. Unfortunately, not all of it has stayed until today since, as **Filip Wróblewski** finds out while interviewing three researchers with the Oskar Kolberg Institute (an organisation devoted to preserving the ethnographer's legacy), some material was looted, some burned by Nazi Germans, or simply lost.

Oskar Kolberg, a miniature by T. Rybowski courtesy of the Institute of Music and Dance.

Despite the loss of some of the material, Kolberg has left a large legacy for generations of researchers, creators and performers of folk culture. Among them are the authors of the texts published in this section, whom we would call *The Kolbergs of today's Central and Eastern Europe.* They include **Maria Baliszewska**, who shares her reflections on the 47 years of the Festival of Folk Bands and Singers in Kazimierz Dolny (Poland), **Arleta Nawrocka-Wysocka**, an author of an analysis of songs sung by generations of the Lutheran community in Cieszyn Silesia, **Gustaw Juzala**, a researcher on the tradition of Eastern carols in Slavic and Baltic nations as well as **Bożena Muszkalska** a musicologist specialising in the music in life of the Ashkenazi Jews and the passionate coordinator of this special section. Lastly, the section includes a presentation of contemporary folk music in Belarus written by **Aliaksandr Muliarchyk** who is also a performer of one of the songs included in the CD we have especially prepared for *New Eastern Europe's* readers.

# The Man Without a Digital Recorder

ŁUKASZ SMOLUCH

Henryk Oskar Kolberg was a 19th century Polish composer, folklorist and ethnographer. For over 50 years he documented folk culture. His main interests included oral and musical folklore, but also folk customs and ceremonies. Throughout his life, Kolberg published 33 volumes of material. Altogether, Kolberg's collection is the largest of its type in Europe.

Oskar Kolberg was born in 1814 in the town of Przysucha (Poland). Five years later, the Kolberg family relocated to Warsaw where they were in close contacts with intelligentsia circles, which had an impact on the young Oskar and his interests. His musical education of included piano and composition. At first, he believed this would become his destiny. This vision changed, however, when Kolberg began attending musical evenings organised in Warsaw where he came across folklore. He became interested in folk music probably because of two things: first, he started studying the already existing compilations of songs (which included the works of Wacław of Olecko and Kazimierz Wójcicki). Second, he was under the influence of the Romantic fascination with folklore that was popular at that time, which saw it as a carrier of the idea of the nation.

## Collector of songs

Intrigued to discover the roots and origins of folk music, Kolberg began making expeditions. At first, these were short outings with friends to areas mainly around Warsaw. In time, however, he began transforming his visits into regular and large-scale studies. Kolberg published the results of his studies and ten years after his first trip when he was already respected as an editor of song compilations as well a person with a recognised position in the field of folk music. Kolberg's collections

published in the years 1842-1847 included *The Songs of the Polish People* (1842), *On Lithuanian Songs* (1846) and *Czech and Slovak Songs* (1846). Kolberg transcribed the songs with written accompaniment and designed them for loud solo performances with piano. With time, however, Kolberg began to treat folk songs as fully-fledged pieces of music not requiring additional ornaments. Hence, he stopped adding accompaniments.

Regular trips to the countryside allowed Kolberg to more vividly perceive the connection between folk songs, customs and the ceremonialism of rural living.

At the same time, he saw the need to classify the materials (the songs included in the first collections were not categorised), which led him to the idea of publishing *The Songs of the Polish People* foreseen as monographic collections. The first collection in this series was published in 1857 and contained ballads from various parts of Poland. In its arrangement, Kolberg decided not only to use the genre criterion but also arranged the songs in such a way as to illustrate the spreading of particular themes and their adjustment to the local conditions, which was undoubtedly a novelty at that time for studies on folklore. Regular trips and contacts with country life allowed Kolberg to more vividly perceive the connection between folk songs, customs and ceremonialism of rural living. This awareness as well as the emerging critical-scientific positivist approach in the studies of folklore led Kolberg to abandon the decision of publishing *The Songs of the Polish People.* What followed this decision became, in fact, the basis of Polish folklore and ethnographic studies for the next 120 years. It was an idea to publish regional monographs covering the territory of 19th century Poland (then divided into three partitions) as well as describing all aspects of the people's lives from folklore to material culture. This series was given the title *The People. Their Customs, Way of Life, Language, Legends, Proverbs, Rites, Witchcraft, Games, Songs, Music and Dances* (*Lud. Jego zwyczaje, sposób życia, mowa, podania, przysłowia, obrzędy, gusła, zabawy, pieśni, muzyka i tańce)* and included as the first volume the already-published *Songs of the Polish Folk People.*

## Scrupulously taking notes

Over the years, Kolberg developed his own methods of collecting and organising material. More than anything else, he would extensively prepare for his fieldwork. He never embarked on journeys alone to the Polish countryside, as he was well aware of the failure of such undertakings. Instead, he arranged for a hospitable reception in the region he was about to visit by gaining the support of its inhabitants, mainly the landowners. Kolberg's family and friends would often help him during these

field trips. At a later stage of his studies, members of the Polish intelligentsia also assisted his studies. Most importantly, however, the local leaders who had substantial knowledge of the community were the ones who were crucial in assisting Kolberg to reach the respondents. His own experience taught the ethnographer as whom to ask for and how to later persuade the locals to sing, play and chat for hours about their country life. Trying to get as much information as possible from his interlocutors, Kolberg scrupulously noted down everything. He was very friendly and patient towards them. Once the field visit was successfully completed, Kolberg would often try to maintain contacts with his interlocutors and continued corresponding with them even after he moved to another location.

The author of *The People* took advantage of every opportunity he had to register valuable folklore texts, regardless of the location. In a few cases, he managed to include in his collections songs and fairy tales which he had gathered without even travelling to the region they came from. In this way he wrote down, for instance, 13 Silesian fairy tales in Mazovia where several Silesian men happened to be working. The same was with the Mazurian songs noted in the area of Płock and Ostrołęka or songs of the wandering Slovakian tinkers who ventured as far as Warsaw. Even though *The People* was primarily envisioned to present the culture of the peasants, it also included some popular songs which were performed in aristocratic mansions as well as in cities. By including these in the collection, Kolberg proved that there was a connection between the folk repertoire and popular culture.

Kolberg took the most meticulous notes on the origins of the various works and arranged them in the appropriate volumes of his collections.

In fact, the field study was only one of the sources of information that Kolberg would use. While wishing to describe regions as fully as possible and being aware of the gravity of that job as well as the limitations of collecting all the information by himself, Kolberg also sought folklore texts, descriptions of regions, different customs and studies of languages published by other researchers. In addition, he obtained materials directly from others who were also collecting folklore. And he encouraged others to collect it too. The most illustrative of this was his open letter in 1865 in the newspaper *The Warsaw Library* (*Biblioteka Warszawska*) in which he requested readers to send folklore texts and information that could be used in research.

While working on his collection, Kolberg co-operated both with professional and amateur informants. Among them were people of different social status, gender and age; landowners and priests, writers and medical doctors, as well as many other professions. These individuals, however, did not form a network of

permanent co-workers, which was impossible both because of the political situation that characterised Poland at that time as well as Kolberg's working conditions. However, the material that Kolberg managed to obtain from them was incorporated into the different volumes of *The People*. Characteristically, in most cases, he did not mention its origin (quite often at the request of the person who provided it) or just posted a general note about it.

## Property of mankind

Regardless of how Kolberg acquired his material from the field, whether it was by mail or simply copied from literature, the information that mattered to him the most was its location. Hence, Kolberg took the most meticulous notes of the name of the location which different songs or fairy tales originated from and based on this information arranged them in appropriate volumes of his collections. Overall, Kolberg did not pay attention to the names of his informers, as he perceived folklore to be the general property of mankind.

Kolberg's studies were very innovative for his time and, thus, left a valuable legacy.

The folklore texts as well as the descriptions of customs and ceremonies and other information gathered was placed by Kolberg in the volumes of *The People* in a certain order he imposed on himself. Every volume of *The People* usually starts with a description of "the land": a given region presented from both the geographical and historical perspective. Subsequently, the author briefly characterises the local community ("the folk people") and moves on to describe of their year-round customs. In this section, there are records of songs and dances accompanying particular events. Quite similar is the organisation of the subsequent chapter on family ceremonies. However, Kolberg devotes separate sections of the monograph to songs that are not related to customs or ceremonies as well as assigns an exclusive chapter to dances. This is the only place in the monograph where the material is arranged in accordance with musical criteria: Kolberg divides them into duple and triple meter dances. Other chapters are devoted to: beliefs, fairy tales, games and language. However, not all fourteen monographs published by Kolberg reflect the pattern described above, which results from a partial shortage of materials from some of the regions.

## One man's work

Without a doubt, Oskar Kolberg is one of the researchers who made a breakthrough in the field of folk studies and ethnography. He conducted studies that were among

the most innovative for his time and thus left a valuable legacy. In fact, Kolberg's contribution to Polish science is undisputed, with numerous experts highly valuing his collections. At the same time, Kolberg belongs to a group of researchers who has caused some trouble. His methods are not completely known, the origin of the material varies and is often non-verifiable. Due to the turbulent fate of the manuscripts, there is no access to the whole collection, which prevents us from a complete evaluation of Kolberg's work and understanding of his research methods.

It is, however, difficult not to be impressed with the over 10,000 published songs (the vast majority of them include tunes), another 35,000 still in manuscripts, fairy tales, stories, proverbs and other folklore texts. This is the result of one man's work. This is a man who had no equipment to record sound or video, which is worth keeping in mind today in the era of technology. Kolberg often worked in very difficult conditions whose scope was limited by a shortage of resources. The material left by Kolberg in his manuscripts has been continuously edited and published by a team of researchers from the Oskar Kolberg Institute in Poznań (www.oskarkolberg.pl). The works published by this institution, which include both Kolberg's original material as well as publications of the institute's scholars, are a priceless source for folklorists, ethnographers, musicologists, historians and researchers of many disciplines. They also constitute an inspiration for performers and creators of contemporary musical culture. NEE

*Translated by Justyna Chada*

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# A Hidden Treasure

An interview with Elżbieta Krzyżaniak-Miller, Danuta Pawlak and Agata Skrukwa of the Oskar Kolberg Institute in Poznań, Poland. Interviewer: Filip Wróblewski

**FILIP WRÓBLEWSKI: Who was Oskar Kolberg for you?**

ELŻBIETA KRZYŻANIAK-MILLER: I am most fascinated by Kolberg's clear passion and unbelievable determination. Indulging in such a reality as the history of culture (it is not only the history of folk culture *sensu stricto* as there is also the culture of the suburban mansions and urban culture) required a great personality. It is this great personality that allowed for him to create this fascinating work. What also attached me greatly to Kolberg was his brilliant self-awareness. What I mean here is that Kolberg, who was an admirer of Frederic Chopin and who deep at heart dreamt of composing himself, had come to the realisation that perhaps he would not be another Chopin, but still could become an artist. Additionally, at a certain moment Kolberg noticed that his talent was more of an academic nature and not that of an artistic genius. Hence, he underwent a transformation. It was this complete reorientation that changed him into a positivist who busily documented hundreds and thousands of tunes. He wrote down fairy tales not always knowing the local dialect. He recorded everything as accurately as he could. However, when it comes to the size of this undertaking, we can say that Kolberg was a representative of Romanticism, while in regards to his work he was a positivist. He may not have been a typical romantic but, for sure, there was a romantic element in Kolberg's lonely endeavour. This reorientation points to his extraordinary modesty. It is not easy to give up artistic ambitions for such an occupation and, at the same time, to do it so persistently and consistently. For me, this is the measure of Kolberg's greatness. Also he combined ethnography, folk studies and ethnomusicology. This is what fascinates me the most in him.

AGATA SKRUKWA: For me, Kolberg is a child of the Enlightenment. He was brought up in a home where both parents were interested in music and adored poetry. From his Protestant home he inherited diligence and precision, as well as consistency in implementing the decisions once taken. This determination of his was paired with unbelievable self-

awareness, as he very well understood the value of the sources that he collected.

ELŻBIETA KRZYŻANIAK-MILLER: The image of Kolberg is mainly built on the basis of the facts included in his correspondence, the rare memories of him as a man and the manuscripts compiled over the years. The letters were censored. He was not able to write about his weariness or about his bitterness. However, his correspondence clearly depicts his constant concern and the total exhaustion caused by fighting for funding.

**Returning to Kolberg's credits; what was the specific nature of his work?**

ELŻBIETA KRZYŻANIAK-MILLER: Kolberg filled a great void since before his work, song texts were published without any sheet music.

DANUTA PAWLAK: He was also very passionate. In my opinion, he must have been aware that he was indeed alone when it comes to the sheet music. Maybe, but only to some extent Gustav Gizeviush, who was Kolberg's predecessor, had attempted to do that but he was unable to write down the tunes. There were also people who would do the notations but only occasionally. In Europe, there is no other compilation like the one prepared by Kolberg, not even among contemporary collections. Simply put, there is no other large compilation of sheet music like the one Kolberg left behind. There are thousands of them indeed, but his is the largest.

ELŻBIETA KRZYŻANIAK-MILLER: And this is because Kolberg noted everything down; he was rushing to collect as much material as possible. This element of rush is very visible in his letters and manuscripts. This is the result of Kolberg's self-restraint that I mentioned earlier and which meant giving up on his artistic ambitions in order to undertake the documentation of folk music, lore, tales, custom descriptions and others. Another important thing is that even though Kolberg was well read in folk music and folklore culture in general, he never attempted to interpret the songs, however tempting it was. For a man who became so familiar with this reality, giving up deeper interpretations was quite a sacrifice made for the sake of the race against time. This rush that characterised Kolberg's work can be explained by the fact that he was one of the few people who knew how to write down tunes. He could not indulge in any deeper analyses of the structure or carry out comparative studies. Instead, he focused primarily on the writing.

AGATA SKRUKWA: Kolberg refrained from defining the nature of Slavic music for documentation. This decision could have cost him a lot, but it was a product of his awareness that interpretation could wait as it was the culture that was changing. He quickly came to the realisation that folk culture was alive and changing. In 1850, the customs border between the Kingdom of Poland and Tsarist Russia was lifted. Industry flourished and after landlordism had ended for peasants, a migration of people from rural areas into cities began.

Clothing changed drastically; factory-produced dyes came into use, gradually displacing plant dyes. Folk clothing also started to change and so did the prosperity of the countryside. Everything was changing. This increased mobility of people from rural areas to cities led to the unification and transformation of culture. And Kolberg was an eyewitness of these events.

DANUTA PAWLAK: That is why he had to be very patient and composed, not to mention conscientious.

**Did these personality traits help him in his fieldwork?**

AGATA SKRUKWA: Patience and friendliness towards his informers helped him greatly. We may not be able to read this from the volumes of *The People,* but it is visible in some of the manuscripts. In accordance with a 19th century custom, Kolberg did not include the names of the artists and informers. He valued them very highly, which can be seen, for example, in the way he described the violinists from the Kujawy region. He was interested in people and their fate.

**It turns out that a great deal of commotion around Kolberg's heritage was caused by some scholars interested in the materials.**

ELŻBIETA KRZYŻANIAK-MILLER: Indeed, there are several such stories which might be brought up in this regard. We have proof that Kolberg's manuscripts have been looted. The only file that is in Warsaw, more precisely in the Library of the Warsaw University, remains a mystery. It includes material from Przemyśl that came from the collection of Michał Fedorowski – the author of *The Belarusian People.* Fedorowski was not only a great author and an ethnographer, but also a passionate collector who would do odd things, including visiting the houses of famous Warsaw families and tricking them into giving him their collections. You can say he was a collector by passion, but also quite crazy.

As time went by, some archivists and publishers also devastated Kolberg's collections. It was probably triggered by the fact that no one knew how much material there was. People believed that 34 volumes had been published, that it was the majority of the collection. Back then there was no knowledge of how large Kolberg's work was and how much there still was left to dig through.

AGATA SKRUKWA: Kolberg prepared the manuscript of *Mazury* to be published with music notes, with a foreword, with everything, even a title page. This manuscript was hidden in the Nature Museum of the Polish Academy of Learning; hidden, just as a piece of paper, under a flower pot. It was thanks to Tadeusz Seweryn, who then held the position of the president of the Ethnological Committee of the Academy, who used his great presence of mind and took care of this manuscript. Other materials were less lucky, like the documentation collected by the scholars of the ethnographic studies that was burned by the Germans at the

courtyard of the Poznań Society of Friends of Arts and Sciences. It was a detailed questionnaire containing ethnographic descriptions that Kolberg made use of. In October 1939 when the Germans introduced new orders in the Poznań Society of Friends of Arts and Sciences, some of Kolberg's letters, which had been lent by Maria Turczynowiczowa into the deposit of the Library, were also burnt.

*Translated by Justyna Chada*

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Danuta Pawlak is a musicologist and a researcher with the Oscar Kolberg Institute in Poznań. She was also the editor of selected volumes of *The People* by Oskar Kolberg, including *Kujawy*, *Prussian Masuria*, *Podolia*, *Music Papers*, *Folk Songs and Tunes in Piano Arrangement*. She used the manuscripts by Gustav Gizeviush to develop *Songs of Folk People from Upper Drweca.*

Agata Skrukwa is a Polish philologist and a researcher with the Oskar Kolberg Institute in Poznań. She was also the editor of selected volumes of *The People* by Oskar Kolberg, including *Oskar Kolberg's Correspondence*, *Sanockie-Krośnieńskie Region, Silesia*, *Belarus-Polesia.* She is also the author of a biography of Oscar Kolberg entitled *Oskar Kolberg 1814-1890*.

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# Belarusian Folk Energy

ALIAKSANDR MULIARCHYK

Non-commercial bands are never guaranteed an easy path to success. However, the experience of Belarusian bands playing folk music cannot be compared to their counterparts in Western Europe where governments take an active role in preserving and promoting folklore.

In music, it quite often happens that with the passage of time the more interesting bands, unlike pop groups, either put their activity on hold or evolve towards more commercial projects. The vast majority of bands that preserve their style change their attitude towards music, which starts to be a demonstration of technical skills of their members. It also happens that their music becomes very niche and thus hardly finds any recipients. In this regard, the Belarusian band called Troitsa is quite unique.

## Three people

Troitsa was formed in 1996 by Ivan Kirchuk – a man who was ahead of his times. What I am referring to is the fact that Kirchuk formed his band at the time when in Belarus, as well as throughout the former Soviet Union, "free" bands, meaning musical groups which were no longer under strict surveillance of censors and Soviet authorities, were only starting to emerge.

When Kirchuk started Troitsa, he was working as a folk music teacher in Minsk. He also produced several radio programmes about Belarusian folk music for the national radio. Additionally, Kirchuk was an activist involved in the ethnographic movement: he participated in ethnographic expeditions and created a folk group called Dziwa. His activities, without a doubt, contributed to a change in the thinking about folk music in Belarus.

The name Troitsa was not accidental. It has a double meaning: first of all it refers to a Slavic holiday, secondly it means "three people" and indeed the group

comprises of three permanent members. In its first composition, it included Dmitry Lukyanchuk (drums) and Vitaly Shkilenok (guitar) and, of course, Kirchuk himself.

## Bumpy road to success

Clearly, nowhere in the world are non-commercial bands such as Troitsa guaranteed an easy path to success. Troista's experience, however, cannot be even compared to that of any other band from Western Europe, who operate in a completely different setting. Unlike in Belarus, in countries with developed market economies that respect human rights, it is the governments that take an active role in preserving and promoting folklore. Not surprisingly, in Belarus, where the opposite takes place, Troitsa's road to success was quite bumpy.

However, the band has had its own achievements of which it can boast. Its first success was the winning of the Ustupi Dorogu contest, which enabled Troitsa to record and publish their first demo with 100 copies. Importantly, one of the demos reached Yuri Shevchuk, the leader of DDT, one of the most popular bands in the post-Soviet space. At the time when he received a copy of Troitsa's record he was in search of bands to take part in a festival called Songs for the End of the 20th Century, which was set to take place in 1997 in St Petersburg. Troitsa was invited to participate in the event. However, the musicians could not decide whether to perform or not until the very last minute, mainly because the audience was dominated by fans of DDT which does not play folk but rock music. In the end they decided to perform and Troitsa received a warm reception by many young people. After the concert, Troitsa was once again invited to Russia to participate in the Ethnic Music Festival, which was a part of the celebration of the 850th anniversary of Moscow.

> Troitsa practically never played in Belarus, where state policy discouraged the development of folk bands.

## In Europe yes, in Belarus no

In 1997, Troitsa went on its first tour outside the former Soviet Union. Its first destination was the Netherlands, where the musicians performed nine concerts (instead of the planned three). Those performances proved to be crucial for the band's further career. The European audience heard something completely unique. After the concerts in the Netherlands, Troitsa went to Austria, Germany, Poland, Spain, Portugal, Hungary and the Czech Republic. It was also at that time that Troitsa made its first record, entitled *Troitsa* and released on the record label Panrecords, which became very popular throughout Western Europe.

Sadly, Troitsa almost never played any concerts in Belarus, where the policy of the state can be summarised in basically one sentence: "everything that reminds the people of their nationality and freedom shall be prohibited and destroyed". The authorities succeeded in doing so. After a few months of staying in their own country, two band members opted out of further co-operation. They made this decision for an unknown reason and presented it without any explanation. Ironically, when Troista's activity was suspended, national newspapers in Belarus, previously not interested in the band's activities at all, suddenly began writing about the loss for national culture that was caused by the band's disappearance from the music scene.

"It could not be helped," said Kirchuk about Troista's dissolution as he was about to depart on a tour of Hungary, Serbia, Bosnia, Germany and Slovakia with his solo act. One of the elements of this act was a puppetry called Batlejka. In fact, this type of theatre is one of the characteristic features of Belarusian ethnic culture. Once the tour was over, Kirchuk returned to Belarus and embarked on several new projects. With financial assistance from his friends and the Dutch fans, vivid admirers of his music, his solo programme was later recorded and published.

City dwellers are the ones who are now rediscovering folk music, which in pervious centuries was passed down from one generation to another.

Kirchuk made another attempt to recreate the band. This time he invited his former students to join the project. Among them were Yuri Dmitriyev and Yuri Pavlovskog, who are members of Troitsa until today. With this new composition, the band began to play a very different kind of music. During its latest concert tours it made use of folk instruments characteristic of such countries as Vietnam, Serbia, Russia, the Netherlands and Germany. This change also shows that Troista's music did not take a commercial path. On the contrary, the band became even more unique and, consequently, more niche.

What is most important, however, is that this transformation has been very well received by the fans of folk music. The vast majority of Troitsa's fans are city dwellers who, these days, are more and more rediscovering folk music which in pervious centuries was passed down from one generation to another. Those who attend the concerts may differ in their opinions on the performance of different songs, but there is a belief that they all share, namely that this music has some sort of magic. Admittedly, they do not even need to know the language of the songs in order to understand what they are about.

With time, Kirchuk stopped writing music of the verse-and-chorus structure. In 2004, Troitsa recorded an album titled *Sem* (*Seven*). The record was first published in the Netherlands. It was not marketed in Belarus where hardly anyone can

afford to pay 30 euros for a CD. For this reason, the record was published again and sold at a lower price in Belarus. When talking about recording music outside Belarus, Kirchuk admits that the most serious problem that characterises such an endeavour is transporting musical instruments outside Belarus. Without a doubt, Troitsa' position is now well established. Many young musicians in Belarus dream of performing on the same stage with Troitsa.

## FolkRoll

FolkRoll is another band which uses elements of Belarusian and Balkan folk. The group was established in 2007 by two musicians: Pavel Ryzkov (composer and guitarist) and Nasta Niakrasava (vocals). Since 2008, the group has been performing in Poland, where it has won many awards, including the Grand Prix at the 12th New Tradition Folk Music Festival organised by Polish Radio in 2009. In 2011, Polish Radio also released the band's first record, *Vir*, which was well received both by critics and the audience. Professor Piotr Dahlig in his review of the record wrote: "this record is a panorama of modern and deepened interpretation of Belarus music folklore. A diversified collection of songs: annual ceremonial songs, lyrical songs, children songs, etc. are subjected to innovative style or, actually, it is a new creation of an amazingly diverse expression and harmonic means which are closer to the art of the 20th century compositions than to the popular ethnic revival."

The third group I would like to mention is my own personal work. The project is called the *Aleks Maj Folk project*. It involves a combination of jazz and rock inspired by traditional Belarusian music. With its cyclic guitar phrases which accompany changing harmonic sequences performed by a double bass, strong expressive percussion and Belarusian ceremonial songs performed by a charming voice, this music has found its recipients, too. The group made its debut in 2007 at a festival in Lida, Belarus, and has performed on numerous occasions both in Belarus and abroad ever since.

A few years ago, it released two records. Its 2010 album is called *Folklandia* and in 2013 it released the album *Cross Roads*, a compilation of 12 songs (one of them, from the *Kupala* series, is included in the compact disc attached to this magazine). The group is composed of the following musicians: Aleks Maj (arrangements, guitar, vocals and electronics), Janka Nemon (drums), Elen Belankina (vocals and drums) and Adam Stodolisk (double bass).

The examples of these three bands show that folk music in Belarus is currently undergoing a transformation. This phenomenon has already been subject of numerous analyses, both in academic and media circles. And clearly, while some critics disagree with the ongoing modernisation of folk music and, when talking about

music groups which opt for this direction, they use such derogatory expressions as "clown shows" (*klaunada*), many young people, based on the reading of some internet forums as well as looking at their reactions during concerts, find that this music has some kind of "mysterious energy". NEE

*Translated by Justyna Chada*

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# In Search of a Disappearing World

BOŻENA MUSZKALSKA

S. Ansky, the folklorist born in Belarus, separated himself from his traditional religious background to join the Jewish enlightenment movement, the Haskalah, in Russia. Based on a folk tale about the *dybbuk*, Ansky wrote the play *The Dybbuk, or Between Two Worlds*, which became the inspiration for two Polish films: *The Dybbuk* and *Austeria*. It is also probably the only piece of work created by a representative of the Jewish community from Eastern Europe which received such high acclaim throughout the world.

The Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine can boast of having one of the largest collections of recorded Jewish folk music in the world. The collection is a unique relic of traditional Ashkenazi Jewish music from the turn of the 20th century. It includes material gathered in Ukraine and Belarus during a folklore expedition in 1911-1914, which was organised by the renowned St Petersburg author and folklore researcher S. Ansky. These materials include a recording of a folk tale about the *dybbuk*, a spirit with the soul of a dead person who possesses living people. The tale was the basis for many plays, films and musical compositions. Based on this folk tale, Ansky himself wrote the play *The Dybbuk, or Between Two Worlds*, which later became the inspiration for two well-known Polish films: *The Dybbuk* (1937) and *Austeria* (1982).

## Salvage ethnography

S. Ansky, the folklorist who was born in Belarus, separated himself from his traditional religious background to join the Jewish enlightenment movement, the Haskalah, in Russia. He shared his attitudes with Russian ethnographers who, even

more than elsewhere in the world, directed their efforts towards "salvage", hoping to record the endangered folk cultures in order to preserve them. He perceived himself as a mediator between cultures, who could preserve and interpret Jewish folkloric heritage for assimilated Jews, non-Jews and scholars. In his play *The Dybbuk, or Between Two Worlds* Ansky both dramatised the recorded folk tale and turned it into a parable for the whole tragic fate of Eastern European Jews, caught "between two worlds" of religious tradition and secular modernity. Ansky considered the biblical and a Hasidic legacy to be the most important parts of traditional Jewish culture.

The play was an ideal material to be turned into a film due to its mysteriousness and the exotic nature of the Hasidic world as presented in the script. The first of the mentioned films, *The Dybbuk* is the work of a Jewish director Michał Waszyński, while the second film was directed by a Pole – Jerzy Kawalerowicz.

The stylistically diverse music of *The Dybbuk* wonderfully depicts the characteristics of the different social groups of the time.

Both films represent a mainstream of ethnography referred to as "salvage ethnography", which is intended to portray the old way of communal life. Representatives of this mainstream assume that the people who are the heroes of their work are essentially mute and moribund, in need of preservation and redemption. The events represent not so much the current, but rather the past way of life of the described culture members, of its "former majesty".

The film *The Dybbuk* was shot mainly at Feniks film studios in Warsaw, employing its best technicians as well as the very best Yiddish actors and musical talents such as Gershon Sirota, the lead cantor in the Tłomacki Synagogue in Warsaw, and Leon Liebgold starring as a Nisn, who sings *The Song of Songs*. The music for the film was composed by Hanoch Kahn and the choreographer was Judith Berg. The location scenes were shot in Kazimierz Dolny, a popular *shtetl* (a Yiddish name for small town in Central and Eastern Europe with a large Jewish population – editor's note) for filming Yiddish movies in Poland. The filmmakers continued the ethnographic project that Ansky began, depicting and mourning a Jewish way of life that they perceived as dying. The scenes filmed during the rituals, singing of prayers, *niguns*, Yiddish songs and Jewish dances were used mostly to reconstruct the traditional Jewish culture.

In the film, the *dybbuk* is the spirit of a dead young man, Channon, who after his marriage to his beloved Lea had been thwarted, entered her body. Channon was a poor Talmudic student while Lea was a wealthy man's daughter. They were in love, but her father, Sender, arranged a match with a wealthy man's son. In a

desperate effort to gain the riches that would make him acceptable to Lea's father, Channon began to study the Kabbalah. His Kabbalistic activities caused his death. Following a prenuptial tradition, before the wedding, Lea visits her mother's grave to invite her presence under the marriage canopy and she also mourns for Channon at his grave. As the bridegroom places the veil over her face, Channon's spirit takes possession of her body. When Rabbi Azrael expels him through exorcism, Lea becomes empty and is unable to sustain her life. She dies, following Channon into death to be united with him eternally.

## A contrasting spectacle

The music for the film, composed by Henoch Kohn, is stylistically diverse and includes passages akin to works of non-Jewish composers. As such, it wonderfully depicts the characteristics of the different social groups: the Hasids close to the tzadik, the Talmudic Jews, the rich, the simple craftsmen and the poor. There are two underlying themes in the motion picture: the Hasidic *nigun* and the melody to the *Shir Hashirim* (*The Song of Songs*).

*The Dybbuk* is deliberately an artistic representation of Jewish folk.

The *nigun*, with its use of meaningless syllables, is sung for the first time at the beginning of the film by the tzadik's followers seated around him accompanied by a typical Jewish musical group consisting of a violin, a clarinet and a basso. As the film continues, the initial motif is echoed in the background with music played by a symphonic orchestra. The *nigun* also provides the accompaniment to the dance performed by Hasids in one of the key scenes of the film.

The psalm melody of the *Shir Hashirim* contrasts with the melody of the *nigun*. At the beginning, it is sung by Channon's father, fulfilling the tzadik's request, who is enjoying the surrounding nature while listening to the song together with a group of followers. The significance of the song in that moment is obviously related to the traditional interpretation of the psalm as a love song that Jews sing for God. Its erotic language was used by mystical poets and writers in order to reach "a higher level of religiousness". Towards the end of the film, Channon sings the same song while Lea is visiting the synagogue. Singing it for God, he expresses his love to her. Finally, Lea turns to her dead beloved with the words of the same song. While the *nigun* also performs the role of interface with the gloomy and terrible netherworld, the psalm melody is combined with love among people and God and between Lea and Channon, whose love will only bring them together after their death.

Besides the *nigun*, folk melodies of Hasidic provenance as well as Yiddish songs are also heard in the film. The synagogue scenes are accompanied by cantillations

of prayer and masterfully sung by Gershon Sirota, a cantor at the Reform Synagogue in Warsaw. The cantor's singing is attended by a mixed choir whose presence is a symbol of Reform Judaism.

The dynamic dance scenes hold an important place in the film *The Dybbuk*. Several dance scenes appear during the wedding. In accordance with local customs, Lea has to dance with the beggars, who have a separate reception. The beggars' dance appears to establish a communication between the young bride and the supernatural forces that will possess her. Later is the Dance of Death, which is one of the most moving scenes in the whole film. It is presaged by the voice of a bard and later some ghosts from the graveyard begin to dance around Lea. She eventually falls into the arms of Death, whose face seems to be the face of her beloved late Channon. The choreographer of the film, Judith Berg, who also played the role of Death in the movie, confessed that the creation of this scene had been based on memories of her grandmother and a *toytntants* danced during Jewish weddings. At the end of the sequence, the camera moves from the wild, grotesque ghost dance towards the static dance of rich Jewish women inside the home. That whole scene creates a logical context for the tragic love affair of a wealthy girl and a poor student. The wedding dances are accompanied by a symphonic orchestra, highlighting the tragedy and grotesqueness of the situation, consolidating the contrasting spectacle of the white-dressed Lea, the poor, the ghosts and the wealthy women.

The film *Austeria* can be seen as an ethnographic project depicting a dying Jewish way of life in Galicia in the early 20th century.

Regardless of the fact that the film brings a lot of ethnographic information, it is deliberately an artistic representation of Jewish folk culture. It is as much an ethnographic recreation as it is an artistic creation.

## Jewish life in Galicia

The film *Austeria,* created nearly half a century after *The Dybbuk,* refers to Ansky's play via the book by the Jewish author, Julian Stryjkowski, which became the basis for the screenplay. The book is a haunting depiction of the Jewish life in Galicia at the beginning of the 20th century, the Jewish world of the author's childhood. Similarly to Ansky, Stryjkowski feels as if he is a mediator between a traditional culture that he describes and the audience. Stryjkowski and director Jerzy Kawalerowicz develop Ansky's ethnographic project to depict and to mourn a Jewish way of life that they perceived as dying, which lets us place both in the "salvage ethnography" trend.

The film takes place on the Austrian part of Galicia during the first days of the First World War. A group of Hasids arrives at an inn owned by a Jew named Tag, looking for shelter in defiance of the Austro-Hungarian Hussars and Russian Cossacks fighting against one another. Paradoxically, as opposed to the local Jews, the Hasids act as if they were not concerned about the danger. With their loud behaviour, singing and dancing they even seem to wish to attract the enemy's attention. They simply ignore the presence of the slain Asia's corpse being mourned over by her fiancé in Tag's home. The infantile tzadik does not understand the risks and the other Hasids follow him blindly.

Although the story told in *Austeria* lacks the mysticism of *The Dybbuk*, both films are interrelated through a similar plot as well as aesthetic elements, among which the most important are music and dance scenes carefully shaped to represent a decaying culture. Comparably to Henoch Kohn, Leopold Kozłowski, the composer of the soundtrack music for *Austeria*, derived material from traditional Jewish melodies, which is an important way of characterising the Hasids' arrival to the village. The Hasids perform *niguns*, without lyrics, to the same melody they dance to in order to achieve a state of euphoria and move closer to God. The assimilated Jews' singing consists mainly of cantillations and psalms sung in the synagogue. The film ends with a virtuosic adaptation of the morning prayer *Elohai Neshuma* rendered by Alexander Kovac, played from a recording issued by Supraphon Music.

## Folkloristic paradigm

The stylisation of the religious singing in *Austeria* is more distinctive than in *The Dybbuk* as we experience here a sort of a "secondary borrowing". As the filmmakers of *Austeria* admit, this main source of inspiration for them was *The Dybbuk*. With its art direction and costumes, lighting, music and dance, as well as the use of death, *Austeria* recycles the cinematic vocabulary of *The Dybbuk*. The scenes with the dancing Hasids in *Austeria* in particular came into being not on the basis of the earlier memories or self-experience, but on the basis of the images created by Ansky and Waszyński. The first one not only shows the visual similarity to analogous scenes in *The Dybbuk,* but apart from that, a quote of music was introduced here. The melody sung during the Hasids' dance in *Austeria* is the same *nigun* from *The Dybbuk*. In the final scene, as in *The Dybbuk*, the dance is linked to the death of the dancers. Interwoven with another *nigun* are the verses from the Yom Kippur liturgy sung by a local cantor. Men absorbed with singing and dancing in honour of God jump into the river, where they die from bullets. Opposed to the scenes presenting dancing Hasids is a scene with the baroness dancing to the *Waves of the Danube* at a ball in Vienna, which highlights the Hasids' "otherness" even more.

While the Hasids are ugly, the baroness and the rest of the dancers are beautiful; while the Hasids' dance ends in death, the dance performed by the baroness leads her to the emperor's indulgence.

*The Dybbuk* and *Austeria* are only two examples of the extremely numerous artistic treatments of the *dybbuk* theme which took place in both Jewish and non-Jewish languages. Many of the productions followed the folkloristic paradigm of the foundational play by S. Ansky. Others have used this iconic work as a springboard for more radical enterprises. In fact, Ansky's play became probably the only piece of work created by a representative of the Jewish community from Eastern Europe which received such a great response from Jews and non-Jews throughout the world. NEE

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# Songs of Lutherans from Cieszyn Silesia

ARLETA NAWROCKA-WYSOCKA

The role of singing in the Lutheran communities of Cieszyn Silesia dates back hundreds of years. This singing tradition, while fading since before the Second World War, provides insight into the influence of the folk life on the faithful and its devotion to song.

Cieszyn Silesia is an area which, because of its complex history, can be treated as a cultural borderland. It is a place where Czech, German and Polish influences collided. Lutheranism has always played a dominant role there as it was supported by the Piast dukes and later strengthened and deepened during the persecutions and repressions of the Habsburg rule. It was not, however, until the 19th century when, in the aftermath of the 1848 Spring of Nations, Lutheranism became an impulse for the Cieszyn Protestants to manifest their Polish identity.

The fate of the Protestants living in Cieszyn Silesia was at first combined with the fate of the inhabitants of Silesia as a whole. However, in 1763, when the region was divided, the paths of different provinces also diverged. Lower Silesia and a part of Upper Silesia were incorporated into Prussia, whereas the Cieszyńskie province remained in the hands of the Austrian monarchs, who expressed a negative attitude towards Protestantism. For that reason, the phenomenon described by historians as "the church of the laity", that is worship outside the Church institution and official structures, was preserved in Cieszyn Silesia for much longer.

## Great attachment

The first glimmers of religious tolerance appeared in 1709 when the building of six "grace" churches was allowed, including the famous Jesus Church in Cieszyn. An expression of further concessions was *The Patent of Toleration* issued in 1781 by Emperor Joseph II, permitting independent parishes in communities where the number of faithful reached 500 persons or 100 families. However, the real freedom of religion was granted with the *Protestant Patent* of 1861.

The exceptional position of Lutheranism in this region was decided to a great extent by an unofficial folk trend that shaped and strengthened through the publishing of religious papers, especially hymn books, that greatly influenced the local communities. During services conducted in Polish, the *Cithara Sanctorum* by Jerzy Trzanowski (Jiří Třanovský), a Czech hymn book, was used. It was later gradually replaced with a Polish hymn book by Jerzy Heczko published in 1865. Historical sources suggest that Lutherans from Cieszyn Silesia had a very emotional attitude towards their hymn books. Not surprisingly, subsequent attempts to change the repertoire were not welcomed. For example, records of the congregation in Wisła show that Heczko's hymn book, although published in 1865, was introduced into official use only in 1922. This confirms the conservatism of the parishioners as well as their great attachment to the very first collection of songs used in Cieszyn Silesia for several hundred years.

Assumedly, the tradition of church singing in the national language was established in Cieszyn Silesia only to the second half of the 19th century. However, the majority of the songbooks used at that time only contained lyrics. The only information on the tune was the textual incipit referring to the popular "note" commonly related to the lyrics. It was probably the reason why the singing of the parishioners required constant reforms: it was worsening instead of improving.

The exceptional position of Lutheranism in this region was decided to a great extent by an unofficial folk trend through the publishing of religious hymns.

Despite undertaking conscious steps to improve the quality of church singing starting in the 1890s, there were regular reports on the worsening situation of Cieszyn's Lutheran churches. More and more comments concerning the neglected signing in congregations were being posted in articles printed in church magazines. One of the reasons explaining this situation was the fact that the custom of singing at home was waning while another reason was the lack of appropriate religious education in state schools. The most serious discussion on the quality of singing was triggered by a lecture by Andrzej Hlawiczka, a teacher from Ustroń. In his lecture at a meeting of The People's Evangelical Education Society held in 1898, Hlawiczka stated that church singing in the Cieszyńskie province could not be considered exemplary since "our chants are sung too slowly and lengthily ... people shout too much ... songs are always performed monotonously."

Hlawiczka's lecture could be judged as ground-breaking, as it triggered a serious discussion on church singing which took place in the Evangelical press for several years. Organists and teachers confirmed the professor's observations in a letter sent to the editor of the *People's Friend* in 1901 where they firmly criticised the singing

of the parishioners: "No one is going to deny that in our congregations, especially in Cieszyn, chants are sung so slowly, lengthily, and loudly; that the tunes are misplaced as one tone falls onto the other; some parts are sung differently, even differently from the arranged chants of Kluz, a brilliant organist." All hymns with a pattern that differed from the original records were described as "spoiled with common changes" and thoughtless organists, who included folk changes in the musical notes, were blamed. The musical level of church singing frequently worried the church authorities, who initiated questionnaires and registers addressing practices of singing particular songs.

## Enriching the repertoire

Following the First World War, a new reality was established in the Church of Cieszyn Silesia as it became a part of the Evangelical Church of Augsburg Confession in the Republic of Poland. Once again, there were calls for reform in church singing. This time, however, the authors lobbied for a reform focused more on an analysis of the repertoire. They criticised the hymn books and opted for the creation of a new songbook. They called for introducing more rhythmical tunes, boosting the song pace as well as for establishing church choirs that would get the congregation acquainted with the perfectly practised hymns.

The reason for the lengthy pace of church singing was perceived in its strict dependence on the accompanying organ music as well as on the skills of the organists themselves which, unfortunately, were not valued very highly. Another impeding factor was the outdated organs which required enormous physical strength and fitness. Improvement was seen in establishing church choirs (especially youth ones), getting the parishioners acquainted with artistic religious music through organising concerts as well as in enriching the song repertoire during various meetings (Bible studies, Christmas parties, etc.). Choral music for the service was proposed to be introduced slowly and calmly so as not to discourage the older and more conservative parishioners from participating in the service. Even despite this progress, the religious magazines published at that time confirm that the initial phase of the choral singing was very controversial both among the congregation members and the clergymen themselves.

The performers believed that some songs had incredible power that could save lives or bring comfort in times of crisis.

Apart from religious singing in church, Lutherans from Cieszyn Silesia also cultivated the habit of religious home singing. Unfortunately, there is very little data regarding this practice. Overall, we know very little about the repertoire, singing circumstances or what the performance looked like. This gap of knowledge

may still be filled with field work and research of records. Hence, from 2006 to 2008 I conducted my own research among the parishioners of the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Cieszyn Silesia. The idea was to register a traditional religious repertoire as it was taught at family homes and remembered by the performers from childhood. The talks and recordings took place in Wisła, Ustroń, Goleszów, Cisownica, and Istebna. The participants were Lutherans from the pre-war generation or born right after the war. The meetings took place in the homes and most often in a very intimate circle (of family and close friends). In Wisła, where the traditions are strongly cultivated, four active vocal groups were recorded (Czernianie, Stejizbianki, Uścieńkowianie and Wańcy).

Religious songs, in local dialect known as *pieśniczki z kancenoła,* are something special for the older performers from the area of Wisła, Ustroń, Istebna, and Koniaków. These songs allow them to recall images from the past, acting as collective family prayers and remembering loved ones who are already gone. They used to be sung almost in any daily situation, including, for instance, preparing breakfast, cleaning, sweeping or tending cows. Most often, however, they were performed during the celebrations of home services on Sundays when participation in the church service was not possible. All family members, including children, had to participate in the Sunday service. This tradition was cultivated in villages which lacked their own church and people had to walk long distances to attend services in a different village or town. The home worship was also celebrated by the elderly and the sick.

The earliest songs performed by Silesian Lutherans were clearly under the influence of Czech religious hymns.

## Deeply personal

Another characteristic practice cultivated by Cieszyn Lutherans was a daily personal prayer. It consisted of morning and evening singing. The lyrics of these songs were of a very personal character and almost unfit for group performance. Respondents in the research project always described them as deep prayers, although many of them were written in a totally outdated language. In some cases they were very naturalistic, while at times full of symbols and metaphors. They originated in the Baroque era, but there were also some earlier songs. They use a dichotomy of lightness, daylight, sunshine-darkness, night and shadow. In some lyrics of the evening songs there are motifs of death, sin and evil. This is because sleep is treated as a slow death. These songs, which today are almost non-existent, made their performers feel very emotional, reminded them of their childhood years and the atmosphere of the family home.

Photo courtesy of Maria Baliszewska

Piotr Majerczyk plays traditional bagpipes.

Photo of Janina Chmiel and her granddaughter from Wólka Ratajska, courtesy of Maria Baliszewska

The struggle for passing down traditional music to the youth has been taking place since the beginning of the Festival of Folk Bands and Singers in Kazimierz Dolny, Poland.


Photo: Hons084 (CC) commons.wikimedia.org

The first glimmers of religious tolerance in Poland appeared in 1709 when the building of six "grace" churches was allowed, including the famous Jesus Church in Cieszyn.

In the repertoire of the Cieszyn Lutherans there were also prayer songs, which were performed at different times of the day and at important moments in people's lives. In addition, there were instructive songs like the one about drinking, which was often sung by wives to their husbands. The performers believed that some songs had incredible power that could save lives or bring comfort in times of crisis. Such features were first of all attributed to the song from the Trzanowski's hymn book which was titled *Pan Bóg jest mą siłą i obroną miłą* (*The Lord is my strength and my defence*). It was sung in the moments of fear or played on wooden horns (*trembitas*) during official celebrations.

Religious songs were also performed during weddings and funerals. The most popular wedding tune was the Silesian version of the song *Kto się w opiekę* (*He that dwelth in the aid*). The funeral repertoire allowed for more freedom of selection as the person who was responsible for keeping the watch by the deceased was the so-called *czytok* (the one who reads) or *śpiwok* (the one who sings). It was this person who, for three nights until the funeral, or only on the day of the funeral, chanted the songs selected from the enormous hymn book.

The earliest songs performed by Silesian Lutherans were clearly under the influence of the Czech religious hymns. These are primarily Christmas songs which had appeared in the Polish Protestant hymn books long before Trzanowski's hymn book was printed. They have a slightly different textual version but originate from a common source: a 16th century Czech hymn book, while the 17th century German poems were often used for these morning and evening songs.

## Advent and Christmas Songs

The tunes for the lyrics of Advent and Christmas songs are among the oldest tunes sung by Cieszyn Lutherans. They are chants recorded in 16th century cantionals of Czech origin. They constitute the basis of numerous European hymn books, later passed on by other songbooks. They accompanied Christmas Eve dinner which, thanks to the epic Advent songs and choral stories of the birth of Jesus, became sacred songs. Hence, the celebration of Christmas was experienced in the mood of reflection and reverie rather than carefree joy. My interviewees confirmed that the old Christmas and Advent songs were also performed by children carolling on Christmas Eve. Adults also carolled on Christmas Day. A unique phenomenon found only in that region was the singing of old table songs before and after the Christmas Eve dinner. This custom distinguished the community of Cieszyn Silesia Lutherans not only from their Catholic neighbours, but also from Lutherans in the other parts of the country. This custom was neither practised in the Mazuria region (also inhabited by Protestants) nor was it known in the other parts of Upper Silesia.

Almost all of the old songs were eliminated from the church liturgy due to their coarse tone system as well as archaic lyrics. The singers I talked to admitted that those songs had also gradually been ousted from home use starting in the 1960s when the 17th and 18th- century Polish Christmas carols, taken from the Catholic repertoire, gained popularity. Nowadays, these epic songs are performed in very few houses and, similarly to the old table songs, remain more of a memory from the past and a link to the childhood days. Their style and melody predestine them for group performance; hence they are often sung during Christmas carol concerts.

Undoubtedly, the old style of singing religious songs was significantly different from what we are used to today. This can be illustrated by the example of a church in Wisła where songs used to be performed at a very slow pace and male singing was very loud and ornamental. The organists' reminiscences seem to confirm the exceptional character of such slow singing, whereas a diversified style of home singing and singing during the service is explained in the following way: "the different singing style is caused by the fact that at home a particular tune was given different rhythmicity. In church every sound was sung in the same length as the organs ... It was not an easy way to sing. At home people would sing freely and lightly."

Along with the change in the pace of life, we can observe a disappearance of the traditional repertoire, which is gradually falling into decline. Lutherans in Cieszyn Silesia find time for their morning and evening prayers less and less frequently, while the traditional table and Advent songs seem so sad that they are eagerly replaced with more joyful Christmas carols. The process of the fading of a traditional *pieśniczka z kancenoła* in Lutheran circles is caused by the dynamic changes in musical taste and the changing needs of the people responsible for church singing and the faithful themselves.

Newer songs, melodious and easier to sing by the faithful, are gaining popularity. A turning point for the Polish Evangelical Church of Augsburg Confession might be the moment of publishing a new Evangelical Songbook. And indeed, the new songbook which has been used since 2002 by Evangelical Churches of Augsburg Confession, the Polish Reformed Church and in Evangelical Churches of Augsburg Confession in the Czech Republic, has become a reflection of the dynamic changes in musical taste and the needs of this community. NEE

*Translated by Justyna Chada*

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# The Customs and Symbols of Carolling

GUSTAW JUZALA

Among the different genres of Slavic and Baltic folklore that have been preserved until today are the well-wishing carols, songs that are not of a Christian character but are a regularly repeated magical practice. Their texts demonstrate extraordinary durability and persistence: the first ones were written down in Poland in the 16th century and their variations can still be found in contemporary records.

In Poland, similarly to other countries, the first association that people have when they hear the word carol is with a religious Christmas song. The history of the Polish word for a carol, *kolęda,* however, is complicated. In fact, the Old Polish term *kolęda* was understood exclusively etymologically as "a gift", "a donation", or "a tribute" paid during the New Year's period. It was used this way by leading Polish poets Jan Kochanowski, Adam Mickiewicz and Juliusz Słowacki. Hence, from the etymological point of view the correct term is New Year's carol, *kolęda życzeniowa* (or well-wishing carol), which is a form of sung wishes. Since the 16th century, these well-wishing carols have also become literary carols, original dedications for their patrons. It was not until 1843, when a Polish priest named Michał Mioduszewski connected the word *kolęda* with Christmas, settling its name permanently in the Polish language.

## Sellers of happiness

In many different European regions, various "sellers of happiness" dressed in costumes visit homesteads. They perform wishing texts, which are accompanied by specific behaviour and trinkets associated with the most important annual

ceremonies such as Christmas, New Year's Day, Twelfth-night, the Great Week, Easter, Pentecost, Ascension Day and Corpus Christi. In Hungary, carol singers also perform during the annual pig slaughter while in the Balkans during the ceremonial call for rain. In return for a gift, these performers of wishing songs are commonly encountered at weddings, less often at funerals (the Hutsul region, Moldova, Transylvania) and occasionally at christenings.

The texts of well-wishing songs are distinguished not only because of their proper function; they also have a characteristic structure with four elements: the invocation to the hosts (usually sung beneath a window) and a request for permission to sing; singing for particular family members; a request for gifts; and, finally, the wishes. Wishing-incantation is implicitly expressed in the form of wishes that came true and explicitly in the expressions ending the carol, which are often separate songs. In the carols directed at the host and hostess they speak of full barns, saints working in the farmers' fields, a good harvest, the reproduction of farm animals, etc. The singing about these desirable events in the perfect aspect allows for the enchanting of the harvest. These two ways of expressing wishes constitute an inseparable whole in the process of carolling.

In the Polish tradition, a carol was not a Christmas song, but a New Year song with a magical character.

The term *kolęda*, currently the name for a Christmas and New Year song, takes its origin in the Latin word *calendae*, which means the first day of the month in the Julian Calendar. That is why, the Latin term *calendae*, which explicitly meant "the words that are to be announced", referred mostly to the first days of a new year – the time when public announcements for the oncoming months were made, and people exchanged gifts and wishes. In the Polish tradition, a *kolęda* was also not a Christmas song, but only a New Year song with a magical character. Hence, the wishing carols, often simply called New Year's carols, are rooted in the pre-Christian traditions.

## A universal custom

Petru Caraman, a Romanian folklorist, in his monumental work on Christmas carolling by the Slavs and Romanians wrote: "Christmas and New Year carolling is a custom deeply rooted throughout Europe and beyond; it can be seen everywhere where European colonists settled. Seemingly, it is one of the customs deprived of a country of origin; hence it is universal and no modern nation observing this tradition can claim its origin. On the surface, carolling is of a Christian nature as it is only encountered among the Christian nations. Moreover, it is performed during and in relation to one of the greatest holiday seasons, Christmas."

The seeds which gave rise to the enormous richness of carols were undoubtedly the wishes offered at the beginning of the new period. Different songs were performed for the host, others for the hostess, the young man or the maiden. As a matter of fact, carols represent a whole range of texts idealising the farmers' life. When the addressee is the host, the songs speak of prosperity in the field and in the barn; if it is the hostess, they speak of prosperity in the house, the vegetable garden and with the domestic fowl. In the carols designated for the youth, the wishes focus on happy love, marriage and beauty. Jan Stanislaw Bystroń, a Polish ethnographer, noted two important pagan holidays celebrated then: an agrarian holiday aimed at maintaining vegetation during the winter season and All Soul's Day aimed at contacting the souls of the dead. The similarity between well-wishing carols of various nations was noticed already in the 1880s. At that time, Alexander Wesolovsky published a study of Romanian, Slavic and Greek carols. His findings became an inspiration for another study carried out by Caraman, who scrupulously put together the impressive material of carols of all Slavic nations along with those of the Romanians and the Greeks. The motif of bestowing gifts on carol singers for the wishes is a central point of the custom of carol singing. A call to give gifts to the religious individuals performing the song, so that the addressees themselves could receive even more, is a popular motif in verbal forms of carol singers across the area inhibited by the Slavs and the Balts. A mutual exchange of gifts (a well-wishing song for food) between the hosts and carol singers seems to confirm that carol singers come for food and pay back with wishes of prosperity and well-being. In this situation, threats and curses directed towards the hosts who fail to fulfil their ceremonial obligations are believed to be an adequate reaction.

Singing carols aimed at ensuring the flourishing of plants, cattle fertility, good health and marriage.

## Words as gifts

In folklore, words are equivalent to objects and perceived as gifts. In traditional cultures, gifts required reciprocity. The gift could not be rejected, as this would be an insult. An exchange of gifts was hence not only seen as an act of politeness but also as one of the basic rules of coexistence. In the gift hierarchy, as we learn from our analysis of the carols, the words occupy a significant position. In this sense, the customary payment for the carol (in the form of food, drink or money) is a returned gift (invoked with the words).

The well-wishing element contributed to the development of various types of wishing motifs addressing all of the most important economic and family needs.

Thus, there are phrases praising all family members being addressed by the carols (the host, the hostess, their son, the maiden and the grandmother), greeting texts, holiday phrases and other expressions of blessing. From the genetic point of view, the range of household carols is more closely related to the magical sense of carolling. In this group, we find common motifs throughout the Baltic and Slavic area such as wishes of good harvest and cattle reproduction. These elements are most visible in the Easter carols since they were not as Christianised as the well-wishing songs of the Christmas season.

Singing carols as magical songs aims at ensuring the rich flourishing of plants, cattle fertility, good health and marriage. Numerous folklorists reconstructed the magical genesis of carolling as a comeback of the souls from the other world. These souls descend to human settlements in order to receive from people special ritual food as a gift. This maintains the thesis of the connection between All Souls' Day and the oldest forms of carolling. Death and life constitute an unbreakable circle. In Poland, death is related to various types of carolling, like the one that is performed in the spring during the drowning of the effigy of Marzanna (a Slavic goddess associated with seasonal agrarian rites based on the idea of death and rebirth of nature – editor's note). This custom is also called "Remembrance of Drowning Death" as it takes its origin in a procession with the effigy of Marzanna, which used to begin at the house where someone had recently died. In the afternoon, from the same house, there would be another procession of the youth. This time, the youngsters would sing and carry a decorated Christmas tree on a high pole. For this, they also would receive some gifts.

## Positive magic

Carolling was believed to help achieve social values such as maintaining the life and continuity of the group. It is, therefore, an example of positive magic aimed at multiplying possessions, ensuring good health, and prosperity at work and in family matters. It also protects people from evil forces and bad phenomena. Wishes, words addressed to another person, are a gift.

Annual moments of passage like Christmas or Easter were connected to the daily cycles like sunrise and sunset or noon and midnight, which also possessed magical powers. The joining of the two magical periods would strengthen the power of the sung wishes. For a group of people singing wishes, the place and the time of performance are characterised by an accumulation of the following features. First of all, the group consists of single men. They are no longer children, but they also do not have families of their own. In addition, despite their potential reproductive abilities, they still do not belong to the group whose sexuality is officially approved

and sanctioned. Second, carolling is done at night, from the dusk of Easter Sunday till the dawn of Easter Monday. This is a period of special activity of demons and ghosts, a time that appeals to the darkness preceding the creation of the orderly world, but it is also the best time to undertake magical activities such as the ceremonial recreation of the world and placing wishes. The fact that they come at night suggests that carollers are perceived as creatures from another world. Third, springtime carollers performed songs accompanied by instruments traditionally associated with the underground: bagpipes and the violin are linked with the devil while the Lithuanian *kanklės* is associated with death. Fourth, the springtime carollers would knock on the window, sing the carols by the window and receive gifts through the window.

The window was in fact treated as a border place. It can be seen in numerous ceremonies of passage. In Lithuania on Christmas Eve, food is left for the dead by the window, which is treated as a contact place with the afterlife. Before the christening ceremony, the child is taken out of the house through the window and brought back home also through the window until a chicken is killed on the threshold of the house, which is treated as an offering to the ancestors. Only then can the child be brought in and out of the house through the door. Newlyweds would also enter the house through the window in order to trick evil forces.

Carols were believed to have healing and magical powers when adequately sung.

Fifth, the springtime carol singers are often presented in the songs as "outsiders", "guests", "road people", those who come from "beyond the bridge". They are believed to have a peculiar status related to the crossing of the border, abilities to mediate between "this and the other world". They are sent by God, who tells them where to go and who to visit with wishes. Similarly to healers, they can give blessings in God's name as they perform a special song.

## Coexistence with the universe

The group of carollers is seen as mediators on many different levels: between places in space, sections of time, sequences of life and between "this world and the next". Mediation requires intermediate actions and means reducing the tension that occur while moving between a different place or time. Thus, the place, time, instruments and age of the performers are all important elements of the ceremony of carolling. Every feature of carolling has the ability to strengthen the power of the wishes due to the collection and intensification of the mediation. Guests from the other world, connected with the sphere of death, also play a significant role in the beliefs related to fertility.

In old cultures, death as a state of disintegration of forms and indulging in amorphous chaos was the essential phase in the cycle of change to which the universe was subject. A human being must undergo the same rhythm of transformations as his bodily and social status change over time. The physical death was therefore the beginning of another change and passing into a different plane of existence. In different mythologies, the gods of the underworld are simultaneously the gods of vegetation and fertility. This transfer from death to life is especially connected with spring, the season when the revitalisation of the universe occurs and the lost order is restored.

Carolling, as everything else that is connected with death, has healing and magical characteristics when adequately used. The creatures coming from the other world, linked with demoralisation and disintegration, appeal the order of the afterlife, the subterranean world which is free from the destructive activity of time. In the land of the afterlife, there are no diseases, ageing or dying. Exchanging gifts is, in this case, symbolic in nature. In the folk perception of the world, humans coexist with the universe and in certain situations this balance is disturbed. Therefore, during the dramatic periods of passage, it is necessary to undertake such ceremonial actions that will rebuild the order in a ritualistic way. This takes place, among other things, thanks to the ceremony of carolling. NEE

*Translated by Justyna Chada*

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# Masters of Polish Folk

MARIA BALISZEWSKA

Each year the Polish town of Kazimierz Dolny becomes a place where people can listen to authentic traditional music. Thanks to the Festival of Folk Bands and Singers, Polish folk music is alive and beginning to pass into the hands of the next generation of performers and enthusiasts.

Kazimierz Dolny is a charming small town situated on the banks of the Vistula River, 140 kilometres from Warsaw. Established in the Middle Ages, it is a town with a long history. In the 14th century Polish King Kazimierz Wielki (the Great) built a fortified castle there, whose ruins tower above the town even today. The city is also regarded as a pearl of Renaissance architecture with its tenement houses adorned with exquisite, lace-like attics encircling the main Market Square. There are also several 16th century churches and a parish located just by the Market Square, a monastery and a Franciscan church. Many other unique places and details are reminiscent of times long past, such as the well in the middle of the Market Square or the Three Crosses' Mountain, whose crosses were erected to commemorate the 17th century plague. A trip to the peak of the mountain and the castle ruins provides a stunning view over the Vistula River, the green valleys as well as beautiful gorges. Before the Second World War, the city was inhabited by a rather large Jewish community; there still is a synagogue near the Market Square.

## A new folk setting

During the summer, this small town turns into the capital of Polish traditional music. In the last days of June, the Festival of Folk Bands and Singers has been taking place there for the last 47 years. Both the place and the festival are exceptional events since traditional music in Poland is alive and well, despite the changing 20th century context when civilisational changes occurred in a large number of villages, with little regard to folk culture. This change was very visible in the late

1960s and it was then when the question about the survival and development of folk music began to be asked by both the academic community and enthusiasts of folk culture. Concerns were voiced over what music would survive and what would possibly fall into oblivion.

Jadwiga Sobieska, a musicologist and researcher, became the initiator of the festival in Kazimierz Dolny. She was also known as the creator of the national Folklore Collection Initiative which she launched together with her husband, Marian Sobieski, after having lost all of their collections during the Second World War and the 1944 Warsaw Uprising. Sobieska understood that with the disappearance of the natural context of folk music, a new setting had to be created where it could be sung, danced and played and where artists, soloists and musical groups would have an opportunity, even if only once a year, to play music, socialise and compete with each other.

In the 1950s in a Polish village, one could still listen to and document authentic 19th century folk music.

It is worth mentioning here that unlike classical music, which uses musical notes and has a formal structure as well as a division into composers, performers and listeners, folk music was passed down from generation to generation, relying on the oral tradition. It was also anonymous as the names of the artists are unknown. Folk music was based on approximately 20 different phenomena: customs and rituals, beliefs and superstitions, ceremonial poetry, wedding customs and songs, military songs, fortune telling and spells, proverbs, riddles, epic songs, religious poems, fairy tales, folk shows, lyrical songs, group singing and common songs. The most important feature of the 19th century folk music was its utilitarian function. It was assigned to different ceremonies as there was an inseparable connection between song genre and the specific custom, often a symbolic or even magical function. It was also a form of entertainment and a binding force for the small community.

"Every village has a different song." This phrase by Oskar Kolberg illustrates the community's identity building which took place through songs and music even in the smallest villages. Indeed, in rural areas, people attributed magical powers to certain songs or dances. Some were thought to bring good luck to the newlyweds while others were to guarantee a good harvest. Some songs appealed to Divine Providence or were a way of expressing the cult of the Virgin Mary. Many songs or instrumental melodies from the past have survived in the memory of village people. Not that long ago, we could even hear them in Kazimierz Dolny. And that was the driving force behind the festival of folk bands and singers that was established there.

## An antidote

The changes that took place in the 20th century and which brought about modern technologies and the rapid development of mass media, as well as a higher mobility of people that characterises modern life, have all proved disastrous for folk traditions. In other words, the civilisational progress, which was desperately needed in the rural areas, has at the same time impacted the communities' culture, ceremonies, singing and fun. This process, which in Western Europe began in the first half of the 20th century, took place slightly later in Poland. Even in the 1950s in a Polish village one could still listen to and document authentic 19th century music. Bass tubes were brought down from the attic, dusted off and in a few minutes several dozen tunes and dances were recreated. Young women would still sing at wedding receptions and violinists played to their songs in various ways, just as it was described by Oskar Kolberg: "he is playing what is being sung, but putting all his soul and talent in it."

It was also in the 1950s when some negative trends that had an impact on authentic folk music and its reception by society, started to emerge. The communist authorities, despite seemingly paying a lot of attention to folk culture, ruthlessly used it for their own propaganda purposes. The most illustrative example was the establishment of folk groups like "Mazowsze" or "Śląsk". Their performances, although resembling traditional Polish music on the surface, in fact contributed to the levelling of some of its nuances and eliminating the diversity from the original. Folk music and culture were treated in an instrumental way and not as a form of artistic expression. Folk culture became a propaganda tool for the communist authorities, who treated it solely as a colourful ornament.

Kazimierz Dolny is one of the most important places in Poland where once a year people can hear traditional music from Poland's different regions.

From this perspective, the creation of the Festival of Folk Band and Singers in Kazimierz Dolny in 1967, which was intended to serve as an antidote to what the communists were doing with Polish folklore, was a ground-breaking phenomenon. In the years that followed, it became the most important place for traditional Polish folk music. It is a place where folk artists meet and where listeners and the audiences swarm in large numbers to receive their musical education. It has also served as a medium to preserve the dying folk culture in its authentic musical shape.

Each year, it gathers artists who were first selected in local competitions across Poland. In the middle of the Market Square in Kazimierz Dolny, there is a large stage near the statue of Kazimierz Wielki – the patron of the festival. On the first

and last days of the festival, performers with their instruments walk and sing in a colourful parade while being cheered on by spectators and listeners.

The official contest lasts two days. The artists are evaluated in the following categories: soloists, solo instrumentalists, folk bands (i.e. musical groups, which were once the most important performers at country weddings) and vocal groups. In addition, there is a special contest, called "big–small", which is organised for young people who have been taught by village masters and a new contest for reconstructed music. It especially seems to appeal to young urban people, who are increasingly taking an interest in traditional music, playing folk instruments with the repertoire of a particular region while using various sources, either directly from a master (if they are still around) or from written or oral records. The festival is a contest evaluated by a jury (nine judges) of experts in different fields related to folk traditions. They include musicologists, folklorists, dialectologists and musicians. The jury evaluates the artists' compliance with tradition and performance.

Old traditional songs are welcome and highly evaluated. Ceremonial, epic and religious songs and ditties are performed in the same style as they were passed down from generation to generation. In addition to the main contest, there are numerous side events, including seminars, folk art fairs and music lessons. Overall, music and art of exceptional quality are omnipresent in Kazimierz Dolny during the festival.

## True musicians

Without a doubt, Kazimierz Dolny is the most important place where once a year people can listen to authentic traditional music from Poland's different regions. Here one can enjoy it, get to know it better and learn it straight from the artists. And it is the artists themselves who are the most important in Kazimierz Dolny. They too feel proud to be a part of the festival, where they can present their local culture and, by doing so, although usually unconsciously, they take us, the spectators and listeners, back to a not-so-distant time when this music was omnipresent in the Polish countryside.

In 1973, when I had the first opportunity to listen, observe and record folk musicians, singers and instrumentalists at the festival in Kazimierz Dolny, I met a number of great artists for whom music was part of their lives; a way of expression and pride. They shared a part of themselves with the audience. They were true musicians, self-taught. They performed entire shows during the festival. However, since the official time allowed for recording the music during the festival was never enough, we would often agree to meet in their villages and continue the documentation of their works.

Here I would like to point out to some of the truly great artists. Among them were Stanisław Klejnas, a professional musician who proudly announced that he did nothing more in his life than play music at weddings and parties. When he was playing, his fingers would produce the tunes of modal *obereks* and *mazurkas* and he remembered hundreds of them. Wojciech Sowa, whose individual style of play has roots in the 19th century, was a violinist from Piątkowa who knew several hundred tunes and dances mainly from his native village located on the Dynowskie Plateau. There was also Ignacy Bednarz, a violinist and the organist in a church in Nowa Wieś whose music was an example of the great repertoire from Roztocze, a sub-region of Lubelszczyzna (eastern Poland). All of these musicians were recipients of the Tower (*Baszta*), the first prize of the festival and a reference to the castle tower above Kazimierz Dolny.

Among the male and female singers, there were mostly wedding singers who not so long ago held such positions in their villages. Enough to mention is the late Anna Malec, who was born at the beginning of the 20th century and sang the wedding songs she learnt from her grandmother. Their modal scale, narrow and ambitious melodic line, freedom of rhythm, lyrics with old-fashioned names of devices and magical herbs indicate that their origin dates back several hundred years. Worth mentioning is also Helena Goliszkowa and her impressive repertoire of ballads and children's songs and the warm voice of Maria Gumiela from Szarowola, her lullabies and the songs which were sung during the preparation of a wedding ceremonial cake as well as Wojciech Sołtys and his shepherd songs and many of the other masters of folk music.

It might happen that it will be the city dwellers, rather than country people, who will act as the next generation of folk musicians.

All of us who were given the opportunity to listen to these artists should feel grateful to have the opportunity to touch past centuries. That is why I recall those names and songs. Of course, there are many more but all are impossible to mention, since thousands of artists have performed at the festival in Kazimierz Dolny over the last 47 years, including a great number of geniuses who acted as guides to the old folk culture and rituals.

This festival, its creators and organisers, deserve credit for prolonging the life of folk music. Without this event, we might not have the opportunity to listen to songs often dating back to the Middle Ages or the tunes that might be reminiscent of the times of Chopin and his encounters with folk ensembles. In fact, the festival is now the only event of this calibre which is attended by high-class musicians and singers. I mentioned those names also because, unfortunately, there are fewer and fewer artists who, like them, are connected with the natural message and the

utilitarian function of music. They have been passing away every year and in most cases are not replaced by successors.

## Next generation of folk musicians

This struggle for passing down traditional music to the youth, the struggle for new artists and their repertoire has been taking place since the beginning of the festival. It is reflected in the festival rules, which do not allow new musical instruments (e.g. the accordion) in the contest. Instead a Polish harmonic (handmade by rural organ masters) is permitted. Wedding tunes played on the harmonics do not get distorted, as is the case with accordions. The regulations also suggest using a particular old song repertoire, especially forgotten genres, rarely performed ballads, wedding songs connected with particular parts of the ceremony, lullabies, baptism songs, funeral songs as well as many others so that they could not only be a mention in Oscar Kolberg's collections or archival recordings, but also so they could still live a natural life, even if only at the festival. The regulations determine the performance categories and encourage young artists to participate. Hence, the third generation of home-grown musicians is starting to take part in the contest. They come not only from rural but also from urban areas, especially from Wielkopolska, the bagpipe region. Thanks to the festival in Kazimierz Dolny this instrument has survived in Poland.

Rewarding the old song repertoire in the same contest also means that every year we can enjoy a diversity of musical tales from the previous centuries. In the 1970s, a category of social sing-alongs, typical for the Polish countryside, was introduced to the contest. Vocal groups consciously reproduce (from memory, documents and records) ceremonial, ballads and religious songs. Even though the collective performances lose the particular customs from a region or small town because the performance is designated for the stage, the fact that these old songs, especially ballads or funeral songs, are listened to is significant. The latest category, introduced a few years ago, is the category of reconstructed music.

Today at the festival in Kazimierz Dolny we can observe two phenomena: relics of the old folk culture represented by old musicians and groups reconstructing songs as well as instrumental music. This is restored music, one that is played from memory or records. The reconstructed music category is most popular among young urban dwellers, who want to get to know old traditional music and come face-to-face with the traditions that are still alive and present at the festival in Kazimierz. They also feel the need to come in contact with the art which is so closely related to nature, as they are aware of how important it is to maintain the continuity of culture.

The dance houses in Warsaw, Kraków and Poznań in the last couple of years have managed to encourage not only a numerous and faithful audience, but also one that understands the significance and priceless value of the art they encounter. It also includes new musicians who find truth and sincerity in traditional music. It might happen that it will be the city dwellers, rather than country people, who will continue acting as the creators of folk music and then history will come full circle as this music will return to the country. However, it might also happen that, thanks to this group of enthusiasts – the many enthusiasts of rural folk culture that I mentioned earlier– the music will not vanish completely from the country and people in rural areas will be able to identify with it once again as they have for centuries. The Festival of Folk Bands and Musicians in Kazimierz Dolny, which indeed is a unique place and a unique event, has been promoting and hopefully will continue to promote this idea for the decades to come.

*Translated by Justyna Chada*

Maria Baliszewska is a ethnomusicologist, journalist and founder of the Broadcast Centre of Folk Culture with the Polish Radio.

# OSKAR KOLBERG GUIDE


Marking the 2014 Kolberg Year, we have prepared a special multimedia application that will enable users to get to know places where this extraordinary ethnographer and folklorist worked and lived.

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The application is also a unique chance to follow Kolberg's extensive trips around the countryside, visiting Poland's top historical sites, getting to know the enthralling things he discovered about folk culture, and even glimpsing authentic publications from his time. On the way you will be treated to a captivating dose of archive folk music, courtesy of the Polish Radio and the Polish Academy of Sciences (Institute of Art).

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FIVB Volleyball Men's World Championship
1-7 September

GDAŃSK
city of freedom

Gdańsk Goldberg Festival
5-14 September



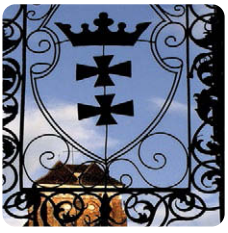




Shakespeare Festival
27 September - 5 October







Grassmania Festival
3-4 October


Transvizualia Festival
3-5 October


All About Freedom Festival
15-22 October



Jazz Jantar Festival
4 & 7-16 November

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