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CENTRAL EUROPE

New Eastern Europe

No 2(XI)/2014

Price 19 PLN (w tym 5% VAT) 10 EUR 12 USD 7 GBP

ISSN: 2083-7372

quarterly

April-June

A Tale of Three Maidans

Paweł Kowal
Maciej Wapiński

PUTIN'S POWERS

James Sherr
Piotr Żochowski
Andrei Tsygankov



ISSN 2083-7372



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Dear Reader,

Traditionally, on this page we share with you our overall interpretation of the situation in the region which, in a way, serves as the basis for editorial decisions as to which texts to include in an issue. Being a quarterly magazine we, first and foremost, focus on the processes (more than breaking news stories), point to tendencies, provide deeper commentary and try to avoid simplified interpretations of complex events. Being also a news journal we want to offer you stories that are relevant and refer to the current situation in the region. Finally, but also importantly, being a forum for dialogue we try to present different points of view and offer the perspectives from inside the region.

In this issue, the texts have been selected based on the very same criteria as explained above. And yet now more than ever, as the events of the last few months have shown, we feel humbled with regards to any interpretation we can possibly offer to our readers on this page. Instead, we will share with you the belief that drives our everyday editorial efforts, in the times of peace or war. It is expressed in the words of the great Polish patriot and founder of the foundation that publishes *New Eastern Europe*, the late Jan Nowak-Jeziorański: “Peaceful relations are most effectively built at the citizens’ level.”

In this very same vein, we hold today that the peoples of Central and Eastern Europe are interested in pursuing this goal, even when the contrary is assumed by politicians. We encourage you to keep this perspective in mind especially when reading the series of texts published in this issue, both on Ukraine and on Russia.

Lastly, with the fast moving and dynamic course of events in the region (primarily Ukraine and Crimea), we are aware that some of the texts may already have some elements that will be out-of-date at the time of your reading. It is our hope, however, that you as a reader of *New Eastern Europe* will gain a deeper understanding of these events from a political, historical, cultural and social perspective that you won't get from mainstream western media.

That being said, we do invite you to also join us online, both on our website (www.neweasterneurope.eu, or www.readnee.com) and on our social networks (Facebook and Twitter), where we offer up-to-date commentary and analyses from the region.

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The Editors do not return submitted texts unless requested. The Editors reserve the right to edit and shorten submitted texts.



New Eastern Europe is co-financed by the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education.



The project is co-financed by the Department of Public and Cultural Diplomacy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

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Circulation: 5500

Printing:

Drukarnia Kolejowa Kraków Sp. z o.o.

International Distribution:

www.pineapple-media.com

Printed in Poland



A Tale of Three Maidans

PAWEŁ KOWAL AND MACIEJ WAPIŃSKI

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Ukrainians have been coming to the contemporary Maidan Nezalezhnosti, Independence Square, in Kyiv to protest against the ruling elite and the situation in the country. **The Maidan as a form of protest** has now become synonymous with occupation, civil disobedience and non-violent protest.

After more than three months of mass protests in Ukraine, there is no doubt as to what the “Maidan” is: a very specifically Ukrainian form of resistance against the government. The Maidan is not just a protest, like a strike typical for the more industrialised countries of Central Europe. It is a form of direct democracy rooted in the revived Cossack tradition. The Cossack council, the Zaporozhian Sich institution that existed in the 17th century, can be regarded as a prototype for the Maidan as a form of political expression.

The word *maidan* originates from Arabic and Turkish languages and initially was synonymous with the word “square”. It began taking on new meanings in the last decade. The Maidan as a form of protest means capturing public places and buildings and their long-term occupation. It is based on the principles of civil disobedience and non-violent protest. In this sense, it refers not to the tradition of violent political upheavals, but to the European Autumn of Nations of 1989-1990. The Maidan is also an example of the advanced self-organisation of citizens. Maintaining a stationary protest for weeks requires the organisation of policing and sanitation, food supplies, information support and even certain forms of cultural life. The Maidan is therefore not only a space, but also the definition of a community, a form of a protest and even a kind of “temporary authority”.

The genesis of the recent protests can be found in the 1990 student strikes, the first Maidan in modern Ukraine, and later the Orange Revolution of 2004.

A revolution on granite

The first Maidan of Ukraine took place before the collapse of the Soviet Union and was organised by students. It became known in history as the “Granite Revolution”. The protest was organised on the October Revolution Square, which was soon to become Independence Square (the famous contemporary Maidan Nezalezhnosti). There would be no independent Ukraine without those hunger strikes, according to Mykhailo Svystovych, a participant of those events and now a social activist and journalist. These strikes were preceded by the strikes of Donbass miners. Poorly paid and working in bad conditions, the miners demanded improvements in their living standards. A new wave of strikes began at the turn of 1989 and 1990, surprising the authorities in both Soviet Ukraine and Moscow. The miners’ strike was the beginning of a wider protest. In one speech, Gorbachev called them an even greater challenge to the Communist Party than the Chernobyl disaster.

A significant number of participants in the 1990 student protests came from Lviv.

In September 1990, approximately 100 students set up tents in the central square of Kyiv and declared the area a “communism-free zone”. They began a hunger strike and became a generational experience for some

of today’s politicians and activists. Oleh Tiahnybok (the leader of the Svoboda party), Svyatoslav Vakarchuk (a famous Ukrainian rock singer), Vakhtang Kipiani (an established journalist and historian), Oksana Zabuzhko (a famous writer) and Taras Prohasko (a writer and journalist) were among those who took part in the hunger strike. It was not a brawl, but a certain type of romanticism, as evaluated years later by Markian Mikhalchyshyn, a student activist at that time and now a member of the Lviv city council. A significant part of the protest’s participants came from Lviv. Its initiators were mostly activists of the Student Brotherhood of Lviv, created a year earlier, and other student organisations.

The 1990 student revolution was very similar to American movements taking place in the 1960s. It was a sunny autumn. Pictures showed young people with flowers, singing and playing guitars. They lay on the sidewalks. They were actually surprised that the police did not remove them immediately from the city centre. A poem called “October 1990” by Oleg Pokalchuk became the anthem of the protest: “Arise, Kyiv! Wake up, Sich! Lviv, do not fall asleep! We are not the ones that we were before. The square is our vortex.”

Leonid Kravchuk, head of the Supreme Council at that time, played a key role in the revolution. He met with the students on October 6th, the fourth day of the protest. “I went to them and said, ‘Let’s go to the Supreme Council.’ We had a special meeting and gave the floor to the students. They presented their opinions and

A crowd stands on the Maidan in Kyiv in February 2014. The Maidan has become an expression of protest against everyone in politics, including the opposition politicians.



Photo: Wojciech Koźmic

suggestions and we prepared a resolution of the Council based on their arguments. No one beat anyone,” Kravchuk said in December 2013.

A generational experience

The main proposals were to remove Prime Minister Vitaly Masol from his position, allow new parties to participate in political life, nationalise the property of the Communist Party of Ukraine and give the possibility to conduct military service on the territory of Ukraine. The first protesters were joined by representatives of all the universities in Kyiv. A legendary gesture by writer Oles Gonchar became moral support and one of the most important events of that time. He had been the secretary of the Writers' Union of the Soviet Union for 27 years, but some of his books had also not been approved by the censors for publishing. During the protests, the 72-year-old Gonchar supported students and resigned from membership in the Communist Party.

The two-weeks-long protest resulted in the resignation of Vitaly Masol, who would return to the position of prime minister of independent Ukraine in 1994. The success of the students' hunger strike, however, had a wider dimension: the young generation of Ukrainians demonstrated its willingness to use the collapsing trend of *perestroika* and to take over the initiative by circles supporting the independence of a Ukrainian state. The clash between the conservative attitudes of the elites of

Soviet Ukraine and the relatively radical demands of the protesting youth was a specific feature of that protest. The emerging society of an independent Ukraine, or at least those members of it who participated in the protests and supported them, appeared to be ahead of the professional politicians. The cautious party apparatus was forced to make concessions.

The leaders who emerged during the 2000 “Ukraine without Kuchma” protests **set the stage** for a greater act – the Orange Revolution.

The events of autumn 1990 are not well-known in the West. They were regarded as an element of the disintegration of the Soviet Union, but not much more. The Granite Revolution, however, was a significant generational experience for the protesters, who were

mostly born around 1970 during the rule of Brezhnev and grew up at the time of the decline of the Soviet Union. In fact, the politicians of Soviet Ukraine (Leonid Kravchuk, Leonid Kuchma) became the true beneficiaries of the protests. They adapted part of their demands as their own.

The 1990s in Ukraine were a time of problems caused by economic reforms and economic collapse. Former communist activists acquired mid-level plants and the richest businessmen expanded their influence. It led to the crystallisation of the close relationship between government and big business. In the time of Kuchma’s presidency, it resulted in the formation of Ukraine’s specific political system of oligarchic democracy. Its specific features included a weak administration, control of political life by the rich and an unprecedented concentration of capital by a small group of people.

“Ukraine without Kuchma” was a protest action that took place in 2000 as an expression of society’s disagreement with the situation. The protests were sparked by the murder of the famous journalist Georgiy Gongadze and the disclosure of Mykola Melnychenko’s secretly recorded tapes. The tapes’ contents indicated that responsibility for Gongadze’s murder lay with the president’s inner circle and completely compromised Kuchma. Although thousands of people participated in the demonstrations, they never turned into a mass movement. Similar to the Granite Revolution, when Independence Square was announced a “communist-free zone”, in 2000 the tent camp on the main square of Kyiv was labelled a “Kuchma-free zone”. The protests were dispersed by police and the tent camp was eliminated, but created a basis for the revolution that would take place three years later. The leaders that emerged during the “Ukraine without Kuchma” protest, including Yuri Lutsenko, had set the stage for a greater act – the Orange Revolution.

From the Orange Revolution to the EuroMaidan

The removal of Viktor Yushchenko from the post of prime minister in April 2001 turned him into an opposition leader together with Yulia Tymoshenko, a former deputy prime minister. Despite being closely linked with Kuchma and known as the co-creators of the system of oligarchic democracy, they openly declared their disobedience to him. The period of 2001–2004 was one of deep political crisis for Ukraine. The presidential competition between Yushchenko and Viktor Yanukovich marked the peak of this crisis. The falsified election results led to the outbreak of the peaceful revolution, which merged several separate political circles. Thanks to the mass media, especially television, the world was reminded of the existence of the country, which is in the middle of Europe and is inhabited by almost 50 million people. The rich symbolism, particularly the omnipresent orange colour, allowed the public throughout the world to easily identify with the protesters, who called for a repeat of the presidential elections.

It is difficult to interpret the 2004 Maidan unequivocally. Undoubtedly, the middle class, those people who could not fulfil their aspirations in the framework of a system that existed in Ukraine, was its backbone. The people demanded a change of government and they wanted to get what they deserved. They were tired of mediocrity and constant robbery by a small group of extremely rich people. The revolution was successful, but the elites failed. The new Orange Revolution authorities could not control their country and the lack of a rapid offer from the West cooled enthusiasm before anything was achieved.

The three Ukrainian Maidans can be seen as a sequence of events in the framework of an incomplete **transformation**.

The reasons behind the 2013–2014 protests are deep, including the alienation of the authorities and the exceptionally strong position of the oligarchs in Ukraine's socio-political system and the struggle between them. The most important one, however, is the inefficient democracy that was in practice. One should also mention the ineffective social system, social stratification, high (unseen) unemployment and a deep demographic crisis.

The unused potential of the Orange Revolution contributed to the victory of Viktor Yanukovich in 2010. The new authorities declared closer cooperation with the European Union, but withdrew from signing the Association Agreement just before the Eastern Partnership summit in Vilnius in 2013. People went to the streets. Today, hardly anyone remembers that a well-known journalist named Mustafa Nayem was the one who called for action when it became clear that negotiations with the EU were being suspended.

Two thousand people gathered spontaneously, using the internet and mobile communication to organise themselves. A demonstration called the “EuroMaidan” was planned to be held a few days later by Yuri Lutsenko, head of the Third Republic movement. People also gathered under political party flags in the European Square of Kyiv, next to the student and civil society protests on the Maidan. Paradoxically, both were united by the authorities. The beating of demonstrators in the night between November 29th and 30th radicalised the mood and thousands more people came out onto the streets. The EuroMaidan ceased to be a manifestation of pro-European sentiments and became a protest against the government.

Politicians tried to chase the Euromaidan away, but they were always one step behind the crowd. The Maidan became an expression of protest against everyone, including the opposition politicians who lacked charisma, courage and cleverness. The most evident example was Vitali Klitschko, portrayed in the western media as a leader of the Maidan, who could not prevent the crowds from going to Hrushevsky Street. The problem was not only the lack of legitimacy from the Maidan, the leaders of the three largest opposition parties did not hide their ambitions. These ambitions may be hard to reconcile in the future and the situation is even more complicated by the likely return of former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko to the political scene.

The Ukrainians oppose everyone

“Ukraine’s problem is that it is ruled by those who do not need it,” Mykhailo Hrushevsky said in the 19th century. It is symbolic that some of the most brutal episodes of the EuroMaidan took place on the street with his name.


A specific separation of the public from the politicians happened during the third Maidan. During the first one, a new political elite was formed. The second one resulted in disappointment in the policy of the new government brought to power by the people. A high level of distrust is now felt during the third one. Ukrainians oppose everyone. At the same time, a new elite is being created. This includes independent journalists, heads of civil society organisations and student leaders. They may become the new faces of Ukrainian politics in few years.

It is difficult to predict what will be the final outcome of the EuroMaidan. Will it bring only a change of government, the restoration of the old constitution and new elections? The experience of the Orange Revolution shows that a change of government does not change necessarily mean anything. Ukraine needs goals and a means to achieve them. This is the role for the West: to offer support for specific projects in exchange for real reforms. Without them, the Ukrainian tragedy will turn into a farce.

Regardless of the political consequences, the EuroMaidan has already won. Ukrainians have shown that the Soviet way of being is not hereditary. Hundreds of thousands of people gathered in the squares of Kyiv, Lviv and Kharkiv to prove that they feel responsible for their country and are prepared to pay the highest price to live in a normal country.

The three Ukrainian Maidans can be regarded as a sequence of events in the framework of an unfinished transformation. The first one accelerated processes that had already begun in the Soviet Union. The Orange Revolution was a manifestation of the non-acceptance of the system created during the presidency of Leonid Kuchma. The EuroMaidan combined pro-European slogans and a revolt against the former politicians. The toppling of Lenin statues throughout Ukraine plays a key role in this, as it is a gesture that shows a break with the past.

The Granite Revolution and the EuroMaidan are similar because there was no clear leadership. The two weeks of the students' hunger strike in 1990 was an action organised by dozens of student activists with no single figure on top. The EuroMaidan's origin is similar, although its scale is obviously much larger. There were many figures that emerged, but they were not politicians. They were social activists and independent journalists. The question arises, hence, whether they will agree to enter politics or decide to remain monitors of the authorities.

The Ukrainians were already disappointed once by those who came to power in 2005. Regardless of who will govern Ukraine, he or she should start with serious reforms. Otherwise, a new Maidan will happen again in the next several years. 

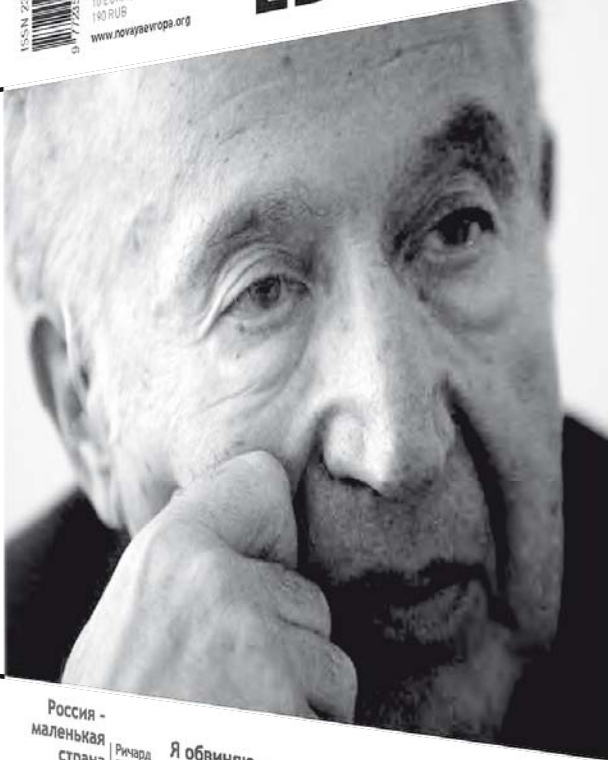
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ISSN 2253-0847
 9 722325 024305
 А
 Ежеквартальный
 №1
 ЗИМА 2013/2014
 Цена
 19 PLN w tym 5% VAT
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We Do Not Want to Be Slaves

A conversation with Andriy Sadovyy, Mayor of Lviv, Ukraine.
Interviewer: Olesya Yaremchuk

Notwithstanding “pressure from above”, Andriy Sadovyy, mayor of the western Ukrainian city of Lviv, protected residents during the revolution. The mayor shared with *New Eastern Europe* his vision of the situation in Ukraine and perspectives of cooperation with Europe. On January 16th 2014, after the authoritarian laws were passed in Ukraine, the mayor of Lviv immediately stated: “The laws contradict common sense and are not binding on the territory of Lviv.” In his video appeal, he said that he would do whatever it took in order to ensure the safety of Lviv residents. This referred not only to these laws but also to the convictions and persecutions of the activists, which were beyond the mayor’s control.

Yuriy Verbytskyi, a scientist, alpinist and resident of Lviv, was abducted from a Kyiv hospital, taken to a forest and tortured to death. Though the Ministry of Internal Affairs claims that Yuriy died from hypothermia, the escalation of the conflict in Ukraine raised a general alarm around the world, and every minute was decisive. The people did not give up even after outrageous pressure and deaths,

and, more than that, an active movement began in the regions. It also surged in the Lviv Oblast, as the protesters occupied the Lviv regional state administration, creating a people’s council in order to become the legitimate authority of the Lviv region and to subordinate the entire police, military and public prosecutors.

I met with Mayor Sadovyy an hour before this important event. He was a little nervous, but retained control over the situation. After all, he has been mayor already for eight years. It is clear that he reads a lot: there are 50 volumes of Ivan Franko’s works on the shelves of his office, along with the books by Foucault, Nietzsche, Homer and Wittgenstein. Sadovyy believes that the most valuable things in life are life itself and the love of God. He is an optimist. In addition to his education, he is a qualified electrical engineer, which is why he also says that currently Newton’s law is at work in Ukraine: the bigger the pressure, the greater the resistance.

OLESYA YAREMCHUK: Recently, we have witnessed serious violations of human rights in Ukraine. Who do you

think shall be responsible for these acts and how should these cases be investigated?

ANDRIY SADOVYY: Human dignity is sacred, and the Constitution of Ukraine prescribes respect to a human being rather sensibly. The events of the past few months in our country severely infringe on democracy and the freedom of speech. The laws that were adopted by Ukraine's Parliament, the Verkhovna Rada, on January 16th 2014 violated the Constitution and contradict common sense. Who shall bear responsibility? I am against finding a scapegoat to take the blame. It does not happen this way. There are politicians and high-ranking officials who put their hands on the Bible and the Constitution and took an oath of allegiance to the Ukrainian people. They bear responsibility before God as well. Today, all the politicians have to put aside their own ambitions and do their uttermost in order to prevent further bloodshed in Ukraine. Is this possible? The chance is always there. If the safety of the people and prevention of bloodshed are at the core of negotiations, these negotiations are entitled to success. However, if the interests of some or other politicians form the basis of negotiations, then there is no point.

Activist Gennadiy Druzenko recently stated, "This is a war. We are not India. And we do not have, like Gandhi, 360 million people and 20 years ahead of us. And most importantly, we are not opposed by British gentlemen, but by

Donetsk criminals." Do you believe that the protests were effective?

Ukrainians demonstrated the greatest possible self-control and discipline to not submit to provocations. It is beyond any doubt that in this situation those who call themselves politicians and are trusted have to be with the people and continue to seek peaceful ways to resolve the situation. There is no ethnic or other war in Ukraine. We have a slightly different situation. We do not want to be slaves. And people say this straightforwardly. They do not want to be the oligarchs' slaves, without rights and freedoms and to serve them for little money. It cannot be this way. The Ukrainian authorities were pursuing the path of European integration for half a year. They were all unanimous that this was the only way for development of our state. And then they reversed course. No explanations or clear reasons were given. Instead, a different scenario unfolded and laws oppressing democracy, freedom of speech and human rights were adopted. Surely the people are entitled to express their opinions. I have always been optimistic in life. I believe in common sense and that, after these hardships, Ukraine will be a free country, one of which we will all be proud.

What are now the next steps for Ukraine?

The first is a focus on the signing of the Association Agreement with the European Union. Why? The member states of the European Union have

ECSEuropean
Solidarity
Centre

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.

opening | 2014

European Solidarity Centre
ul. Doki 1 | 80-958 Gdańsk
tel. +48 58 767 79 71
e-mail@ecs.gda.plwww.ecs.gda.pl



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.

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 of 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.



ECS IN FIGURES

98,000 archival pamphlets, posters and documents

41,500 archival photographs

800 films of video footage with accounts from oppositionists

632 projects for children and young people

200 conferences

78 conferences and film screenings

47 books published

30 open lectures

22 temporary exhibitions

18 documentaries

1 Poland's first opinion survey asking what Poles think about Solidarity

Andriy Sadovyy has been the mayor of the city of Lviv since 2006. Sadovyy has been a strong supporter of the EuroMaidan anti-government protesters in Ukraine.



Photo courtesy of the Office of the Mayor of Lviv

gone through extremely difficult trials, decades or centuries of wars for the right of people to have their dignity. And the EU is actually made up of states that have accepted the human being as a cornerstone of their civilisation. Joining this union, even in the form of an association, is a guarantee of freedom and democracy for Ukrainians. That is why it is extremely important. We have to demand that this direction is maintained and it starts with the signing of the Association Agreement.

Those who worry about economic issues have to understand that a lot of talented people are born here in Ukraine. The richness of a country always lies

in the young and talented people. If Ukrainians are given a free reign and an opportunity to work honestly, I am sure that within a relatively short time we will demonstrate a very good example of success and economic development. But this can only be done under one condition: that we are free.

In this difficult time for Ukraine you proved to be a strong pro-European leader. Some people have suggested that you be nominated to run for the nation's president. What is your reaction to this idea?

I am privileged to have been born in Lviv and to work as the city mayor. I

have obligations to the community of Lviv that I am not entitled to breach. I am obliged to work as the city mayor and I will do my utmost to guarantee the safety to Lviv's inhabitants in this situation, to ensure that Lviv lives its normal life and that people have the right to express their opinions.

So even if you were nominated you would reject the proposal?

I have no right to do this. I have obligations before my community. My term officially ends in October 2015.

If you had more powers, what relationships would you build with Europe? What would be the priority spheres for cooperation?

As a city, we already have very good relationships with European institutions such as the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. We receive financial aid and grant support. We have good advisers and consultants helping. So the example of Lviv can actually be used for the whole of Ukraine. We receive loans from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development at five per cent. This is a very low interest rate. Such a rate is not given to the state. We also receive grant funding. For example, we recently signed a 20 million euro contract for the modernisation of the heating system, and we will receive another 10 million euros as a grant. These are excellent opportunities. Other cities in Ukraine can also have such possibilities if they

cooperate with the European Union. Lviv acts as a kind of a testing ground where we try many things out and are keen to share this experience with other cities of our country.

Which countries support Lviv the most?

Without a doubt, the greatest foreign support comes from the German government. But we are also supported by the Polish and Norwegian governments.

In your opinion, how do you see the fact that the Ukrainians were willing to spill blood for a formal association with EU? I am speaking especially about the first weeks of Maidan, when retaining the pro-European direction was the main motif behind the street protests?

In my view, European politicians have to give serious thought to what's been recently happening in Ukraine. They quietly aim for association with Ukraine. However, Russia actively strives for integration with Ukraine. And it is willing to put ten times more at stake. On the other hand, as you have correctly noted, the Ukrainians have spilled blood for even a possibility to get closer to the European Union. This is a big question for European politicians: are they willing to provide the necessary support for Ukrainian democracy?

European politicians have by far greater experience with negotiations than their Ukrainian counterparts. We are a young country, having existed for about two

decades now. I think that the EU has to make a challenging decision. If it stands aside and only watches what is going on, these ongoing processes will end badly, also for European politicians who think that they can wait out this moment. At the same time, we can't ignore the fact that the world today is interactive and mobile. The Ukrainians communicate with their colleagues in other countries. For example, if a certain prime minister is indifferent to actions taking place in Kyiv, he might be just as well indifferent to the protection of the freedom of speech and democracy in his own country. We are all Europeans and we have to stick together.

How exactly should the EU support us?

First of all, the EU should be active in regards to Ukraine. If Russia provides its support to Ukraine in resolving day-to-day problems, it works. Why does the EU sit and wait until Ukraine is ready? This is not right and not fair. In the meantime, blood is being shed in Ukraine. These are the things that European politicians have to understand without saying. They have to take a balanced and correct position. It is not a good idea to waste time for discussions or for reprimands in this situation. It's time to act.

Proposals of Galician federalism are voiced often in the Ukrainian media. In an interview three years ago you declared that you did not support this idea. At the same time you emphasised that you would support stronger local

governance. What is your attitude now? Have you changed your opinion?

I am a proponent of the European model, where local governments definitely have a larger scope of powers than in Ukraine. During these three years, the scope of powers of local government has further decreased. We are a unitary state; we are all Ukrainians. Any scenario that can lead to internal conflicts in our country is absolutely harmful. Today, the problems of Ukrainians in the east, the west, the south and the north are identical. We have to use the resources of the Ukrainians.

What are some of the serious problems in the country? One challenge is the monopolisation of authority to its maximum extent, leading to centralisation. We need stronger decentralisation. A positive example of this is Germany, which even has a ministry that coordinates and helps local governments. In such a case, the cities are more flexible and operate based on local conditions. We currently have 450 engines (a reference to the number of major cities in Ukraine – editor's note) that currently run at idle speed. If they were given more powers, they would be able to propel Ukraine to the next level of development. A major shift in Ukraine's development would take place if we could utilise our human resources and turn everyone into a participant of the process, and not expect them to just sit and wait for peanuts from above when all the money is gone.

You speak from experience: Lviv is quite economically dependent on Kyiv. To the best of my knowledge, previously only 20 per cent of the city budget came from the state. What is the current state of affairs?


The situation is very complicated. Although we form our city budget based on estimates of the state budget, there are actually transfers to the state budget. In other words, the state takes money away from us. And other cities, like Kharkiv, receive subsidies from the state budget. Odessa receives subsidies. This is the answer to the question by those who ask, “Who feeds the others?” Lviv is a sustainable city. We earn our living. But this money is taken away from us. Taking into account all the taxes collected on the territory of Lviv, we provide the lion’s share to the state. And this is not right. Currently many issues have to be

resolved in our city. In many aspects our economy is not modernised yet. It needs substantial inflows and investments.

Still, in your opinion, is the scenario of the “break-up of Ukraine” and “separation” a pro-Kremlin scenario or a genuine desire of inhabitants of the regions to gain greater autonomy?

I am certain that this is not a Ukrainian scenario.

What is Europe for you?

Geographically, it is one of the greatest parts of the world. At the level of values and ideas, it is a place with the highest possible respect for human dignity. These democracies are mature and have gone through very difficult trials. Today, they are worthy examples. Many people from around the world are eager to visit Europe and be affiliated with it, Ukraine included. 

Translated by Olena Shynkarenko

Andriy Sadovyy is the mayor of the city of Lviv. He has served in this position since 2006.

Olesya Yaremchuk is a Ukrainian journalist based in Lviv.

The Soviet Union versus the EuroMaidan

MILAN LELICH

Neo-fascists from western Ukraine want to force homosexuality throughout Ukraine, ruin the economy and spread anarchy with the support of the United States. This was the essence of the Maidan image that exists in minds of many inhabitants of the southeast regions of Ukraine. The pro-government propaganda struggled to **enhance this distorted perception** in every possible way, whereas the opposition set almost nothing against it.

Southeast Ukraine was the electoral core of Viktor Yanukovich and his supporters in the Party of Regions. This region is primarily made up of the Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts and has a unique mentality. During the days of the Soviet Union, heavy industry was actively developed here, with coal mining being the primary industry. The work of miners was considered prestigious and was highly paid. After Ukraine gained independence in 1991, everything collapsed rapidly. Mines and plants were closed down on a large scale, and it became more difficult to pay workers their wages while the majority of the population fell far below the poverty line. Miners' strikes and protests regularly shook the region in the 1990s and were either broken up by the militia or with promises that the wages would be paid in the near future.

For the residents of this depressed region, Soviet times were a period of stability and well-being. Even today, many locals still associate themselves with the long-gone Soviet Union. According to a study conducted by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology in May 2012, 10 per cent of the region's population has this mentality. On the streets one can see people who wear T-shirts with the hammer and sickle and proudly state to the journalists, "We are Soviet patriots!" For them, Ukraine as a state has always been alien, since no Ukrainian government has even tried to

offer them an alternative to the Soviet mentality. The European perspective, the free market and human rights are something distant and unclear, while the Soviet times are remembered with nostalgia.

Regional patriotism

The positive image of the Soviet Union in the minds of many of the residents in southeast Ukraine has nothing in common with the reality surrounding them. The majority of Ukrainians living in Donbass have somehow adapted. They work illegally in mines, engage in smuggling activities or barely survive on petty salaries in the public sector or from their pensions. Nevertheless, the unemployment rate remains extremely high, many towns and villages are dying out, and crime, alcoholism and drug addiction thrive.

Propaganda promoting the threat of neo-fascists rising to power has turned absolutely real for the inhabitants of southeast Ukraine.

However, the Soviet mentality denies the very possibility of rebellion. The Yanukovich authorities were perceived as something inviolable and any changes incited fear. “You should not protest, but work,” says a local miner at the illegal “makeshift coal mine” who receives a lousy wage for working there and risking his life every day. “No one brought Donbass to its

knees,” says a local state employee whose monthly income is scarcely sufficient for food and utility payments. The Soviet aesthetic of pointless “labour feats” in which the workers are the heroes is still very much alive today. The word “dissident” is traditionally perceived as blasphemous.

Let us add here the specific “regional patriotism” based on the outdated myth that “Donbass feeds the entire country”, whereas in reality the Donetsk Oblast is the nationwide leader in receiving subsidies from the state budget. Four out of five inhabitants of southeast Ukraine have never in their lives left their own regions, let alone been abroad. And this gets a semi-closed, “strange” community hostile to everything, semi-feudal, semi-capitalistic and semi-criminal.

These factors served as a catalyst for the specific type of local government that emerged in Donbass (and, subject to some exceptions, for the whole of southeast Ukraine in general) that is often referred to as “corruptocracy”. The better-known term, kleptocracy, could also be used; however, it does not reflect the depth of the social relations in the southeast. Local elites not only steal funds from the state budget (although this is the basis of their activity), but they also develop and enhance their corrupt connections to the greatest extent possible, replacing regular,

democratic relationships between the authorities and society. The EuroMaidan has turned into a revolution that threatens to now destroy the overwhelming corruption scheme which has existed for years. Therefore the local “tsars”, who in many towns and villages have held power uninterrupted since the late 1980s, will desperately seek ways to to preserve their own order even despite the transition in the central authorities in Kyiv.

Expanding the myths

In their fight against the Maidan, the previous authorities masterfully exploited stereotypes that are typical for the Soviet mentality as described above. The information campaign against the revolutionaries was hinged on the following absolutely contradictory theses.

Myth 1: Supporters of the Maidan are made up of only neo-fascists and the UPA (Ukrainian Insurgent Army)

Surely, there are many of the Maidan activists who strongly support the UPA and consider Stepan Bandera to be a national hero. There is also a great deal of those adhering to ultra right-wing ideology and probably there are some individuals with frankly pro-fascist attitudes. However, due to the efforts of the pro-government propaganda, a delusive threat of neo-fascists rising to power has turned to be absolutely real for the inhabitants of southeast Ukraine. Fascism was an archetypical, absolute evil for the citizens of the Soviet Union and this evil is being proficiently manipulated by the current authorities. Moreover, there is no understanding of the nature of fascism, which is generally limited to external features. About one in ten participants of pro-government mass actions were more or less able to give a clear definition about what fascism is and even fewer can tell the difference between fascism, Nazism and, for example, nationalism. “The fascists are those in favour of Bandera.” “The fascists are those carrying red-and-black flags.” “The fascists are marching with torches.” These are the replies of the southeast residents to journalists’ questions.

The Ukrainian media presented any speech by a European or American politician at the Maidan as **proof** of a “western conspiracy”.

The real anti-fascist hysteria began long before the EuroMaidan. It was first a reaction by the authorities to an opposition campaign in the spring of 2013 called “Rise up, Ukraine!” In response to the opposition actions, the Party of Regions conducted a series of meaningless “anti-fascist marches”. As the protest events

began in Kyiv, “anti-fascism” found a new lease on life. The authorities looked to Russia, where worshipping “the feat of the Great Patriotic War” has turned into a *sui generis* national religion. In Ukraine, many opponents of the Maidan, including the soldiers of the special militia forces, started seeing themselves as the real fighters against fascism and on a massive scale attaching orange-and-black St. George ribbons – the symbol of officious “anti-fascism” – to their clothes. Purely surrealistic scenes can be observed in some southeast towns. People march arm-in-arm in “anti-fascist” columns with Orthodox banners and crosses, portraits of Joseph Stalin and tricolour flags of the Russian Federation (the latter are very popular among the marginal pro-Russian organisations).

Myth 2: The revolutionaries from western Ukraine want to occupy the southeast

Despite the fact that, according to data from all surveys, residents from all regions in Ukraine protested at the Maidan, the stereotype that “only *Zapadentsy* (a derogatory term for western Ukrainians) were at the Maidan” is very viable. By supporting and emphasising this false hypothesis in every possible way, the central authorities, local elites and pro-government media were able to exploit the above-mentioned feelings of “regional patriotism”. Although so far there is no record of any massive “invasion” of Maidan activists into the south-eastern regions, anxiety in some regions, especially Crimea, remains high. The buildings of the local administrations and entrances to the administrative centres were barricaded. The militia protected public authorities day and night, and people’s guards were formed from the Party of Regions activists and pro-Russian radicals – poor young people who get paid for participation in protests – for the “defence against Bandera aggression”. The local media replicated unconfirmed information about busloads of western Ukrainians allegedly arriving in the southeast to carry out extremist activities. In brief, everything was done to enhance aggression against the “strangers”.

"Shout for Ukraine" is a poster exhibit prepared by the students of the Gdańsk Academy of Arts and led by their professor - Jacek Staniszewski as their reaction to the dramatic events that took place in Kyiv in the winter of 2013-2014. The exhibit was already presented to the public in Gdańsk. It is also going to be presented in Kyiv, at the Maidan.

The purpose of the exhibit was to show solidarity with the Ukrainian people but it was is not the first exhibit organised in Gdańsk of this kind. It is part of the overall work of the Social Propaganda Team who have become known for their courage in dealing with uneasy social topics. Their leader, Jacek Staniszewski, has been trying



to make his students sensitive to difficult, often uncomfortable, topics and link them with high level art works. Not surprisingly, each of the exhibits has stirred a wide public discussion and broad reflection.

The authors of the “Shout for Ukraine” exhibit include: Eugenia Tynna, Piotr Paluch, Ola Miętus, Maja Tybel i Emil Čwik, Gabriela Warzycka, Agata Wilkowska, Basia Stec, Ania Faleńczyk, Natalia Lament, Zuza Zamorska, Natalia Uryniuk, Paulina Przygoda, Ania Orłowska, Edyta Majewska, Vera King, Julia Parchimowicz, Jacek Wielebski, Krzysiek Głazewski, Jacek Staniszewski.

*Jacek Staniszewski is a Polish artist and musician. He is also a professor of graphics at Gdańsk Academy of Fine Arts. Staniszewski's works include over 500 posters prepared for different exhibitions, theatre plays, concerts. He is also an author of disc covers and a leader of a music band “Maszyna do mięsa” (A meat grinder).





FORGET YOU NOT



UKRAINE

Myth 3: The Maidan is organised and sponsored by the European Union and the United States

The Cold War will never end for a Soviet citizen. Western states are traditionally perceived as “potential enemies”, which is also skilfully used by supporters of Yanukovych. The events at the Maidan were presented as an attempt by the West to topple a legitimate president and replace him with an obedient “puppet”. This creates a natural desire to have a bearer of the Soviet mentality to protect what is “ours”.

The media presented any speech of a European or an American politician at the Maidan as proof of a “western conspiracy”. Any contact of the opposition leaders with their western colleagues is seen as an illustration of their dependence on Brussels or Washington. The Maidan activists wear protective equipment made in the West (helmets or combat boots), which means that the whole revolution is financed by the West. In addition, the aim of the revolution is also presented as “alienation from fraternal Russia”, to which many residents of southeast regions feel an unbreakable bond.

Myth 4: The revolutionaries want to implement western practices in Ukraine, and in particular to impose homosexuality

Even prior to the revolutionary events, the opponents of Ukraine’s European integration represented by the Communists and the “Ukrainian Choice” movement led by Viktor Medvedchuk conducted a campaign against “European values”. The emphasis was put on the sexual sphere of life of Europeans. It was suggested that absolute debauchery is rampant in Europe and that homosexuality, paedophilia and incest are not just normal but almost encouraged by European authorities. Ukrainians who have limited access to information and have never been in Western Europe, and do not know any foreign language, often believe this to be absolutely true. This is especially true in the southeast, where such an image could well fit in the Soviet cliché of the “decaying West”.

The opposition failed to employ an efficient counter-information strategy to engage Ukrainians in the south and east.

After Ukraine made an abrupt geopolitical turnabout towards Russia, members of the ruling Party of Regions also began to emphasise the subject of homosexuality. For example, the then-Prime Minister Mykola Azarov stated at a meeting of supporters of the Party of Regions: “We have to legalise same-sex marriage in order to sign the Association Agreement with the EU,” although such a condition was never laid down by officials in Brussels and would have been absurd. Nevertheless, the patriarchal and conservative southeast easily falls for such absurdities.

Along with the “homosexual threat”, the pro-Yanukovych propaganda exploited other stereotypes in relation to the EU. Particularly, it is alleged that immigrants from countries of Asia and Africa have taken over Europe and turned European capitals into criminal ghettos. Although internationalism was formally upheld in the Soviet Union, the Soviet mentality does not foresee any special tolerance towards people of different races. For this reason, journalists recorded numerous interviews with “anti-fascists” at massive protests against the EuroMaidan, who openly spoke out against “blacks” coming to Ukraine.

Myth 5: The revolutionaries want to destroy the economy and wreak havoc in Ukraine


“As long as there is no war” is a popular saying from the Soviet times. The generation that had experienced the Second World War was indeed ready to suffer any hardships so that the horrors of the 1940s would not be repeated. Many decades have passed since then, but, in the southeast, “war” is feared above all. This fear is aggravated by incorrect parallels between the current events in Ukraine and, for example, Syria that are promoted by the media. In addition to “war”, the inhabitants of the southeast are also afraid of losing stability. However, as described above, “stability” for the majority of the local residents means hard, risky and underpaid work with a lack of the prospects for a normal life. But few dare to risk even these. “You should not protest, but work.” This phrase can be heard now both from the leaders of the Party of Regions and the average workers in propaganda pieces of the local media.

The whole information campaign of the ruling party was based on its total domination in the media sphere of the southeast part of the country. Television remains a major source of information for these residents, especially in the small villages. Both the national and local channels persistently transmitted the above-mentioned themes. The print media primarily serve as propaganda as well. Local residents are not willing to look for an alternative point of view, especially online and in social networks.

I am not familiar with any special studies on the activities of supporters and opponents of the EuroMaidan in the social networks in relation to social and political activity, of course. But my subjective impression is that the Euro-revolutionaries are one step ahead of their opponents, at least in terms of coordination and information-sharing through social networks. The major problem is that independent and pro-opposition media and bloggers often “agitate those already agitated”; they read, reprint and repost themselves. Meanwhile, the huge number of the Maidan opponents remains untapped.

How to break a blockade

The opposition had failed to work out an efficient information counter-strategy during the protests. On the whole, it appears that the opposition aimed all its efforts in Kyiv without providing any support to the EuroMaidan activists in the south and the east who are, nonetheless, small in numbers. The latter, being left to themselves, lost both power and the information confrontation to the outweighing forces of the opponent. The information policy of the Maidan leaders impedes them from negating the above-mentioned myths of the anti-Maidaners; on the contrary, it instead supports them. No rational agenda for the depressed southeast, Donbass most of all, has been developed. The political and civil opposition should refuse to emphasise national issues and should instead focus on social issues to demonstrate to south-eastern Ukrainians a real alternative to the quasi-capitalism existing there. The information blockade can be only broken by day-to-day diligent work, such as visits to the depressed towns and villages, comprehensibly written campaign materials, particularly in Russian, and the popularisation of pro-opposition internet media. None of this has been done so far. Meanwhile, while the opposition continues to gleam from its victory in Kyiv's high-ranked cabinets or the Kyiv streets, an average inhabitant of the southeast will continue to consider the Maidan to be a crowd of bloodthirsty ultra-nationalists financed by the West.

After the revolution succeeded in Ukraine with Yanukovych's escape from the country and the opposition's coming to power – nothing has changed. The new authorities are doing nothing in order to reach the southeast. One of their first decisions was to revoke the “Law on Languages” – according to which Russian was given the status of an official regional language in many south-eastern regions of Ukraine. Although in practice this law was only used for the purpose of degrading the state language, Ukrainian, the inhabitants of Crimea and Donbass treated its revocation as a direct threat to Russian-speaking Ukrainians. As a result, a part of the local elites of the southeast, primarily in Kharkiv and Crimea, continue to warn about the “threat of nationalism” with the aim of stirring up separatism. 

Translated by Olena Shynkarenko

Milan Lelich is a Ukrainian journalist and political analyst
with the weekly magazine *Фокус (Focus)*.

The Revolution Triggered by Grand Political Corruption

HALYNA SENYK

Since returning to power in 2010, Viktor Yanukovych and his closest associates experienced a boom in their international business empires. The Ukrainian revolution, which started as a mass movement in support for European integration, later crystallised as a movement against the grand political corruption of Yanukovych and the former ruling elite.

When looking at the recent revolutions in Egypt, Tunisia, Syria, Libya, Thailand and Ukraine, there is a one common catalyst. This trigger is that grand political corruption got out of control and pushed people into the streets. Despite historical, geographical, ethnic and religious differences, these countries have shown that grand political corruption causes the failure of government institutions, ruins the economy and often ends in mass protests and bloody violence.

The Ukrainian revolution, which started as a mass movement in support of European integration and therefore was called the EuroMaidan, later crystallised as a movement against the grand political corruption of the incumbent ruling elite. The level of corruption in the country reached its apex during the presidency of Viktor Yanukovych (since 2010), when the economy of the country was distributed among a handful of families closely linked to the president. The alliance between the oligarchs and the state became entrenched at the highest levels of government while at the local level, judges, police, municipal government and local politicians organised themselves into a corrupt network of mutual enrichment at the public's expense. While most post-Soviet states developed an oligarchic class that owns a high proportion of the country's wealth, the situation in Ukraine appeared to be one of the more extreme.

Beneficiary

According to the best estimates, the 50 richest Russians own assets valued at 16 per cent of Russia's GDP. In Ukraine, the same group holds assets valued at 45 per cent of the country's GDP. This fact has had a big impact on the country's politics, economy and future development, not to mention the well-being of its citizens. A quick overview of former President Yanukovych's assets shows that he did not own anything in his name: he was a beneficiary owner of a number of formerly state-owned properties throughout Ukraine.

One of the best-known properties is the luxurious Mezhyhirya estate, which was privatised in a chain of murky contracts and turned into a world-class luxury property in less than three years. It wasn't until after Yanukovych was ousted from power that the general public was able to see the immense wealth that he amassed during his time as president. In addition to Mezhyhirya, the president enjoyed a number of privatised state dachas in Crimea, such as Muholatka No. 9 and Dawn Nos. 1, 3 and 6, which were renovated at the public's expense over the last three years. The interiors were upgraded and furnished with gold Italian furniture, English porcelain and other luxuries such as a heated marble massage table that cost 600,000 hryvnias (around 70,000 US dollars). Helipads were installed near two of the government villas. There are also two other private estates in the Crimea that were renovated after ownership was transferred to Yanukovych. As a result of this investment, their value increased, which then gave Yanukovych the right to buy them for himself.

The 50 richest Ukrainians hold assets valued at 45 per cent of the country's GDP.

The estates, however, were not enough and Yanukovych decided to privatise Cape Aya, formerly the resort of the State Road Services, which approximately equals the Kingdom of Monaco in land area and includes beautiful wild beaches and vast forests at the foot of the Aya Mountain. Altogether, the area of the estate is 8.6 acres. In the summer of 2007, the property (including the park) was privatised for 6.36 million hryvnias (over \$700,000). Yanukovych further expanded his ownership of Cape Aya. In accordance with the Sevastopol City Council Ruling No. 4355 passed in May 2008 in connection with a voluntary refusal, the right for regular use of the state rehabilitation Centre for the Liquidators of the Chernobyl Plant, a tract of land totalling 10.2 acres, was suspended. It was then leased to a private company that has had close ties to Yanukovych for 25 years. Today, this company belongs to an unknown Cypriot holding called Leolita Trading Ltd. All of the construction work was done under the supervision of Oleksandr Yanukovych, Viktor's son. On the site of the Cape Aya estate they are now building a luxurious palace that is even more audacious than Mezhyhirya.

Expanding business

The assets of Oleksander Yanukovych have increased 72-fold during the presidency of his father. He is the sole owner of the Ukrainian Bank of Development, which increased its capital 10 times in the three years of the Yanukovych presidency after taking over the functions of the state UkrEximbank which serves the employees of the Ministry of Interior, the tax authorities and courts. Moreover, the Ukrainian Bank of Development became the sole bank for all tax-related payments for taxpayers. It also owes its rapid growth to successful bidding for public procurement tenders, in particular for giving loans to state the Railway Company Ukrzaliznytsya.

The president's close allies Serhiy Klyuyev (former head of the Banking Regulation Committee in Parliament) and his brother Andriy Kluyev (former head of the Presidential Administration) also experienced a boom in their international business empires during Yanukovych's presidency. They actively used the benefits of state support to create a solar energy conglomerate called Active Solar with its centre in Austria. During Yanukovych's presidency, the Kluyevs' Semiconductor Factory (an unprofitable company belonging to Active Solar) received loans of more than 450 million euros from Ukreximbank, the state bank. Part of the interest on these loans was paid with support from the state funds per a decision by Andriy Kluyev, then vice prime minister of Ukraine. Andriy Kluyev also misused EU money to connect his family's solar power stations to the national electricity grid.

The **assets** of Oleksander Yanukovych increased 72-fold during the presidency of his father.

Furthermore, the Yanukovych presidency had a positive impact on the richest man in Ukraine, the oligarch Renat Akhmetov, a close associate of the president for many years. Akhmetov's company System Capital Management (SCM), a Cyprus-registered group of companies, currently is Ukraine's

largest corporation. In 2006, when Yanukovych was prime minister of Ukraine, Akhmetov established Metinvest to manage SCM's mining and metallurgy interests and DTEK (Donbass Fuel Energy Company) in the power engineering sector. With these interlocking, vertically-integrated corporations, Akhmetov dominates the metallurgical sector from raw materials to finished products and has been able to fight off rival businesses by cutting off their access to raw materials, energy or markets.

Currently, Metinvest companies own Ukraine's largest iron ore manufacturer and its second-largest coking coal mine, and they manufacture 40 per cent of Ukraine's steel production. Likewise, DTEK has plants in the power engineering sector that mine coal and enrich it, produce oil and gas and trade it, and have thermal power plants that produce over 30 per cent of Ukraine's electricity consumption. DTEK



Photo: Wojciech Koźmic

The immense corruption of Viktor Yanukovich was one of the main reasons behind the EuroMaidan protests.

also enjoys a monopoly in developing wind power and other renewables, and exports electricity to EU states.

Fertiliser king

The oil and gas industries are heavily controlled by another oligarch, Dmytro Firtash, alleged to be closely connected with Yuriy Boyko, the former deputy prime minister. Firtash was little known to the Ukrainian public until 2006, when it was announced that he owned 90 per cent of Ukraine's share of RosUkrEnerg (RUE). RUE was the opaque intermediary of the Russian-Ukrainian-Turkmen natural gas trade. Further digging uncovered the fact that in 2002 Firtash had been involved in the establishment of RUE's equally dubious predecessor, Eural Trans Gas, along with the infamous Russian-Ukrainian crime boss Semion Mogilevich.

The details of these transactions remain unclear and there must have been many high-level beneficiaries besides Firtash and Mogilevich, but the basic pattern was fairly clear. The intermediaries essentially bankrupted Ukraine's natural gas system by siphoning off the profits, particularly of the international aspects of the trade, leaving Ukraine's state-run monopoly Naftohaz to maintain the pipeline system and provide low-cost gas to domestic consumers. This being impossible,

the system was perpetually in debt and Ukraine's state coffers – and therefore its citizens – suffered as a result.

Despite an attempt to cut off RUE from the gas business by Yulia Tymoshenko in 2009, it has remained a key player in the gas business since Yanukovych came to power in 2010 and Firtash's fortunes have improved. Firtash filed suit in the Stockholm Arbitration Court in 2009, claiming that Rosukrenergo was the legal owner of the gas reclaimed by Tymoshenko and, by the time the suit was heard, Yanukovych had been elected and his government did not contest Firtash's ownership. Firtash was paid back for the gas, along with a 10 per cent government penalty payment all owed by the bankrupt Naftohaz. Over time, a new Firtash-controlled company, the Ostchem Holding Company registered in Switzerland in 2012, now leads in the Russian-Ukrainian natural gas trade.

In April 2011, the government cancelled Naftohaz's monopoly over gas imports and made it possible for Firtash to import gas directly from Russia and beyond. For reasons that are unclear, but are probably related to Firtash's connections in Russia and Central Asia, Ostchem is able to import gas at favourable prices from Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan and supply gas to Ukrainian companies which pay full price, leaving the Ukrainian state company Naftohaz to supply gas to the unprofitable and debt-ridden residential market.

The Ukrainian treasury has not fared well from this trade, but Firtash's empire has and its access to low-cost natural gas was crucial in enabling him to buy up a number of chemical companies that specialise in fertiliser production, starting in 2010. Ostchem plants currently manufacture all of Ukraine's ammonium nitrate and control four of Ukraine's six largest nitrogen fertiliser manufacturers, leading to Firtash being known in the media as Ukraine's "Fertiliser King".

But the biggest gain that Firtash has made since Yanukovych took office has been in Ukraine's titanium production business, over which he has a near-monopoly. While the history of Firtash's acquisition of this entire metal sector predates Yanukovych's presidency, it began when Yanukovych was prime minister during Kuchma's final term in office. Moreover, Firtash became closely associated with Yuriy Boyko, then the minister of Fuel and Energy, and profits from the infamous purchase of two sea rigs for more than \$400 million each (double the market price) ended up in the bank owned by Firtash in Latvia in 2011.

The breakdown of checks and balances

The peculiarity of Ukraine is that the privatised branches of the economy also are heavily subsidised from the state budget, as mentioned above. Thus the mining

industry in 2013 alone received a subsidy equal to 1.5 per cent of the annual health care budget for the entire nation. The solar energy business has been subsidised by interest-free credits from state banks, exemptions from taxation and by abuse of EU direct budget support.

Grand political corruption will be successfully curbed only by a national confrontation between all members of society and the ruling elite, and by the confiscation of the proceeds from corruption of the elites and their associates. This is now the challenge that confronts the EuroMaidan activists. The majority of contemporary strategies of fighting grand political corruption mistakenly aim at broadening legal restrictions, which often cannot be used due to a lack of rule of law. Effective and successful state governance that can facilitate the curbing of grand political corruption can only be achieved through the decrease of political control over material resources and the creation of legislative restrictions imposed by the combined efforts of the opposition and civil society. Ukraine is a good example of how the political opposition is forced to work in close cooperation with civil society, which actually started the EuroMaidan in November 2013. Civil society and the opposition perform different functions and, although they can mutually reinforce each other, they cannot substitute each other.

Free and fair elections alone will not resolve the problem of grand political corruption.

In the majority of cases, western political scientists who study the phenomenon of grand political corruption see it as a deviation from the universal practice of equal and fair distribution of material resources and benefits among all citizens. Such a deviation is legally restricted in old democracies and is severely prosecuted. However, this approach does not work in new democracies, including most of the post-Soviet countries, which suffer from a lack of a tradition of equal and fair distribution of national wealth among all citizens and a lack of the rule of law.

Those who are in power enjoy direct access to resources and, since resources are always limited, they secure access to resources for themselves and their associates alone. This requires control over the judiciary and law enforcement agencies.

Under the presidency of Viktor Yanukovich, Ukraine experienced the usurpation of control over all the branches of power by the executive branch. Unacceptable decisive influence on the appointments of judges to the Supreme Council of Justice as well as dismissals and disciplinary measures taken against judges have been seen as major factors that have increased the dependence of the judiciary on executive power. Ukraine committed itself to reforming the Prosecutor's Office upon joining the Council of Europe, but nothing has been done in that respect.

The effect is that the Ukrainian prosecutor general holds an immensely powerful function not much different from the *Prokuratura* of Soviet times. His tasks are not only to deal with traditional prosecution but also to have a general oversight on judges' professional behaviour and adherence to professional standards and legality control functions, which in most other European countries are to be found in an ombudsman institution. Ukraine does have an ombudsman, but he has different functions.

Additionally, the prosecutor general has gained an additional control function over the judiciary. Last year, the prosecution initiated 600 disciplinary cases against judges according to a public statement by the deputy prosecutor general, and information indicates that at least 38 judges have been dismissed versus an average of 6.5 a year previously. If the background is the fight against corruption, it is remarkable that only a few of those dismissals followed a criminal conviction against judges. The judges must feel their independence is under strong pressure from the dominating influence of prosecution on their future. Whatever the need to discipline judges, prosecutors should definitely not be responsible for it; that disturbs the balance of power between the prosecution and the judiciary.


Crucial factors

In countries like Ukraine, the United Nations Convention against Corruption, along with other anti-corruption bodies, has not worked. Fair and free elections have also not resolved the problem of grand political corruption. According to Transparency International, the majority of countries where grand political corruption has been booming are nominal democracies, rather than autocracies. The successful curbing of grand political corruption in new democracies anticipates the long-term strengthening of the role of civil society along with a growing middle class to control the governing elites. Besides, the change of the ruling elites requires not just fair elections, but establishing clear and transparent rules regarding political financing.

Ukraine's EuroMaidan movement shows that the main participants of the fight against grand political corruption are a broad coalition that includes both the opposition political parties and civil society. The coalition's activities are focused on elaborating effective steps to overturn the ruling elite, improve state governance and stop favouritism. No country can be changed without domestic collective action by the media, political opposition and civil society; the latter should maintain its watchdog function even after the successful change of government. The opposition in Ukraine has learned the hard way to cooperate with civil society on equal terms, and Ukraine's experience so far shows that parity may be possible. Whether this

parity will be maintained now that the revolution has entered its next phase, however, remains to be seen.

The present situation with Russia invading Ukraine is closely linked to the grand political corruption and the fact that Vladimir Putin's governing elites, as well as Putin himself, feel threatened by the possibility of losing their ill-gotten assets. According to some estimates Putin's combined ownership stakes would give him a personal net worth of \$70 billion. Since most of his assets are hidden, Putin allegedly has used his power to build large secret ownership stakes of several multi-billion dollar commodity firms. His most vocal critics assert that Putin has leveraged his power to acquire a 4.5 per cent ownership stake in the natural gas producer Gazprom, a 37 per cent stake in the oil company Surgutneftegas and a 50 per cent stake in the Swiss oil-trader Gunvor. Gazprom alone gets over \$150 billion in revenue annually, Guvnor \$80 billion and Surgutneftegas over \$20 billion.

Since Putin does not have the above assets in his name and uses intermediaries to maintain his possessions, as soon as he loses his power, his destiny will not be different than that of Yanukovych. In order to prevent this scenario, Putin risked the invasion with Ukraine, calling his act a mission of mercy to protect the Russian-speaking population in Crimea and south-eastern Ukraine. 

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Between the Past and Uncertainty

MAKSYM KHYLKO

Although it seems that the revolution is over, Ukraine now faces a number of **critical challenges**. One serious challenge is the ongoing Russian interference. In addition to much-needed aid and assistance, the European Union must provide a clear position on the unacceptability of Russian intervention.

The new Ukrainian political nation was born at the Maidan when Ukrainian nationalists stood arm-in-arm with Jews, Tatars, Belarusians, Armenians and others, dodging snipers' bullets, to protect their common right to live in an independent, free and European Ukraine. Ukrainian-speaking and Russian-speaking Ukrainians blessed each other before risking their lives for the sake of the universal ideals of democracy. Civil society was also born when the people of the Maidan self-organised medical services, logistics, security, information technology and PR services; and when the people managed to force the political leaders to listen to their voices.

Now comes the great responsibility for this newly-born political nation and civil society to not lose these achievements of “the Revolution of Dignity”, as many now call it. Much work will need to be done by the civil sector to consolidate the whole country with the commitment to democracy and respect for human rights. Genuine civil control over the authorities must be established.

A new government by the people and for the people

The people of the Maidan have promised to stay until they see a new government free from the corrupt politicians of the past. On February 26th 2014, the acting President of Ukraine Oleksandr Turchynov came to the Maidan to present a new

government, a 50/50 mix consisting of civil activists and experienced politicians. Tymoshenko's *Batkivshchyna* (Fatherland) party received seven posts, including the prime minister, the minister of the cabinet, deputy prime minister for the European integration and the ministries of the interior, justice, fuel and energy and social policy. Arseniy Yatsenyuk, who lost the chance to become a nominee for the presidency after the release of Yulia Tymoshenko, has agreed to lead this new government, doomed to clean the Augean stables of the Yanukovych legacy.

The *Svoboda* party also received positions in the new government. The prosecutor general, deputy prime minister, minister of agriculture and minister of environment will all be members of the *Svoboda* party. Vitaliy Klitschko's *UDAR* party refused to take part in the new government, but promised to support it.

The people of the Maidan have promised to stay until they see a new government free from the corrupt politicians of the past.

The people of the Maidan greeted most of the new nominees for ministers, but jeered some of the names of the "experienced" politicians. However, it is impossible to please everyone. This is the first Ukrainian government with so many positions now held by civil society activists, such as deputy prime minister for humanitarian affairs and the ministers of economics, education, culture, health and of youth and sport, as well as the anti-corruption bureau.

Vitali Klitschko has declared his firm decision to run for the presidency (elections are scheduled for May 25th of this year). Many people are disappointed by his indecisive behaviour during the conflict, but he does seem to be someone who has the ability to unite Ukraine. What is more, he is free from a corrupt past. It seems that some western countries, especially Germany as well as the United States, would prefer to see Klitschko as president; while Russia may favour Yulia Tymoshenko, who is more familiar to Vladimir Putin.

Many people in Ukraine welcomed Tymoshenko's release from prison but have strong reservations about her return to politics. They have not forgotten about her previous dubious relations with oligarchs or the 2009 gas deal. Given the limitations on the president's power in the Constitution of 2004, Tymoshenko may actually prefer to influence policy through a loyal prime minister and parliamentary speaker from behind the scenes. But one should not exclude the possibility of her running for president. She would then oppose Klitschko, and this might jeopardise the unity of the Ukrainian nation. Nonetheless, whoever the new president is he or she will have to keep in mind that the people of Ukraine will refuse to be duped again and will keep a close eye on all activity.

To ensure fair and transparent elections

It may be a challenging task to ensure the fairness of vote counting in the May presidential elections in a number of regions where the supporters of the former President Viktor Yanukovich still control the local authorities, the police and the courts. In previous elections, some local officials in the eastern regions have “managed” to provide an almost 100 per cent turnout with a near 100 per cent of the votes going to their candidate. We must consider that Russia’s interference in the election process may be extremely high, including financial support as well as public relations and media support for an anti-European candidate. Russian political consultants close to the Kremlin are already calling for “specialists for special projects and mass actions” in Ukraine.

The Kremlin’s **primary target** is deepening the inter-regional divide in Ukraine.

The Kremlin’s primary target may not be a victory of the favourable nominee but the deepening of the inter-regional divide in Ukraine. Russian television, which is the main source of information for most residents of the eastern and southern regions of Ukraine,


continues to carry out a propaganda campaign to intimidate locals into fearing the “fascists” from the Maidan.

Following Yanukovich’s governance, the state treasury is nearly empty. Russia is likely to resume its “trade war” and withdraw the gas discount. The Ukrainian economy is on the verge of default while the EU, the International Monetary Fund and the US continue to talk about possible financial aid. Let us hope that they will not demand unpopular reforms before the elections because even a temporal deterioration of social standards will be exploited by Russian media propaganda.

The most vital challenge is to prevent the Russian intervention, which is much more likely than the western leaders believe. In fact, the Kremlin has already launched the “Georgian scenario”. Russian MPs have visited Crimea to encourage local authorities to separate and have promised to simplify procedures for granting Russian citizenship. Russian top officials have publicly declared that there exists a real threat to Russian citizens in Ukraine and they have promised to protect them if necessary. A conflict may be provoked any time by the Russia-sponsored “vigilantes” paramilitary and Cossack factions created in some eastern and southern regions, including Crimea, where the Russian Black Sea Fleet is located. On February 26th 2014, Vladimir Putin ordered an inspection of the Russian Armed Forces in the Western and Central Military Districts. A total of 110,000 troops, 880 tanks, 110 helicopters and 1,200 pieces of military hardware have taken part in this military exercise near the Ukrainian border.

To understand why the Kremlin is so afraid of the Maidan one should read what Russian opposition activists, independent journalists and popular bloggers write about the events in Kyiv. They recommend that the Russian people use the Maidan as an example to learn how to assert their own rights.

The revolution may be over, but the crisis is far from resolved. The EU has the opportunity to provide three definite things to Ukraine: a clear position on the unacceptability of Russian intervention, assistance in carrying out transparent and democratic elections (including as many observers as possible) and immediate financial assistance without immediate demands for the unpopular reforms before the elections.

It seems that the EU is shocked by the rapid changes in Ukraine and that it traditionally tries not to irritate Russia while the Kremlin considers such positions to be the evidence of weakness. The attempts to appease Putin over Ukraine, however, are doomed to yield no positive results. If the European Union fails to protect Ukraine from aggression, then Moldova and the Baltic states could be next. It is time for the EU, having the ambitions of a world power, to take more responsibility for the fate of the continent. 

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Russia's Elusive Search for Soft Power

JAMES SHERR

Throughout recent history, Russia's leaders have invested in the country's image as much as its power. Under the watch of Vladimir Putin, "soft power" not only entered the lexicon, but attracted political and financial resources. Yet, Russia's understanding of soft power is markedly different from western thinking and practice.

The political system associated with Vladimir Putin derives its appeal from a very simple proposition: Russia is not the West. From the vantage point of 1991, the proposition would have appeared jarringly counter-intuitive. Western values and the "power of attraction" seemed to be synonymous, not only to Joseph Nye, the author of the term "soft power", but to all but a rump of economically retrograde and incorrigibly illiberal states. In most of post-communist Europe, the western model was adopted with partial or stunning success. Those who could not adopt it – or would not do so – learned to master its discourse and mimic its practice.

By the end of Vladimir Putin's second term as president, the coordinates of thinking had changed significantly. The flawed introduction of the liberal market model to Russia in the 1990s engendered widespread bitterness and disillusionment. Not for the first time in the country's history, a large portion of Russians concluded that western values and practices were irrelevant, if not harmful, to their distinctive Russian circumstances. Such sentiments were not confined to Russia.

Soft power or soft coercion?

The wars of the Bush administration, its hubris and cultural deafness, divided the West and profoundly tarnished the image of the United States. Whilst enlargement of the European Union had widened the sphere of liberty and prosperity in Europe, its templated approach to "best practice" was also producing its share of disorientation

and discontent even before the Eurozone crisis. On the eve of the Georgian war in 2008, Russia was more prosperous than at any time in its history. Abroad, the revival of Russia's collective self-respect instilled attraction and apprehension in equal measure.

Yet by the end of Dmitry Medvedev's brief and disappointing presidency, the coordinates had begun to shift again. It is now an open secret that Russia not only has entered a trajectory of stagnation, but that its increasingly predatory economic system is the principal obstruction to its

Putin's power might be corroding internally, but it remains a **diplomatic asset** to countries that oppose the "dictatorships" of Brussels and Washington.

modernity and competitiveness. In its self-designated "sphere of privileged interests", its influence intimidates, but is losing its ability to reassure and impress. Despite this swelling inventory of disappointments, the Russian Federation knows its own interests and pursues them with deliberation and purpose. Putin's "vertical" of power might be corroding internally, but it remains a diplomatic asset and a tangible comfort to countries that oppose the "dictatorships" of Brussels and Washington.

In this brief period, as well as its longer history, Russia's leaders have invested in the country's image as much as its power. Under Putin's watch, "soft power" not only entered the lexicon, but attracted political and financial resources. Yet, in several respects, Russia's understanding of soft power departs markedly from western thinking and practice.

Soft power is not innate to Russia. Respect for hard power is part of its political metabolism. "The state," as Trotsky said, "is not pure spirit" and one need not be a Trotskyite to agree with him. Both the establishment of the Soviet Union and its preservation during the Second World War were, by any conventional standard, gruesome enterprises. It is indicative that soft power, widely seen as the EU's strength, was relied upon by the Soviet Union during times of weakness. Whereas the western liberal distrusts any arrangement not underpinned by consent, Russian *derzhavniki* – ideologists of great power – distrust any form of consent not underpinned by "hard" guarantees. This historical context puts Russian soft power in a different context from that which citizens of liberal democracies take for granted.

A second difference is more recent. The rigours of the Soviet collapse (which reduced Russia to the European borders of 1560) re-legitimised the Darwinian view of the world that Gorbachev's "new thinking" had so eloquently challenged. For ten years, Russia bore less resemblance to a state than to an arena in which powerful interests competed for wealth and power, unconstrained by rules, and invariably at the country's expense. These conditions rewarded those who had a "morally uncomplicated view of economic structures and their uses". Those who did not lose

out, and many lost all. Abroad, geopolitics and (under Putin) geo-economics filled the intellectual vacuum created by the discrediting of Marxist-Leninist ideology. Today, in business as much as politics, interdependence is more widely seen as a condition of struggle than equilibrium. Few believe that mutual interest rules out the pursuit of unilateral advantage.

Divide rather than unite

A third difference is that the morally cold Leninist asperity about the relationship between ends and means retains its hold. In advancing any aim, Putin's Russia, like Lenin's, employs tools in combination and makes use of all the means available. Therefore, "soft power" is invariably accompanied by covert measures and by harder forms of influence. Russian expressions like *prinudit k druzhbe* (coerce into friendship) and *protiv kogo vy druzhite?* (against whom are you waging friendship?) reveal an understanding of the world quite foreign to western liberalism. This intertwining of soft power with harder additives both undermines it and makes it more potent.

Fourth, money and power are closely entwined in Russia, and this imparts a specific flavour to a good proportion of Russian business abroad. The *chekist* heritage only accentuates these differences, as does the role of "special service" professionals in leading economic entities with investments and interests abroad.

Fifth, whereas liberal discourse about soft power is orientated around values, Russia today pitches its appeal to identities. Because identity is based on culture – and on affinity more than attraction – its hold is often deeper than adherence to values, which to many in the world (and not simply Russians) are little more than abstractions. This appeal is a great strength in Russia's relations with constituencies and countries who perceive that their traditions and distinctiveness have been traduced by Euro-Atlantic integration, moralism and liberal universalism, not to say intervention in their own affairs.

Yet despite this strength, a sixth and contradictory difference arises: Russia's self-designated soft power often serves to divide rather than unite. This is particularly so in Central and Eastern Europe and the so-called "near abroad", where policies designed to protect "compatriots", promote Russian culture and "correct distortions of history" often challenge the integrity and authenticity of other national cultures. Unlike western soft power, which seeks to "get others to want what you want", the essence of its Russian counterpart is to tell others what they want and, in the words of two Ukrainian experts, "mobilise those who already want it".¹

¹ Alexander Bogomolov and Oleksandr Lytvynenko, *A Ghost in the Mirror: Russian Soft Power in Ukraine*, Chatham House Briefing Paper, REP RSP BP 2012/01, January 2012.

Seventh, Russian soft power is effectively state power, and Russia's leaders do not readily accept that western soft power is any different. NGOs are seen as "political technology" that acquires geopolitical potency in combination with foreign actors and finance. The West's preoccupation with social media and the internet reflects and enhances its political potential to expand the western sphere of influence, whether in Libya, Serbia, Syria or Ukraine. The West's interest in civil society is seen as intrinsically subversive and, in Russia's near abroad, as intrinsically anti-Russian. In Russia, state programmes and doctrines securitise that which governments in liberal societies control with difficulty or not at all. Culture, business and Russian diasporas abroad are all defined officially as "instruments" of state policy.

The final difference lies in the fact that the most important target of Russia's soft power is the Russian people themselves. In contrast to Soviet times, Europe is no longer the world outside but a source of markets, ideas, investment and a place where over a million Russians live.

The West's interest in civil society is seen as intrinsically **subversive** and intrinsically anti-Russian.

Russia's authorities have no wish to turn the clock back on these changes, which they welcome and distrust in equal measure. Their civilisational counteroffensive against post-modernism and "liberal universalism" is designed to enhance respect for Russia's own distinctiveness in these complex conditions. Robust diplomacy, geo-economic competition and soft power are, in their aggregate, designed to create an international order conducive to the maintenance of the system of governance at home.

Respect and attraction

Russia's successes during the first two terms of Putin's presidency are widely attributed to two factors: the taming of Russia's oligarchs (resurrection of the power vertical) and the steady rise in global commodity prices beginning in 2003. The combination played a significant role in reviving Russia. But the psychological and "moral" dimensions of its revival are often overlooked.

Putin was determined to resurrect Russia as an emphatically modern state, European in outlook, but not liberal; ethnically diverse, but with a Russian cultural core. This entailed the resurrection of nation and state as the foundations of loyalty and policy. This construct, which acquired ideological force after the coloured revolutions of 2003-05, is juxtaposed to western post-modernism, which seeks to move beyond these foundations. In response not only to coloured revolutions, but EU integration, Putin and his ideologists sought to create a potent amalgam of Tsarist, Soviet and

post-Soviet values. In this *schéma*, “history” and “culture” acquire legitimacies of their own. As Putin declared in 2012, “The choice of the Russian people has been confirmed again and again – not by plebiscites or referendums – but by blood.”

This choice is not strictly confined to Russia. It also applies to the “historically conditioned relations” that defined the post-Soviet world and, with particular force, the two other branches of the great Russian people: Belarusians and Ukrainians. Although Moscow is at pains to underscore the independence and sovereignty of the Belarussian and Ukrainian states, it is equally emphatic that “kindred, humanitarian ties” need to be respected by the governments of these states and by others. As President Medvedev informed President Yushchenko of Ukraine in 2009, these ties engender, and must preserve joint security and tight economic cooperation. The previous year, he bluntly informed members of the Valdai Club, “you [the West] do not belong here”. In other words, Russia respects the sovereignty of its former Soviet neighbours, but maintains a right to define what it means in practice.

Yet in the outside world, Russia is an adamant defender of sovereignty and an orthodox Westphalian power. Whether the issue is Yugoslavia, Iraq or Syria, it upholds the strict demarcation line between internal and external affairs that underpinned the legal order of post-1648 Europe. Whatever the conduct of governments within their own jurisdiction might be, it is not the business of external powers. The Russian Federation not only advances the principle of a multi-polar order, but a world characterised by multiple values centres. This principled position has given Russia a reputation for reliability amongst partners, clients and others determined to resist the West’s attempts (*pace* Sergey Lavrov) to “monopolise the globalisation process”.

At the same time, it is based on hard political interest. The Kremlin is convinced that, once permitted, regime change becomes contagious. It is also convinced that the ultimate target of western inspired regime change is Russia itself. NATO’s 1999 intervention in Kosovo might have been justified, even unavoidable, but in Russian eyes it eliminated any pretence that NATO was a defensive alliance. In the view of the official Armed Forces journal, *Red Star*, “NATO is bombing Serbia, but aiming at Russia.” When western recognition of Kosovo’s independence followed in February 2008, the Kremlin felt confirmed in its apprehension that the bombing campaign was a dress rehearsal for “coercive diplomacy” in the South Caucasus: an apprehension that arguably played a part in igniting the Russia-Georgia war that followed. When NATO’s military campaign in Libya exceeded the strict humanitarian boundaries established by the UN Security Council, President Medvedev openly described it as a foretaste of what the West was planning for Russia.

These examples bring out the close connection between Russian toughness and Russian apprehensions. They also illustrate the continuing force of an axiom observed in Tsarist and Soviet times: defence of the homeland begins in other countries.


Respect without attraction

That axiom has a tangible impact on Russia's post-Soviet neighbours, much as it did on the USSR's Warsaw Pact allies. This would be enough to blunt the impact of Russian soft power in the post-Soviet neighbourhood as well as Central Europe. But there are other, equally weighty factors.

For one thing, Moscow has rarely bothered to ask whether its declaration of "kindred ties" is reciprocated, whether its compatriots abroad feel beholden to the Russian state or whether the creation of "firm good neighbourliness" is regarded as a mutual enterprise. Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs blithely declares that "the Russian diaspora abroad provides social and humanitarian support for the implementation of the interests of the Russian Federation in post-Soviet countries". Does it? The presumption that "the entire compatriot community is homogeneous" dogs Russia's policy in the near abroad.

Russia is convinced that the ultimate target of western inspired regime change is Russia itself.

So does a mode of cultural diplomacy antagonistic to majority populations in neighbouring countries, even where (as in Ukraine) this majority happens to be of Slavic ethnicity. The widely established Ukrainian view that there is no contradiction between having a Slavic and a European identity or, for that matter joining the EU and remaining on friendly terms with Russia, is an insidious threat to Moscow's entire "humanitarian" project. Russian cultural policy does not simply promote Russian culture. It challenges the integrity and authenticity of other national cultures in the former Soviet Union and the East Slavic world.

Finally, as recent events in Ukraine demonstrate, the failure of Russian soft power gambits can lead to the introduction of harder and more lethal ones. 



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Putin's Crusade

ANDREI P. TSYGANKOV

Since returning to the Russian presidency in 2012, Vladimir Putin has emphasised **strengthening Russia's traditional values** and articulating a new policy of uniting Russians. This conservative approach has also affected Russian foreign policy, exacerbating tensions with the West.

Since Vladimir Putin's return to the presidency in 2012, Russia's foreign policy has obtained an ideological justification. Beginning with his election campaign, Putin has promoted the vision of Russia as a culturally distinct power, committed to defending particular values and principles relative to those of the West and other civilisations. In his 2012 address to the Federation Council, Putin spoke of new demographic and moral threats that must be overcome if the nation is to "preserve and reproduce itself". In multiple statements, he criticised what he saw as Europe's departure from traditional religious and family values. In his 2013 Valdai Club speech, he quoted Russian traditionalist thinkers and declared "the desire for independence and sovereignty in spiritual, ideological and foreign policy spheres" as an "integral part of our national character". Finally, in his 2013 address to the Federation Council, Putin positioned Russia as a "conservative" power and the worldwide defender of traditional values.

Before Putin's third term as Russia's president, the Kremlin's discourse was largely shaped by ideas of adjustment to the international community and the protection of national interests. Throughout the 2000s, Putin was commonly dismissive of calls for a "Russian idea", instead filling his speeches with indicators of Russia's economic and political successes. In his 2007 address to the Federation Council, for example, Putin even ridiculed searches for a national idea as a Russian "old-style entertainment" (*starinnaya russkaya zabava*) by comparing them to searches

for the meaning of life. Dmitry Medvedev's emphasis on modernisation was yet another attempt to shape Russia's values as those assisting the country in its global integration.

Distinct civilisational values

Putin's priorities inside the country include strengthening Russia's traditional values and articulating a new idea to unite Russians and non-Russian minorities. Since early 2012, he has advanced the idea of a state-civilisation by recognising ethnic Russians as "the core (*sterzhen*) that binds the fabric" of Russia as a culture and a state. While proposing to unite the country around Russian values, Putin also argued against "attempts to preach the ideas of building a Russian 'national,' mono-ethnic state" as "contrary to our entire thousand-year history" and "the shortest path to the destruction of the Russian people and the Russian state system".

Russian foreign policy is not only about the balance of power and economic development, but also of Russia's **resurgence** as a civilisation.

Another theme developed by the president in his 2012 inaugural address to the Federation Council and his other speeches is that of a strong state capable of addressing "corruption" and "flaws of the law enforcement system" as root causes of ethnic violence. Finally, being

especially concerned with national unity, Putin pointed to "deficit of spiritual values" and recommended strengthening "the institutions that are the carriers of traditional values", especially the family and schools.

The emphasis on distinct civilisational values has affected Russia's foreign policy. Behind the opposition to western global hegemony, special relations with Asian and Middle Eastern countries or building the Eurasian Union are not only considerations of balance of power and economic development, but also those of Russia's resurgence as a state-civilisation. Although the Kremlin's values-based priorities are yet to be fully specified and articulated in foreign policy doctrine, instinctively Moscow is acting on them by seeking to defend what it views as traditional family values, national unity and sovereignty in foreign affairs.

In its relations with western nations, the Kremlin's newly-found values have exacerbated tensions. Many in Europe and the United States do not believe that Moscow is interested in deepening cooperation with the West and advocate a tougher approach to Russia based on its attitude towards human rights. Western leaders voiced their disagreement with the handling of protesters by the Kremlin in Russia. The sentencing of members of the punk band Pussy Riot for hooliganism

was met with strong criticism by western governments, calling the punishment “disproportionate” and urging the Russian authorities to “ensure that the right to freedom of expression [be] upheld”.

Frequent disagreements

Another expression of United States-Russia disagreement concerned the case of Russian lawyer Sergei Magnitsky, who was defending a foreign firm but was arrested and died while in detention. In December 2012, the US Congress, while normalising trade relations with Russia, passed a bill named after Magnitsky that imposed visa bans and asset freezes on human rights violators in Russia. In response to western human rights pressures, the Kremlin demanded non-interference in Russia’s “internal affairs” and a respect for traditional values. The Russian State Duma retaliated to the Magnitsky bill by passing the “Anti-Magnitsky Act”, which targets US citizens whom Russia considers to be violators of human rights and bans the adoption of Russian children by US citizens. The crisis provoked speculation of a new Cold War in the making, with US-Russia relations being jeopardised by a weak presidency in Washington.

Western countries also expressed disappointment with Russia’s new law against “propaganda” of “non-traditional sexual relations among minors” passed in June 2013. According to the Kremlin, the law does not seek to police adults but aims to protect children from information that rejects “traditional family values.” Eighty-eight per cent of Russians support the law. However, many human rights activists in the US and Europe see it as an “anti-gay law” and have called for a boycott of Russian vodka and the Winter Olympics in Sochi. Western leaders also publicly spoke out against the new law.

Russia and the West also frequently disagree over the Middle East. As western nations supported the military opposition in Syria, the Kremlin strengthened ties with those within the Syrian opposition interested in working with Russia and blamed European and American leaders for violating sovereignty and spreading instability in the Middle East. As the United States accused Bashar al-Assad’s regime of using chemical weapons against military opposition, Russian officials rejected such accusations. Since the appointment of John Kerry as the new secretary of state, the US and Russia tried to organise peace conferences on Syria, but their priorities continue to differ. While western countries have no

By granting Snowden asylum, Russia positioned itself as a **protector** against global interferences from hegemonic power.

faith in Bashar al-Assad's commitment to peace, the Kremlin strongly pushes for negotiations between the Syrian leader and the military opposition.

In comparison with the West, many emerging nations largely share Russia's values-based priorities. China, India, Brazil and many Middle Eastern nations have never been critical of the state of human rights or domestic political system in Russia. On the Middle East and Syria, Russia frequently acts jointly with China by vetoing Syria resolutions introduced in the United Nations Security Council by western nations. Moscow and Beijing are concerned that such resolutions would pave the way for

military intervention and regime change in Syria, as happened in Libya. By building on non-western resentment towards US hegemony and military interventions, Putin has strengthened his global reputation as an advocate for sovereignty, national unity and cultural values. While meeting with

Even while a critic of European policies, Putin commonly presents Russia as “an inalienable and organic part of **Greater Europe**”.

Barack Obama during the G-20 summit in St Petersburg, Putin obtained support of most non-western leaders present for his position on Assad and the Middle East. In addition, the Kremlin was able to take advantage of the affair surrounding Edward Snowden. By granting asylum to the former CIA employee who defected to Russia, Moscow again positioned itself as a defender of national sovereignty and protector against global interference from a hegemonic power.

Values as a threat

Russia's values-based priorities are supported by its policies in the former Soviet Union. In addition to economic benefits, Russia seeks to increase its influence in the region by promoting its newly articulated values of state-centred national unity, traditional religious ties and respect for cross-cultural relations and sovereignty and non-interference from large powers such as the United States, the European Union and China. In October 2011, Putin proposed to build a new Eurasian Union among the states of the former Soviet Union. He emphasised the open nature of the proposed union and laid out economic incentives for joining it, including increase in trade, common modernisation projects and improved standards of living.

The Eurasian Union initiative is built upon Russia's other regional integration efforts. In 2010, Russia initiated a Customs Union that includes Belarus and Kazakhstan. In the following year, Russia invited Ukraine to join the Customs Union, promising another major discount for gas prices. Armenia and Kyrgyzstan are being considered for membership, too. In Belarus and Ukraine, Russia's civilisational arguments have to do with the three countries' Slavic and Orthodox

Photo: Presidential Press and Information Office (CC) commons.wikimedia.org



President Vladimir Putin inspects the readiness of the Russian Air Force in 2012. The likelihood of further crises in Russia-West relations, such as in Crimea, remains high. The two sides are plagued by mutual suspicion and mistrust.

Christian values. With respect to the Muslim states of the region, however, the Kremlin advocates the notion of cross-cultural ties and a similarity in political systems with highly concentrated authority. By capitalising on high oil prices, the Kremlin contributed to reversing the pro-western revolutions in Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan by supporting those governments in favour of stronger ties with Russia.

Russia's regional initiatives were met with opposition from those outside the former Soviet Union who perceive the Kremlin's promoted values as threatening. Former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton referred to it as "re-Sovietisation" and promised to find "effective ways to slow down or prevent it". Speaking for many in the US political class, Republican Senator John McCain called the proposed Eurasian Union "an old idea that the Russians have had dating back to the days of the Tsars".

European leaders also perceived the idea as threatening. They were especially concerned about Ukraine's being pulled into the Russia-centred union and worked against it by characterising the proposed arrangement as anti-European and offered Kyiv an opportunity to sign an Association Agreement with the European Union. Moscow actively discouraged Ukraine from taking the step towards Europe, which cultivated in Ukraine's decision not to sign the agreement with the EU at the Vilnius Summit in November 2013. However, the choice by then-Ukrainian president Viktor Yanukovich was contested by the opposition that favoured the country's pro-European development and was critical of his political and economic policies at home. Being pulled in different directions by Russia and the EU, Yanukovich

refused to accept the opposition's conditions, but also declined to use force to restore order. As a result, the country experienced violence and destabilisation.

China too reacted critically to the Eurasian Union initiative albeit not by criticising Moscow's values-based priorities. Instead, Beijing made an economic argument by inviting former Soviet states to join a larger China-centred trade and transportation arrangement titled the Economic Belt of the Great Silk Road. Even while sharing Russia's criticisms of the West's interventionism and preference for a strong state-political system, China acted on its own increasing economic ambitions in Eurasia.


Moscow's new civilisational discourse is not exclusively focused on distinctiveness from the outside world. Putin remains keenly interested in strengthening Russia's relations with the European Union and the United States in a global world. Importantly, the recent Foreign Policy Concept signed by Putin into law in February 2013 describes the world in terms of "rivalry of values and development models within the framework of the universal principles of democracy and the market economy". Although Putin feels threatened by the West's human rights rhetoric and is concerned with the European Union and the United States' international policies, he continues to value their contribution to global civilisation and Russian development. Even while being critical of European states' policies, Putin commonly presents Russia as "an inalienable and organic part of Greater Europe".

More crises ahead?

Vladimir Putin's "conservative" foreign policy turn is unlikely to bring the results that the Kremlin expects. Even though Moscow has not defined Russia's values as anti-western, the West is sceptical of the legitimacy of these values. The elites in the US and the EU mistrust Russia and frequently present its domestic and international policies as hostile to western values. The Kremlin's efforts to present its law against "propaganda" of "non-traditional sexual relations" as consistent with values of mainstream constituencies in western countries are misguided. Although some groups in the West hold homophobic stereotypes, members of the mainstream political class in the West – liberal or conservative – rarely share them. The US and Europe will also remain sceptical of Russia's insistence on values of sovereignty and non-interference in international relations. Russia and the West will therefore continue to disagree on how to stabilise Syria or Ukraine. Nor will western nations be supportive of Russia's state-dominant political system by viewing their own institutions as "democratic" and therefore superior to those of "authoritarian" Russia.

Outside the West, the Kremlin's values-based foreign policy is likely to be a mixed bag. Russia is internally constrained in building a Eurasian Union. In December,

Putin pledged 15 billion US dollars to Ukraine to assist its economic recovery and lure it into the Customs Union. However, modest economic growth of only 1.5 per cent annually will limit Russia's ability to provide large subsidies to its neighbours, thereby undermining, rather than strengthening, its soft power and future benefits from mutual cooperation. In addition, Russian elites are divided between supporters of a strong-state developmental model and those favouring a European path. The external appeal of western and Chinese soft power projects will further curtail the Kremlin's ambitions. Elites in the former Soviet states are frequently unhappy with Moscow's lack of sensitivity toward their interests, even as some of them remain attracted to Russia and suspicious of other powers in the region.

Overall, the likelihood of further crises in Russia-West relations remains high. The two sides are plagued by mutual suspicion and mistrust. Economically and politically unstable, they also suffer from lacking domestic confidence and remain vulnerable to potential spikes in radicalism. The context of vulnerability may encourage their governments to be receptive to advice from hardliners. Mutual criticisms may then be viewed as validating claims to distinctiveness and exceptionalism empowering more nationalist voices and complicating international cooperation. Differences in values and interests, hence, will not disappear anytime soon and, at best, will only be narrowed gradually. 

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The Failed Lingua Franca of Eastern Europe?

LEONIDAS DONSKIS

The Russian language may have **failed as an imperial project** of becoming a lingua franca in Eastern Europe, but many brilliant minds of the region are inextricably linked to the language. Today, Russian is increasingly seen as a tool of political domination over the former republics of the Soviet Union.

Jokes are not terribly kind to the Russian language and its political reputation. One of them, for instance, deals with anticipations of the emergence of a new global *lingua franca* as the outcome of the rise of the economic and political power of a respective nation. It holds that while an optimist is still inclined to proceed with English and polishing all forms of its use for business and leisure, a pessimist works hard on his or her Russian. A realist, however, chooses neither. Instead, he or she opts for Mandarin Chinese. Curiously enough, the worst-case scenario comes straight out of the imagination of the Cold War era without giving much consideration as to whether the world, dominated by the Chinese or any other non-western power emerging after a successful authoritarian modernisation, would be any better off and happier.

Another joke immortalised by the humourist and author Leo Rosten appears even harsher towards the Russian language. Having observed an old Jew sitting on a bench and studying, a KGB officer approaches him and asks what he is studying in such a painstaking fashion. “Hebrew,” the old man answers. “And why do you need it?” smiles the KGB guy. “You will not go to Israel without special permission, won’t you? Additionally, you are much too old to need a new language.” “That’s the whole point,” sighs the old Jew. “When I die, suppose I will go straight to Heaven and then I will badly need Hebrew.” “Yes, but what if you go straight to Hell?” asks the nosy KGB officer. “No problem,” smiles the Jew, “I already speak Russian fluently.”

A Baltic philosopher

For Lithuanians, Latvians and Estonians, whose histories and cultures had long been tied to Russia, the Russian language does not appear as something that we can paint in black and white. Imperial languages do have their centres of gravity, as Lithuanian poet and dissident Tomas Venclova once noted. In the Baltic states, some of the most eminent thinkers and world-class scholars were native speakers of Russian. Along with Poles in Lithuania and Baltic Germans in Latvia and Estonia, without whose influences and works it would be impossible to understand the role and place of the Baltic region in the world, Russian speakers make up an entire trajectory of culture in the Baltics. Riga alone was the birthplace of such great Russian speakers as Isaiah Berlin, Sergei Eisenstein, Arkady Raikin and Mikhail Baryshnikov.

Interwar Lithuanian
philosophical texts reveal the
strong connection to 19th
century Russian philosophy.

One great Baltic Russian speaker, Vasily Sesemann (Vosylius Sezemanas in Lithuanian), unquestionably merits honourable mention. Born in Vyborg (Viipuri in Finnish) in the former centre of Karelia, Wilhelm Sesemann (1884–1963) was the son of a Finnish-Swedish father and a Russian-

German mother. This family also gave us Henry Parland (1908–1930), a talented Finnish poet who wrote in Swedish and was Wilhelm Sesemann's nephew. Until his premature death, Parland lived for some time in Kaunas and often met with his uncle, who was already a professor at Vytautas Magnus University. Well before that, Sesemann had spent many years in St Petersburg (or Petrograd, as it was then called) where he was deeply affected by Russian culture and became Vasily Sesemann. While studying philosophy in St Petersburg and Marburg, Sesemann continued his friendship with his secondary school classmate Nikolai Hartmann, a great Baltic German born in Riga who later became a famous German philosopher. Influenced by the neo-Kantians and phenomenologists, Sesemann also remained close to Russian philosophy and its theoretical orientations.

In 1923, he was invited as a professor to the newly established University of Lithuania, which became Vytautas Magnus University in 1930. In Lithuania, Vasily Sesemann became Vosylius Sezemanas, quickly learned the Lithuanian language and actively joined Lithuanian academic and intellectual life. He was undoubtedly the most authoritative and internationally recognised philosopher in Lithuania during that period. His works in logic, epistemology and aesthetics became classics of modern Lithuanian philosophy. Sesemann's *Aesthetics*, first published in 1970 after having been miraculously preserved in a village barn during the post-war

Stalinist repressions, earned him the reputation of being Lithuania's most renowned academic philosopher.

Despite his many-layered identity and affinity to Russian culture, Sesemann did not avoid the fate of many Lithuanian intellectuals. After the Soviet Union occupied and annexed Lithuania in 1940 and then again in 1944, Vytautas Magnus University ceased to exist and part of it – not only the library, but the staff as well – was transferred to Vilnius. Teaching at Vilnius University after the war, Sesemann soon fell into official disfavour for his connections to Russian émigré circles and keeping “subversive literature” in his house. In 1950, he was sentenced to 15 years in a camp in Taishet (Irkutsk). In 1956, he was released by the Khrushchev regime, and two years later he was again allowed to teach at Vilnius University.

Vasily Sesemann is a Baltic philosopher. This description fits him better than the long, cumbersome “Finnish-Russian-German-Lithuanian philosopher”. A builder of intellectual bridges, Sesemann joined German and Russian currents of thought with a sensitive attention to Lithuanian culture and

The Russian language circulated and lived its own **unique life** among the most eminent European thinkers.

a universal philosophical approach. Thus, he was an innovative theoretician close to the Russian formalists in aesthetics and theory of literature, one who enriched the study of culture, but who also, as the Finnish semiotician Eero Tarasti claims, was on the threshold of discovering the science of semiotics. He may, in fact, be regarded as one of the fathers of semiotics. Eero Tarasti's teacher in Paris, the eminent French semiotician of Lithuanian background Algirdas-Julien (Julius) Greimas, had a high opinion of Sesemann and his *Aesthetics* as well.

Traces of Russian culture and Eurasianism in Lithuania

An examination of several interwar Lithuanian philosophical texts reveals just how strongly Lithuanian philosophy was affected by the 19th and 20th century Russian philosophy. Key Lithuanian intellectuals wrote their doctoral dissertations on the prominent Russian religious thinker and social philosopher Vladimir Solovyov. During that period, in addition to Vladimir Solovyov, other Russian thinkers and writers, especially Nikolai Berdyaev and the Russian nihilists, influenced many Lithuanian academics and intellectuals. Roughly speaking, the philosophical vision of Lithuania as a bridge between the civilisations of the East and West put forward in pre-war Lithuania is nothing but another term for the specifically Russian notion of Eurasia, though this concept is usually reserved exclusively for Russia and its

historic mission. Stasys Šalkauskis, a Lithuanian philosopher and a devout reader and follower of Solovyov, wrote *Sur les confins de deux mondes* (*In the Confines of Two Worlds*, 1919, Switzerland) in French where he described Lithuania as a bridge between the civilisations of East and West. Šalkauskis's concept of a synthesis of civilisations is merely a Lithuanian variation on a classic theme in Russian philosophy.

“Eurasianism”, both as a philosophical tendency and model of cultural identity, was a central concept in Lev Karsavin's work and writing. Karsavin spent several decades lecturing in Lithuania and fundamentally influenced the development of Lithuanian philosophy of culture and cultural history. In 1928, he was offered a professorship at the then newly-founded University of Lithuania in Kaunas, where he had arrived from Paris. Like his close friend Vasily Sesemann, Karsavin deeply believed in Eurasianism both as a philosophical reference point and as a concept of uniquely Russian spirituality that is impossible to explain by putting Russia into western cultural categories or squeezing it into the world of oriental civilisational trajectories.

An eminent Russian religious thinker and an erudite cultural historian, Karsavin (1882–1952) soon became a fluent speaker of Lithuanian and established his reputation as one of the most brilliant lecturers at the University of Lithuania. His five-volume magnum opus, *Europos kultūros istorija* (*The Cultural History of Europe*, 1931–1937), written in Lithuanian and published in interwar Lithuania, is a work of European significance and has yet to be surpassed among Lithuanian contributions of this type. When the Soviet Union repeatedly occupied Lithuania after the Second World War, Karsavin was exiled to the Komi ASSR, where he died in 1952. A man with several planes of identity and also of multidimensional spiritual and moral existence, Karsavin converted to Roman Catholicism.

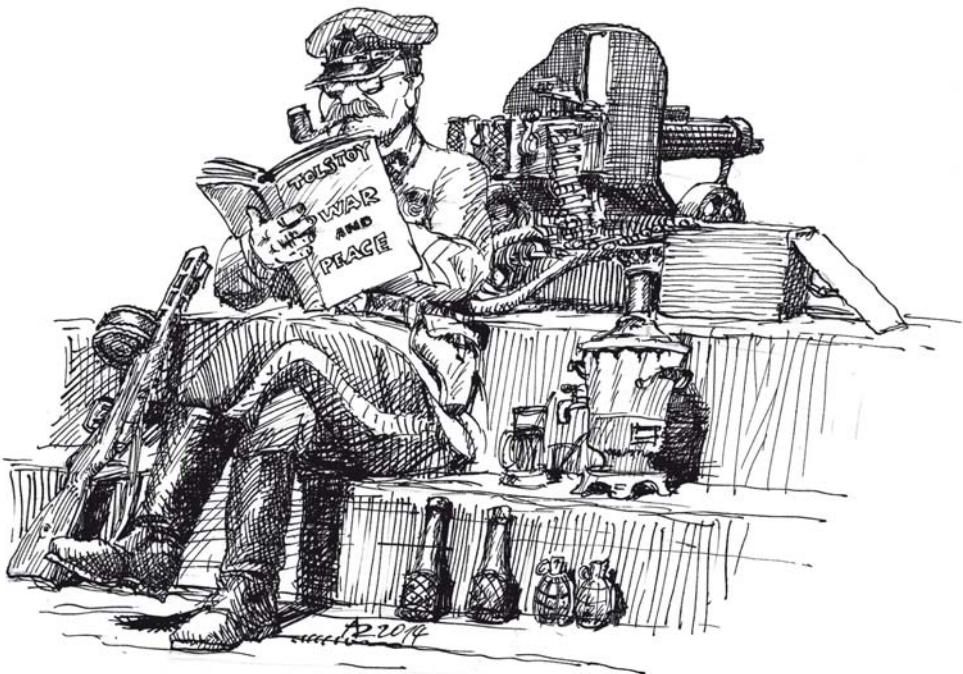
Lithuania symbolically reciprocated with Jurgis Baltrušaitis (1873–1944), a Lithuanian Symbolist poet and diplomat who wrote in Lithuanian and Russian, and who was to be included in the gallery of noted Russian poets. He is mentioned among other great Russian poets and writers whose names start with “B”: Alexander Blok, Andrei Bely, Valery Bryusov and Konstantin Balmont.

Juri Lotman and Estonia

In the late 1960s, an interest in semiotics and literary theory drove Tomas Venclova to Tartu where he attended Juri Lotman's seminar in semiotics and structural poetics. From 1966 to 1971, Venclova studied semiotics and Russian literature in Tartu University's doctoral programme. Lotman was a world-class semiotician and literary theorist who after the antisemitic cleansing in what was then called Leningrad (today's St Petersburg) was offered a professorship in Estonia.

He attracted many writers and literary scholars from political dissident circles that resisted Marxist-Leninist ideology and sought an alternative to dialectical and historical materialism as the compulsory methodology for the humanities and social sciences. Unable to gain a position in Leningrad, Juri Lotman succeeded in this respect at Tartu University in 1950, where he created the Tartu-Moscow Semiotic School. The first structuralist in the former Soviet Union, he became the famous pioneer of structural semiotics and a new type of literary and cultural theory. Members of the Tartu-Moscow school included such illustrious scholars as Boris Uspensky, Vyacheslav Ivanov, Vladimir Toporov, Mikhail Gasparov and Alexander Piatigorsky.

Needless to say, in those times choosing such disciplines as semiotics and structural poetics was in and of itself an overt and significant expression of dissent. Lotman, by the way, was not the only one who found a place at Tartu University after the antisemitic purges. The same fate befell the Leningrad philosopher and well-known aesthetician Leonid Stolovich. In this way, Estonia became one of the global centres for structural semiotics and literary theory. Juri Lotman's work and tradition are carried on in Estonia today by his son, Tallinn University Professor Mikhail Lotman.



Language of courage and dissent

Adam Michnik, who cleverly depicts himself as an anti-communist Russophile (the vast majority of Eastern and Central European intellectuals would share this view, as they could best be described as political Russophobes and cultural Russophiles), once confessed to me that he had long been a decent Polish patriot in the sense of disdain for the Russian language. Yet the critical moment came, according to Michnik, when he started reading Russian dissidents and found himself brothers-in-arms with Andrei Sakharov, Elena Bonner, Vladimir Bukovsky, Sergei Kovalev and all other great Soviet dissenters and human rights defenders. I remember how Michnik once described Russian as the language of courage and dissent. He strongly refused to confine Russian to political oppression, censorship and Russification, a move that did not seem particularly common and widespread in Eastern and Central Europe.

However, a great European speaking Russian is far from something unique. Fluent Russian speakers among the greatest European thinkers include Emmanuel Lévinas, Isaiah Berlin, Czesław Miłosz and Zygmunt Bauman. Russian circulated and lived its own unique life among the most eminent European Jews as well: Marc Chagall, Chaïm Soutine, Jacques Lipchitz and all other Parisian painters of Litvak origin spoke Yiddish and Russian. Paul Celan, who was born in Chernivtsi, Ukraine, and may well be described to have had several planes of identity, became one of the greatest Austrian poets. Celan, who read Ukrainian and Russian, admired Ossip Mandelstam's poetry and translated some of his poems from Russian into German. There are ample grounds to believe that Martin Buber, who spent his early years in Lviv, spoke and read Ukrainian and Russian as well.

Far from Leo Rosten's joke, Russian does not appear to have been a strong candidate short-listed for the competition of the best linguistic option in hell, but, instead, a true lingua franca of Eastern Europe due to its poetic and overall literary credentials, not to mention the depth and breadth of modern Russian culture comparable in terms of modern intellectual and aesthetic sensibilities only to *fin-de-siècle* Viennese cultural life.

Therefore, the Russian language seems to have had a parallel existence on its own in Europe, the existence that may have had nothing in common with Russian as a language of communism as a Secular Church. As conventional wisdom holds, since Moscow established itself in the 20th century as the Jerusalem of the World Proletariat, Russian became for communism what Arabic was and continues to be for Islam, Hebrew for Judaism or Greek and Latin for Christianity – the language of scripture. In fact, even on a closer look at such phenomena as Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera in painting (Rivera's works containing some references in Russian as

well as details linked to the Russian language), it may be suggested that Russian for pious European and Latin American communists was a holy language, a medium and a message at one and the same time.

On a personal note, I subscribe to Adam Michnik's point of view. It is difficult to expect average Europeans to restore the status and prestige of Russian only out of their reverence for Dmitry Shostakovich, Sergei Prokofiev, Sergei Rachmaninoff, Mikhail Bulgakov or Vladimir Nabokov. Yet the Russian language is deeply revered and engraved in the political memory and sensitivity of those who do understand and value the role of Russian dissidents and human rights defenders in the EU and its value system.

Great Europeans in Russian culture

Pyotr Chaadaev, Mikhail Bulgakov, Vladimir Nabokov, Sergei Prokofiev, Dmitry Shostakovich and Joseph Brodsky all appear to have been great Europeans in Russian culture. I will never forget how the noted American scholar George L. Kline, a towering figure in the area of Russian philosophy studies, greeted me in an academic seminar at Dickinson College in Pennsylvania when he understood that I was from Lithuania: "The Lithuanian Divertissement." That was the title of Joseph Brodsky's poem, a token of Brodsky's friendship with Tomas Venclova and his affectionate love for Vilnius and Lithuania. Kline said it in his elegantly fluent Russian.

Great Russian humanists and writers had their intriguing stories in the United States during the Cold War. Some disciples of Mikhail Bakhtin, Yuri Lotman and Sergei Averintsev – major world humanists of Russian origin – got jobs in the United States. Yet make no mistake: during the Cold War era the Soviet Union, i.e. Russia, was an archenemy whose cultural codes and nuances of history and identity had to be studied. In fact, much of the West's infatuation with Islamic studies nowadays stems from a similar, if not identical, impulse.

Russia was full of men and women of ideas fluent in several languages, translating William Shakespeare, François Villon and William Blake, and who were second to none in the world (among them are Boris Pasternak, Ilya Ehrenburg and Samuil Marshak). Yet these people were perceived as lesser Europeans or, at best, as the "poor cousins" of Europeans. This applies to all Eastern European intellectuals and scholars, especially humanists. Becoming a hostage of your country's politics or economic performance is a curse of modernity due to the fact that predominant historical-political narratives and interpretations that sell well come from the West. If you are not a product of the western educational system and, if your views have

not been moulded in western institutions of higher education, you will have to find a specific niche not to challenge or otherwise put into question the narratives that reflect the existing distribution of power and prestige.

Great Russian speakers and all other eminent Eastern Europeans know this sad truth better than anyone else.

The evil of banality

Whereas the former Soviet Union that captivated much of Europe and Latin America with its ideological charms and powers of deception and seduction seems to have been a Shakespearean tragedy, present-day Russia appears as a farce. It is a mafia state and a banal kleptocracy rather than a former Jerusalem of the Proletariat or the proud heir of the Enlightenment project. The former Soviet Union was able


Whereas the former Soviet Union seems to have been a Shakespearean tragedy, present-day Russia appears as a **farce**.

to fool millions of ambitious and dissenting minds, while Vladimir Putin's Russia is capable of attracting and corrupting only a European political Russophile of Gerhard Schröder's type or casting the spell on the far right – the new useful idiots of the Kremlin now appear to be the xenophobes, racists, antisemites and homophobes of Europe, such as Marine Le Pen and her ilk, instead of the folks of Lion Feuchtwanger or Jean-Paul Sartre's cut.

All of these reflect the role of the Russian language. After the policy of intense Russification practiced in Tsarist Russia, the Soviet Union stood much closer to the goal of the Sovietisation of local elites and societies than to the objective of linguistic and cultural Russification. On the contrary, highbrow Russian culture – especially classical and modern literature, academic music, and independent film and theatre directors – has always been an ally to the non-conformist parts of the local elites and Soviet republics in their intellectual and cultural resistance to the Soviet propaganda and ideological indoctrination. The Russian language offered writers and scholars a far wider readership and a broader space for self-fulfilment.

In Putin's Russia, the Russian language is increasingly seen as a tool of political domination over the former republics of the Soviet Union. Subsidising Russian-language radio and television channels in what the Kremlin perceives as the “near abroad” and their influence zone as well as fuelling antidemocratic debates and anti-EU sentiment there does a disservice to Russia and its immortal culture in terms of promoting the Russian linguistic and cultural presence in the world. The Russian language could have become a lingua franca of Eastern Europe. It failed irreversibly precisely because Putin and his regime stripped the political vocabulary

of Russia of its potent moral imagination and alternative potential. What is left is not even the banality of evil practiced by the Kremlin with no impunity and in the moral and political void created by the West and its impotence – the West that attempts to reset relations with a regime hostile to every single political and moral sensitivity of the EU and the US. Instead, it is the evil of banality whose essence lies in exercising power for no meaningful reason and with no love for humanity.

And this sounds like funeral music for the role the Russian linguistic and cultural presence in the world played in the 20th century. 

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The Omnipresent Feeling of Danger

PIOTR ŻOCHOWSKI

The centralised **security apparatus** is the spine of the Russian state. Security policy is shaped through the prism of potential, often dubious threats and assumes the animosity of external players towards Russia. The question remains whether this system can guarantee Russia's safety in the long term.

In February 2013, during the annual meeting of the College of the Federal Security Service (FSS), Vladimir Putin made things quite clear when he said: "Any direct or indirect intervention into our internal affairs, any forms of pressure on Russia and her allies and partners are unacceptable." Putin continued, "The citizens' constitutional right to the freedom of speech is inalienable and inviolable; however, no one has the right to spread hatred, destabilise society and the country and at the same time create a threat to the life, success and peace of millions of our citizens."

These words express, in a very concise way, the cornerstone of the philosophy of the Russian system of internal security. They echo some of the clichés well-known from history that are still very relevant, especially when we look at the activity of the Russian intelligence agencies: "Death to the spies" and "Lubyanka (the headquarters of the FSS, previously the KGB) doesn't sleep so the nation can sleep peacefully". And yet, today, in the second decade of the 21st century, the use of such acronyms as KGB, FSS or GRU (the Russian abbreviation for the Main Intelligence Directorate – editor's note) causes concern. Unavoidably, they bring to our minds Russian imperialism and the tendency of Russian authorities to carry out sophisticated special operations as tools of foreign policy. Evidently, when it comes to Russia's domestic affairs, there is a clear equalisation between the officials of the intelligence agencies and the members of the state's political elite.

The spine

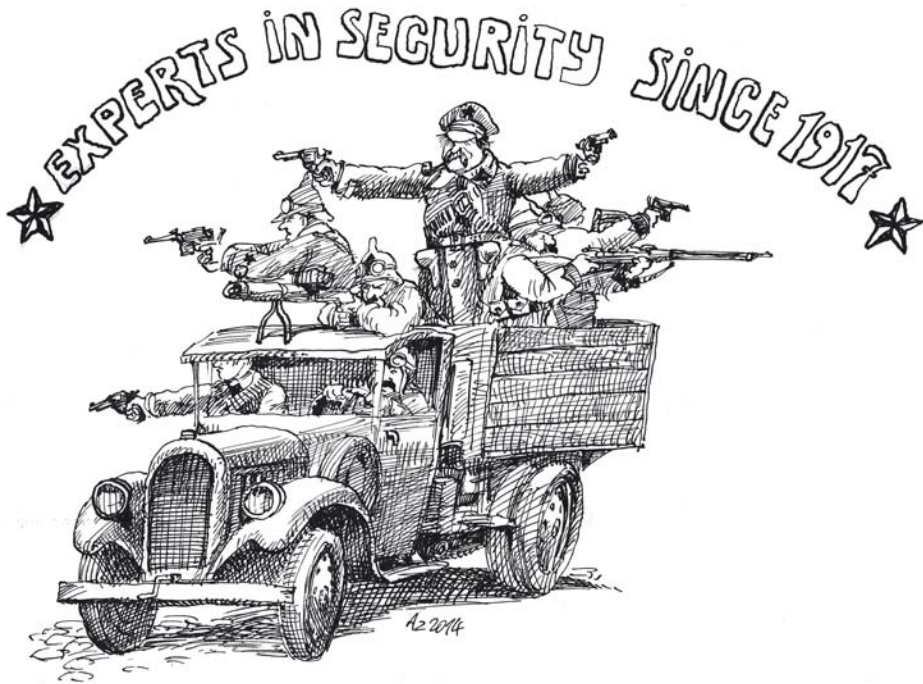
The centralised security apparatus is the spine of the Russian state system. The policy of the authorities is shaped through the prism of potential, often dubious, threats and assumes an animosity of external players towards Russia. But, does it guarantee Russia's safety?

From reading the doctrinal documents prepared in the past decade by the Security Council of the Russian Federation, one can get the impression that Russia cares for its safety more than any other country in the world. The authors of these doctrines and strategic documents have done their best to catalogue all the possible threats that the state and society must oppose. After reading these documents, one can even come to the conclusion that Russia, although it does not exclude international cooperation in the sphere of security, is like a besieged fortress fighting for its survival. The consequences of these doctrinal assumptions can be seen in some provisions of domestic legislation. Even just naming the basic legal acts that regulate Russia's internal security could be a topic of a day-long seminar. Here, it is enough to state that the security policy of the Russian Federation is regulated by frequently-amended, specific laws that determine the competences of the public security and intelligence agencies. For example, the 1995 Law on the Federal Security Services was amended more than 20 times. As a result, Article 12, which stipulates the capacities of the FSS in alphabetically-arranged points, had to include ordinal numbers as there were more points than letters of the alphabet.

The situation is further complicated since different agencies are often equipped with similar capacities. This means that, for example, two different agencies, let's say the FSS and the Ministry of the Internal Affairs, can be used for the implementation of the very same goals, potentially leading to increased repression. Russian laws regarding internal security are also very heavily dependent on political needs. A good example of this is the 2002 Law on Fighting Extremism. It allows, with great liberty, to stigmatise different social, religious or political groups whose views are not in line with the interests of the political elites in charge of the country.

The Kremlin's centralised model of managing the state seen as a high-risk structure has led to the creation of a clumsy bureaucratic monster. Among the institutions responsible for security in Russia are the so-called "security sectors": the previously-mentioned Federal Security Service, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Foreign Intelligence Service (GRU in the sphere of military intelligence), the Federal Drug Control Service, the Federal Protective Service and the Federal Migration Service. The financial security of the country is, on the other hand, guaranteed by such agencies as the Federal Tax Service, the Federal Financial Monitoring Service and

The centralised security apparatus is the spine of the Russian system.



the Federal Customs Service. The activities of the agencies are supported by the prosecutor's office and the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation. They examine cases regarded by the authorities as particularly important for the interest of the Russian state. To coordinate all of these activities and agencies, additional supervisory bodies, such as the National Anti-Terrorism Committee or the Federal Anti-Corruption Bureau, have been established.

One man to rule them all

As stipulated by law, only one person leads this complex, mutually dependent and bloated system: the president of the Russian Federation. The Kremlin model of managing security agencies does not include the participation of the government, let alone the control of the Parliament over the security sector. The latter is merely a legal facade and shows no ambitions in regards to this sphere of the state's activity.

With regards to the current management of the security sector, the key role of some agencies as well as the question of the president's personal confidence in the head of these specific agencies are significant. The make-up of the Security Council of the Russian Federation, which was established by President Putin in 2000, demonstrates the hierarchy of the importance of the individual heads of different agencies in the national security system of the Russian Federation. Among

the permanent members of the Security Council at the moment are: the Director of the FSS Alexander Bortnikov, the Director of the Foreign Intelligence Service (FIS) Mikhail Fradkov, the Minister of Internal Affairs Vladimir Kolokoltsev as well as the Minister of Defence Sergey Shoygu.

The status of the permanent members of the Security Council means that the heads of four security agencies (the FSS, FIS, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Defence) are included among the political elites with direct access to the president during weekly closed-door meetings. Their influence on decisions made by the Russian president in the sphere of military, internal and economic security remains significant. Crucial from this point of view are the broad executive competences of the heads of these agencies, their independence and personal responsibility before the president.

For many of the officials, the collapse of the Soviet Union was a bitter experience. In 1991, conflict at the top of Russia's leadership led to the collapse of the command structures. The main Soviet security agency did not manage to save the collapsing system and it did not manage

to protect the old elite from being alienated and forced to leave. Less than 10 years have passed and those now in power, known as the "Petersburg clique", took control of Russia; reinstating Felix Dzerzhinsky's maxim that "a Chekist should have a cool mind, a fiery heart and clean hands" as an element of Kremlin propaganda.

In the tradition of the intelligence agencies, the new political elites began to treat Russia as an object of special operations with the aims to create "statist capitalism", oust the corrupt oligarchy and clean up the remains of the Yeltsin-era democratic malaise. However, as is often the case with the officers of intelligence agencies, their activities focused on collecting crucial information, gaining control and skilfully manipulating their surroundings. An unquestioned success of Putin's gang has been their taking control of the political system of the Russian state, the elimination of potential political opponents and the commercialisation (or, as some prefer to say, privatisation with the maintaining of control by the government over businesses) of state assets.

Needless to say, achieving these aims would have been difficult without the active participation of institutions established to defend the state's security. After accomplishing these goals, the "Chekist gang" moved on to other domestic problems. The bloated security sector (which, according to conservative estimates, employs over 1.5 million officials and troops) did not end the immense corruption in Russia and belatedly took on the problem of cyberspace security, while the practice of

External and internal security has become one of the main elements of the **political strategy** of the Russian Federation.

fighting terrorism based on repressive measures in the Northern Caucasus turned out to be ineffective. To make matters worse, Russian intelligence employees were exposed in the United States and throughout Europe. This led to a decline in the attractiveness of Chekism in the new Russia. Russia's security institutions, in fulfilling their tasks, began to focus more and more on protecting the interests of the country's elites and the economic interests of the large state-owned enterprises and, to a much smaller degree, on domestic and foreign threats directly related to the safety of Russian citizens.

Management by fear

An analysis of the communication policy of security agencies indicates an intensification in the routine approach of providing security to the state and society. The areas of activity of the security sector include the unending fight with corruption (as ineffective as it is), counterintelligence operations (the biggest success of the FSS was the exposure of a US diplomat in May 2013 as a double agent) as well as the fight against terrorism.

Regulatory activities such as creating new legal regulations or the modification of existing ones are seen to be a cure-all for the worsening security situation in the state. An example of this includes the legislative changes aimed at fighting terrorism. On November 2nd 2013, Vladimir Putin signed a law amending the criminal code as well as some legal acts regulating the fight against terrorism. This legislation allows for responsibility for terrorist-related crimes to be placed not only on the terrorist themselves, but also on relatives of those responsible. This can be considered to be a form of introducing the rule of collective responsibility.

The amendment to the criminal code also introduced criminal responsibility for organising terrorist groups, participation in such groups and participating in terrorist trainings (the criminal code previously specified sanctions only for acts of terror, supporting terrorist activities and public calls for acts of terror). However, the question remains: do such regulations mean the greater effectiveness of the public security agencies? The example of Dagestan (after the bombing in Volgograd on December 30th 2013) shows that the use of force against people suspected of supporting terrorism is still the simplest method.

In 2013, based on the Kremlin's initiative, external and internal security became one of the main elements of the political strategy of the Russian Federation. Taking advantage of the globalisation of security threats, the Russian authorities decided to strengthen Russia's position in the world and manage the internal affairs of the state at the same time. Russia's security policy, implemented with the active participation of intelligence agencies, now focuses on carrying out an offensive on

several “fronts of strengthening security”. By building a network of threats, the authorities have been choosing areas which allow for the development of international cooperation (terrorism, radical Islam and illegal immigration). These attempts have served to tone down some external criticism of the activities of the Russian security apparatus towards its own society as well as strengthen the position of Russia as an equal partner and ally actively involved in resolving some international security problems. To even further improve its image, Russia has shown great engagement in the organisation of international sporting events: the Universiade in Kazan in 2013, the Olympic Games in Sochi in 2014 and the 2018 FIFA World Cup. All in all, we can say that the Russian security agencies have become active participants in activities directly related to the strengthening of Russia’s international position.

One of the first tasks undertaken by the security agencies was reformulating the list of threats to the security of the state, especially as it relates to foreign policy. The primacy of the international factor is evidenced in the fact that the “power propaganda”, while describing specific areas of threats, misses those related to economic security, growing social disaffection or the growth of corruption precluding the realisation of the Kremlin’s flagship projects such as the new technological centre in Skolkovo, the Olympic Games in Sochi and the restructure of the defence industry.

What is particularly unsettling is the fact that efforts are underway to fuel xenophobia in Russian society by pointing to the illegal immigration of people who are ethnically and religiously different as being a threat. The internal threats are hence placed in an international context. The problem of illegal immigration is linked with the threat of radical Islam and associated with terrorism. The Russian intelligence agencies have traditionally been propagating a hypothesis about an unending “silent war” against Russia that is being led by foreign (usually western) intelligence agencies. What is interesting is that, most likely for political reasons, no similar claims are made in regards to the threats coming from Chinese intelligence agencies. This constantly ongoing anti-western campaign is most characteristic of the conservative thinking of the Kremlin elites who fear the negative influence of western models on Russian society. It also supports the thesis that distance needs to be kept in contacts with the West.

Addressing the real threat?


The popularisation of FSS successes is, above all, favourable to the agency itself. Clearly, it contributes to reinforcing its image as one of the most effective security agencies in the world. At the same time, however, there are more and more

doubts with regards to the effectiveness of the implementation of the concept of a counterintelligence society. For the FSS, the greatest difficulty comes from the gradual opening of Russia to the world, which can be seen in the active participation of Russians in global social media networks. Not surprisingly, the FSS has broadened its counterintelligence spectrum to include areas that are related to the circulation of information, supporting further restrictive legal regulations.

Domestic problems related to **ineffective** social programmes are not among the promoted threats to Russian society.

The observable increase of public activities by the Russian security agencies should be seen as an element of the Kremlin's planned policy. The popularisation of the issues of state security is to serve the realisation of two main objectives, which have both an internal and external dimension. The first

is the entry of Russia's security sector into an interaction with the international community and the recognition of the role that Russian intelligence agencies play in positively influencing the shape of security. The second includes an attempt to inject into society a sense of shared responsibility for the state's security. That is why threats of an international nature (terrorism, radical Islam) are being popularised and the concept of an opponent or enemy of the state is being defined with respect to the counterintelligence scheme with the use of ethnic and religious factors.

It is worth noticing that the catalogue of threats prepared by the security agencies does not include Russia's domestic problems related to the negative effects of the lack of social reforms. Only on a very limited scale is the problem of social dissatisfaction brought to light by the anti-Putin demonstrations in larger cities. However, it is not assessed as being particularly dangerous. Maintaining control over social tensions by emphasising the increase of an external threat is nothing new. However, the noticeable publicising of these internal threats can be regarded as an attempt to diverge the attention away from an essential problem – the growing crisis of the current system of government. 

Translated by Filip Mazurczak

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From Security Consumer to Security Provider

WOJCIECH MICHNIK

This year marks the 15th anniversary of Poland's membership in NATO, one of the most important achievements for the nation in terms of security policy. It might seem a bit paradoxical, though, that since Poland has joined NATO and, five years later, the European Union, these organisations have undergone a crisis of institution and identity.

The year 2014 marks the 25th anniversary of the peaceful political and economic changes in Central Europe. For Poland (along with other members of Central Europe), this also constitutes the 15th and 10th anniversaries of membership in NATO and the European Union, respectively. As is usually the case with symbolic anniversaries, this is an occasion not only to celebrate achievements, but also reflect on the condition of NATO and the EU, and the Polish position within their frameworks.

It almost goes without saying that joining both NATO and the EU has been one of the most, if not the most, important achievements for Poland in terms of political, economic and security policy in the past quarter-century. As a country that since 1989 has come a long way from a system dominated by Marxist-Leninist ideology and a centrally-planned economy towards a western liberal democracy with political pluralism and a free-market economy, the Poland of 2014 is in its best shape in its modern history. And even though it has not been a painless transformation, it has left the Poles in better working and living conditions than under the corrupt and deeply immoral former communist system.

New Poland, old problems

The end of the Cold War welcomed by so many people in Central and Eastern Europe brought hopes as well as fears about the political and economic future of the region. Poland was no exception. Although events such as the Roundtable Talks and the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the implosion of the Soviet Union two years later meant that Poland regained its freedom and full independence; the new environment posed challenges and questions about vital Polish political and security interests. Even though a brand new international order was emerging, the elementary problems that stemmed from Poland's geopolitical situation remained unchanged: the securing of the country's borders, its physical security and the minimisation of the threat of an external attack.

By entering NATO, Poland proved to be a reliable partner and a **politically stable** entity.

From this standpoint, it should not come as a surprise that the Polish bid for NATO – the single most successive geopolitical alliance in contemporary history – came right after the Soviet Union and the Eastern

Bloc ceased to exist. In March of 1992, NATO Secretary General Manfred Wörner confirmed that “NATO's door is open” during his visit to Poland. The accession process, lengthy and filled with political hurdles, was completed in 1999, and on March 12th of that year Poland formally became a NATO member, along with Hungary and the Czech Republic.

As mentioned above, membership in NATO provided Poland with security guarantees in the case of a foreign military attack. This security rationale has become the prism through which Poland has viewed its role in NATO and vice-versa, defining NATO's usefulness to Poland. For this very reason the Article 5 guarantee (in short: an armed attack against one or more members shall be considered an attack against all, and other member states will assist those attacked) has been treated by Warsaw as the most important section of the treaty. After the Prague Summit of 2002 and the NATO decision to “go global”, it was clear that the alliance was drifting even further towards out-of-area posture, while it was also evident that for some states like Poland, Norway or the Baltic states, security concerns were predominantly regional as all of them shared at least one of their borders with an unpredictable neighbour. These concerns were later reinforced by the Russia-Georgia War of 2008.

Furthermore, Poland's accession into NATO structures not only helped in securing its political and strategic interests. At the end of the 1990s, it also was perceived as Poland's symbolic return to the West, and a welcome and necessary step in the path to closer integration with west European countries and the EU.

In this particular context, it meant that by entering NATO, Poland proved to be a reliable partner and a politically stable entity.

It might seem a bit paradoxical to the observer of Polish contemporary history that since Poland has joined NATO and the European Union five years later, these organisations entered stages of institutional and identity problems. Considering NATO's constant search of a new *raison d'être*, it is no wonder that NATO as an alliance, built in the conditions of the Cold War to fend off a possible Soviet threat, lost its focus and has been soul-searching ever since. When Poland entered NATO in 1999, the Alliance was just days before engaging itself in an air military campaign over Kosovo and in the midst of the debate about NATO's future strategic concept.

New dimension

The September 11th 2001 terrorist attacks and their aftermath, such as the United States-led campaign against terrorism, seemed to reinvent NATO and send it towards a new dimension both in a geographical and strategic sense. As Afghanistan became a distant testing ground for the military contingents of NATO members, Poland also took an active part in the mission of the International Security Assistance Force, contributing over 2,000 troops to the contingent. Unfortunately, NATO's efforts in Afghanistan - which at first looked like a mission based mainly on peacekeeping, reconstruction and assistance - turned into a counterinsurgency campaign against the resurgent Taliban. Not all of NATO's European allies were ready to provide military support needed for such an operation.

This, in turn, caused a stir within NATO itself.

No one was more vocal about the challenges that NATO came across in Afghanistan than then-US Secretary of Defense Robert Gates. In his now famous speech from June 2011, he explicitly warned that NATO is turning into a two-tiered alliance polarised

Poland has demonstrated that its role within NATO is **evolving**.

“between those willing and able to pay the price and bear the burdens of alliance commitments, and those who enjoy the benefits of NATO membership – be they security guarantees or headquarters billets – but don't want to share the risks and the costs.” It is worth underlining that Poland, which lost 43 soldiers in Afghanistan and paid a hefty price in resources and equipment, demonstrated that its role within NATO was evolving from the security consumer to the security provider.

From a broad perspective, it is probably easier to fully assess Poland's record in the EU than in NATO. According to a survey conducted by the Public Opinion Research Centre (CBOS) in May 2013, 72 per cent of Poles favour Poland's membership in the European Union, while 21 per cent hold a negative view. On the other hand, the

2013 Transatlantic Trends survey, a public opinion research project piloted by the German Marshall Fund of the United States, showed that in 2012 only 45 per cent of Poles subscribe to the notion that NATO is essential to Poland's security, with 40 per cent taking the opposite view. This is a striking difference when compared with 2002, when 64 per cent people surveyed viewed NATO as key to the security of Polish state.

Where does this gap between public support for the EU and NATO come from? It stems mainly from the fact that the economic cost, but also benefits, of being an EU member seems to be quite evident. Security, especially physical safety from an

With the unstable situation on its eastern flank, a NATO focus on regional defence would be welcomed in Poland.

external attack, is often taken for granted. For the average Polish citizen, the opportunities resulting from EU membership such as the common market, an open labour market, EU structural funds and investments in Polish infrastructure are both visible and

measurable. At first glance, it might seem that Poland as a part of NATO has not brought similar tangible and calculable profits. For the sceptics of Polish membership in the Atlantic Alliance, it has been typical to point out that Poland's engagement in the war in Afghanistan was costly, both in lives and money. That is a reason why for some Poles, the benefits of their country's membership in NATO might seem less obvious.

Nevertheless, the perception of NATO as being less beneficial for Poland than the EU misses a basic point: physical security often comes before economic well-being. In other words, it would be hard to enjoy the fruits of membership in the EU, if the threat of foreign attack was imminent. From this regional security perspective, with its political and military power still unmatched by any state or alliance, NATO's role can be primarily seen as a warranty of the peaceful Europe.

Challenges ahead

From today's Polish perspective, there are a few challenges for NATO that are especially worrisome. First is the growing disparity between United States and its European allies. Europeans in general do not believe that spending more on defence or even maintaining the current level of military spending is justified in times of peace. Moreover, there is a belief, particularly in the western half of the continent, that conventional warfare in continental Europe is a thing of the past. For the countries of Central and Eastern Europe with a gloomy historical record of being victims of foreign aggression, this claim is not that obvious. In Poland, the idea of ever-lasting peace is treated with caution, if not with a dismissive smile



– not that it would not be welcomed, just that history points towards an opposite trend. In all fairness, war in Europe does seem almost unthinkable. But that does not mean that it is improbable. And Poland, with its traditional approach to hard security, which is often mistaken for a Cold War mentality or even warmongering, has serious reasons to be sceptical about perpetual peace in the continent. It only takes a look into the current bloody crisis in Ukraine or the bumpy relations with Putin's resurgent Russia to understand why.

Second, the United States' strategy of pivoting towards Asia and the Pacific, to use former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's now-famous phrase, which in the long run will constitute much more than just a rhetorical shift, might mean that NATO's European leg will be much shorter and weaker. One might argue that Poland

was one of the biggest supporters of America's role in Europe once colourfully described by German scholar Joseph Joffe as "Europe's pacifier". By extension, any scaling down of US military presence and political influence in Europe that is not simultaneously backed by a strengthening in European defensive capabilities might put Polish security interests at risk. Although it should be stressed that the shift in American foreign policy dictated both by economic and geostrategic calculations does not mean abandoning Europe, it definitely leaves NATO's European countries with the need to rethink its future defence and security policies. Taking into consideration the austerity measures that have increased cuts in military spending of most of the NATO states, however, the idea of doing more with less sounds more like a bumper sticker than viable solution.

Finally, in 2014 both the US and European NATO forces are scheduled to be withdrawn from Afghanistan. It will likely be followed by an assessment of the mission. Even if one agrees with the cautiously optimistic estimation of the war in Afghanistan, there will be plenty of critical voices about this war raised on both sides of the Atlantic. For Poland, the end of the military mission in the Hindu Kush will also mean that the internal debate about "out of area" missions versus Article 5 commitments can be resumed among NATO member states. With the unstable situation on its eastern flank, a tilt towards a focus on regional defence rather than interventions outside NATO borders would be a scenario that the Polish side would welcome. The question remains whether financial problems of some of the NATO states will not limit the debate to a "wait and see" game.


Poland was able to avoid the fate of its European partners by not succumbing to the economic crisis that originated in the United States in 2008 and it has gained international recognition as a stable economy. As *The Economist* aptly noticed in September of 2013, the Polish economy has grown by one-fifth since 2009. At the same time, the Polish government has continued to implement a project aimed at the modernisation of the Polish armed forces and secure funding for military spending. Part of the project has been the transformation from mandatory conscription (ended in 2009) towards an all-volunteer army, much smaller but also much more mobile and modern.

Taken for granted

Subsequently, the Polish defence budget in 2013 grew by seven per cent over 2012, allowing Poland to move closer to NATO's required two per cent of GDP dedicated to military spending. This is quite a striking achievement, especially when due to economic austerity most of the NATO member states have cut their

defence budgets. The troublesome trend of cutting military spending cannot be explained only as fallout from the economic crisis. Simply put, western societies do not want to pay for robust military budgets as they grow richer and feel more secure from the traditional threats. Even NATO's Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen has written about this in *Foreign Affairs* (July/August 2011), reminding readers that "since the end of the Cold War, defence spending by the European NATO countries has fallen by almost 20 per cent. Over the same period, their combined GDP grew by around 55 per cent".

Contemporary challenges for international peace and security are so multi-layered, unpredictable and complicated that it would be a fantasy to expect just one organisation to address them, not to mention to fix them. NATO, however, has a strong record of defending its allies and making them feel more secure. Some of the events worldwide and in the region – including the recent gruesome ones in Ukraine – should be a constant reminder that security should not be taken for granted and it is never "given" once and for all.

Although it is a well-known cliché, change does not happen overnight. Ten or 15 years might seem a long time from our human perspective. But it is a really short period from the perspective of the political, military and social transformation of states. Poland's record since its accession to NATO is not perfect, but it is predominantly a positive one. Now, after 15 years of membership in NATO, Poland has turned a corner and from being a country that was learning the ropes, it quickly turned into a reliable ally that takes part in NATO military operations, modernising its army and maintains military spending on the level agreed by the member states. And what is even more important – from the realist standpoint – NATO is still the best and most efficient channel of assisting Poland in strengthening its security. 

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The Pain of Pension Reform

ANNA MURADYAN

Since the introduction of pension reforms in Armenia, a powerful civil movement has emerged in opposition to it. Protests were staged and organised unlike any post-election rally. One of the core reasons behind the protests is a mandatory deduction in wages and a complicated savings system, which is difficult for the average Armenian to comprehend.

A powerful civil movement called “Dem.am” was formed last November to campaign against the mandatory component of the pension system, which was adopted three years earlier but was introduced in January 2014. A wave of mass protests shook the country after the introduction of a controversial pension reform that requires employees to transfer five to 10 per cent of their salaries to private pension funds controlled by the Central Bank (CB).

“People spend their salaries according to their needs and they are not ready to give up five per cent or so from this money. This law exacerbates the already bad situation people live in,” says Hayk Avetisyan, an engineer and activist of the Dem. am civil initiative.

No other choice

Before the introduction of the reform, the current pension distribution system was a leftover from the Soviet times. It was based on the principle of solidarity between generations and was calculated according to the length of service before retirement. According to the principle, the current generation makes payments to secure better conditions for people of old age. Specialists claim that the new system would be viable only in the case of seven people working to provide financial support for one pensioner. However, because of high rates of migration and a dangerously low birth rate, there has been a sharp decline in the ratio of pensioners and the

working-age population since independence, reaching almost one-to-one by 2013. As of January 1st 2014, some 520,000 pensioners were registered in Armenia while the number of working income tax payers was about 500,000.

“We have chosen this pension system because we had no other choice,” said Prime Minister Tigran Sargsyan at a press conference at the end of last year. Meanwhile, President Serzh Sargsyan called the reform historical, pointing out that people simply did not accept or acknowledge the reform against the backdrop of general disgruntlement. “The results of this reform will be beneficial for these people anyway,” he added.

Problems in the pensions system are nothing new. Some 12 years ago, social security contributions stopped covering benefits paid to pensioners, and every year the government has subsidised this money from the budget at the expense of other sources. Economic expert Samvel Avagyan points out that 105 billion drams (254 million US dollars) of social security payments were collected in 2008, while the amount of pensions paid was 153 billion drams (about \$370 million).

The mandatory deduction of salaries has triggered tension in a society where a significant part of the population lives in poverty.

“This means there was a shortage of 48 billion drams in the pension fund and it went up to 67 billion in 2012,” he said. In an attempt to solve the problem, the government started to draft a reform package in 2003. The work on the legislative package went on for several years and, although it became a subject to strong criticism from the opposition, it was approved by the Parliament in three readings in December 2010. Various provisions of the law came into force in different periods. Three years were required to start an awareness raising campaign and coordinate the details of the reform before launching the mandatory pension scheme. However, society has no confidence in the state system and, since the results of the pension reform are expected to come into fruition only in 40 years, people simply do not believe in its future.

Under the new legislation, social security payments have to be added to income tax as a unified tax with the rate of 24.4 per cent for up to 120,000 drams (about \$400) and in case the income exceeds the abovementioned sum, the mandatory payment reaches 26 per cent.

Tension

In addition to the income tax, which works for everyone without exception, there is an accumulative pension component, which necessitates five to 10 per cent

monthly deductions from the salaries of working-age people born after January 1st 1974. In order to raise interest in the investment, the funds are doubled by the state and are supposed to be added to the basic pension when employees reach retirement age. This means that 10 per cent of their income is saved in their personal accounts, while the remaining 24-26 per cent goes to the state budget serving the needs of the country. These may include pensions paid to people with disabilities or incapable of working. The pensions of those born before 1974 will be paid under the current system based on the principle of solidarity between generations.

The society has **no confidence** in the state pension system; people simply believe it has **no future.**

However, the allocations from the state budget to personal pension accounts are limited to 25,000 drams at most. This means that if the salary is more than 500,000 drams, then the rest of the mandatory saving of 10 per cent has to be paid from the pockets of the working population. In Armenia, where a significant

part of the population lives in poverty, the mandatory five per cent deduction from salaries has triggered social tensions. The law was put into practice a few years ago and has received significant media coverage, but major protests were staged only in the autumn of last year, when people learned about the five per cent deduction from their salaries (starting from January 1st 2014) after talking with accountants.

The mandatory pension payments are calculated and paid by employers, who are considered as merely tax agents. Avagyan said that in the case of transferring the five per cent of salaries to pension funds, citizens born after 1974 will have 40 per cent of their current income when they retire. Thus, if a salary is 200,000 drams (less than \$500), 40 years later the monthly pension would amount to 80,000 drams (nearly \$200). Today, the basic pension is 14,000 drams (\$34), while an average pension will reach 36,000 drams (\$87) this year.

“This is a rough calculation, and it will depend on inflation as well as on how much money will be invested by asset managers of pension funds,” Avagyan added. The five per cent mandatory payments will be handed to privately-owned pension funds that have to meet legislative requirements. The funds, in turn, will be under state control through the Central Bank of Armenia. The government insists that the state pension funds are considered to have the highest administrative costs; therefore, they significantly reduce retirement savings in the long term.

“Apart from that, there is a risk that the savings will serve social and political needs of the government. This is why it would be appropriate to hand this money to professional private asset managers that have solid experience and an international image,” said Arman Jhangiryan, head of the Department of Financial Market Development at the Finance Ministry.



**FESTIWAL
KULTURY
ŻYDOWSKIEJ**
**JEWISH
CULTURE
FESTIVAL**

FROM
JUNE 27TH
TO
JULY 6TH
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Летняя школа



Центр Русского Языка и Культуры
Новгородского государственного
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школу русского языка 2014.

Centrum Rosyjskiego Języka i Kultury
Nowogrodzki Państwowy Uniwersytet
zaprasza wszystkich chętnych na
międzynarodową letnią szkołę rosyjskiego
języka 2014.

Набор участников: 3 марта – 30 апреля
Заезд участников: 22 июня
Начало программы: 23 июня
Окончание программы: 12 июля
Отъезд участников: 13 июля
Информация о стоимости (на 1 человека, 3 недели):
585 евро

Nabór uczestników: 3 marca – 30 kwietnia
Przyjazd uczestników: 22 czerwca
Rozpoczęcie: 23 czerwca
Zakończenie: 12 lipca
Wyjazd uczestników: 13 lipca
Koszt kursu: (1 osoba, 3 tygodnie): 585 euro

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- 4 занятия по 50 минут (понедельник — четверг)
- группы до 10 человек (уровни А1, А2, В1, В2)
- мероприятия на русском языке в послеобеденное время и по пятницам (дискуссии, просмотры русских фильмов, языковые конкурсы, участие в мастер-классах и другие)
- индивидуальные занятия в дополнение к общей учебной программе (по желанию участников программы)
- сертификат по окончании программы
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- проживание в комфортабельном студенческом общежитии в день приезда - встреча в аэропорту Санкт-Петербурга и проезд в Великий Новгород

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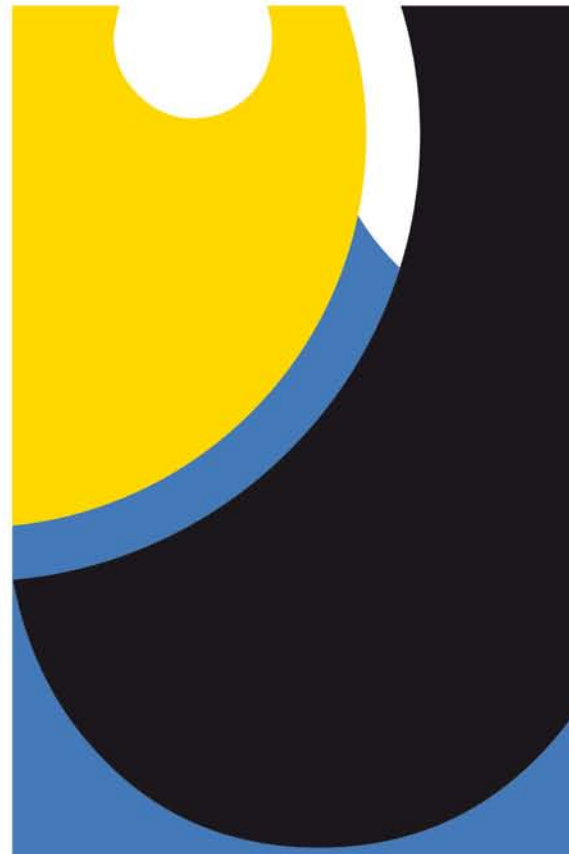
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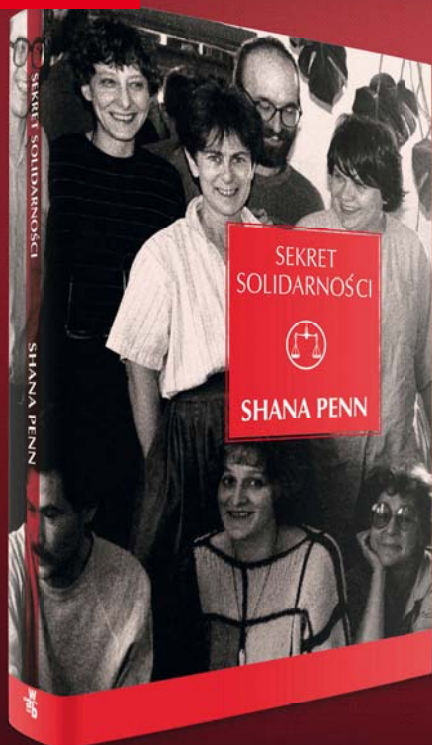
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Mher Abrahamyan, head of Financial System Regulation Department of the Central Bank, said they had to negotiate with dozens of well-known European and American companies to obtain a pension fund manager licence. “We have selected two pension fund managers as a result of consulting with the best professionals of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund,” he said. The Austrian-based C Quadrat Investment AG with \$6 billion in assets represented in 17 countries and the French Amundi Asset Management with about one trillion dollars in assets and represented in around 30 countries are the companies that have been selected to control pension savings in Armenia.

Avoiding responsibility

One of the vigorous critics of the reform, Artsvik Minasyan, an economist and member of the opposition Dashnaksutyun party, said that the state was responsible for the country’s social life and the government should not avoid responsibility regardless of how powerful it might be. “It turns out that the private sector is able to provide better management and administering of assets. This means we undermine our state institutions,” he said.

The government insists that the money invested in private funds has nothing to do with taxes and that the savings still belong to citizens. Under the law, each asset manager should have three types of funds which differ in the degree of risk. These are balanced, conservative and stable funds. The employee can choose one of these funds to invest his or her retirement savings. The size of pensions will increase depending on the choice of funds, but the risk levels will differ too.

The protests against pension reform signify a rare case of burgeoning civil society in Armenia.

The balanced funds will invest their capital in shares and bonds based on a 50/50 correlation. These funds are considered to be very risky since shares may simply depreciate. Conservative funds will be able to invest their assets in a 25/75 correlation, while the stable funds will make 100 per cent investments in bonds. Therefore, the stable funds are considered to be the most secure ones.

Hayk Avetisyan, an engineer and member of the Dem.am civil initiative, says that people were convinced they would never get their money back. “Our economic situation is very unstable and this scheme has failed even in some developed countries. The reforms are necessary since current pensions are small, but they are trying to take away as much money as possible from people under the veil of this.”

The system largely depends on the effective functioning of the asset managers, because the first tangible results will be perceived only in 25-30 years. The law

requires that the fund managers invest 60 per cent of these assets in Armenia's economy and 40 per cent, if desired, may be invested outside the country. This provision was not included in the initial discussions of the legislative package and was introduced on the insistence of the opposition Dashnaktsutyun party, which voiced concerns the government intended to use this law to take the money outside the country.

"But the assets will be distributed among financial markets and 60 per cent of those can be placed in any investment company, which will manage its assets abroad. This will mean not draining money from the country," said Artsvik Minasyan.

Some 1,400 citizens had already chosen their pension funds before January 16th, while 10 days later the government announced that their number reached 10,000. The mandatory accumulative component is applied to 250,000 employees that make up around 25 per cent of the country's workforce. The rest are left out of the system, including about 500,000 inhabitants of rural areas and people who fall under other legal categories. About 30 companies mainly operating in the telecommunications and IT industry, however, have decided to take the extra tax burden off the shoulders of their employees.

But Hayk Avetisyan believes that even if employers compensate their workers' salaries, they still pay taxes indirectly and this will lead a country like Armenia to economic crisis. "Developing countries should reduce taxes in order to support business, while just the opposite is happening here. If the employer decides to raise wages, then he will raise prices of the produced goods to pay this extra money and this will lead to a miserable situation," said Avetisyan.

Constitutional challenge

Some economists point out that one of the system's advantages is the availability of "long money" that can stimulate the economy. Moreover, the government also expects to use these funds for the development of the domestic financial market, which practically does not exist in Armenia.

The amount of money collected annually by the pension funds will reach \$150 million, and, according to economic expert Samvel Avagyan, successful investments will have an indirect positive impact on Armenia's GDP, increasing it by two to three per cent. One of the major setbacks of the reform, in Avagyan's opinion, is the fact that it also acts towards working people born after January 1st 1974 with a service record of about 20 years.

"This means that previous labour experience is annihilated and the savings of next the 20 to 30 years will be incomparable to the retirement savings of 45 years of service. In Estonia, for example, they introduced the mandatory pension system

in 2002 and it worked only for those who were 19 years old so as to not harm people who already had labour experience,” he explained. The expert said the perception of the law would be less painful and appalling if similar measures were taken, but, in his opinion, Armenia’s government was inclined to take more drastic actions.

Artsvik Minasyan, member of Dashnaktsutyun, said the risks of the system stemmed from financial markets, which as a result of the 2008-2009 financial crisis, large funds simply blew up. “Pension funds should not be left to the discretion of financial markets. Besides, by placing such a burden on the already-hardened labour market of Armenia, they will close the doors to new and flexible workplaces,” said Minasyan.

The lack of adequate financial knowledge is another problem. People do not know in which fund to choose to invest their money. In order to raise public awareness of the issue, USAID has allocated \$149 million to work systematically with people and provide them with necessary information. In addition, there is discrimination against women in the pension reform, since they do not make the five per cent payments during their pregnancy and subsequent maternity leave, although the leaves are added to service length. Hence, women will receive smaller pensions than men.


Four parliamentary factions – Heritage, the Armenian National Congress, ARF Dashnaktsutyun and Prosperous Armenia – proposed to suspend the mandatory component of the scheme for one year in early December. The proposal was rejected by the ruling Republican Party, which has a parliamentary majority, supported by the Rule of Law party. The four non-governing forces filed a lawsuit with the Constitutional Court demanding to rule the mandatory component of the law unconstitutional.

“The right to property is being violated; there is discrimination related to age and other factors; the solidarity principle is disrupted; the level of social protection is being reduced. All these actions are prohibited by the Constitution,” the lawsuit claims.

While the Constitutional Court has yet to return a verdict, thousands of people united by the Dem.am civil movement took to the streets. They staged protests and even organised car processions against the pension reform. Unlike in other post-election rallies, employers started to encourage their workers to participate in demonstrations, while the Dem.am Facebook group campaigning against the law had about 28,000 members. This is a rare case in recent civil movements in Armenia.

Large groups of people from different cities joined the Dem.am movement and even local Facebook groups were formed, such as Dem.am Kapan (a city in the southern part of Armenia), and Dem.am Alaverdi. This is a unique case in the

four-year history of civil initiatives when the movement extends outside the capital spreading into the regions.

On January 24th 2014, the Constitutional Court suspended the application of two provisions of the law that were not contested by Dem.am. According to the court ruling, the citizens who will not transfer money to the pension funds will not be subject to penalties as long as the case is being considered by the court. Moreover, they are not required to choose asset managers as well. The court will render its final verdict in the spring of 2014. 

Translated by Suzanna Sargsyan

Anna Muradyan is a freelance journalist based in Armenia.

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"America's Russia Policy – Why a "Reset" Was Needed and Where It Stands", Tom Yeager, "Pulaski Viewpoint"



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New Voices in Serbia

ZORAN VUČKOVIĆ

In Serbia, popular culture significantly influences political and social values. The popular “turbo-folk” genre, which promotes nationalist feelings similar to those of the 1990s, is now being challenged by a new voice, one that promotes discussion about social inequality and the rights of minorities.

In Serbia, the question of mainstream popular culture has never been easy. One reason behind this is the fact that popular culture can be seen as a significant measure of the dominant values in Serbian society. As these values have rapidly changed in the last 25 years, popular culture experienced a few rapid makeovers in a relatively short period of time. The first change came in the 1990s with the rise of Svetlana Ražnjatović, aka Ceca.

The “turbo-folk” music that Ražnjatović represents is a mixture of traditional folk music and new modern sounds with quick beats. In essence, it is a connection to a pre-modern perception of Serbia: rural, with patriarchal values, a deep respect for the Orthodox Church and the military along with strong national feelings. Such music was a perfect fit for the post-communist transition in a country so strongly focused on rebuilding its identity and nation.

Slow changes

Turbo-folk music has created new role models for Serbian society, and not necessarily positive ones. Female turbo-folk singers were, in fact, closely connected with criminal networks that, along with the media, promoted them as a class of successful individuals capable of functioning in this new post-communist reality. A reality dominated by strong national feelings. This new genre of music spread

quickly in Serbia during the 1990s as the wars in Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Kosovo gained momentum, setting new social values in the country.

After ten years of ineffective wars and de facto defeats in Croatia, Bosnia as well as Herzegovina and Kosovo, Slobodan Milošević was overthrown in 2000. Along with a change in the regime, the landscape of social values also began to change. If, however, it took the Serbian opposition around 10 years to oust Milošević, changing the hierarchy of social values has appeared to be much more difficult. Daily political news was dominated by national issues such as Kosovo and the Hague Tribunal, thus impeding Serbian society to maintain a distance from the wars and conduct an objective examination of its role in the conflict. After 2000, Serbia still – if measured only by its attitude towards the 1990s – resembled an isolated country with negative attitudes towards the European Union and the United States, not much different than during the Milošević years.

Serbian Turbo-folk music
created new role models
for society in a reality
dominated by strong
national feelings.

As of 2014, Serbian popular culture artists have once again begun to influence the political and social values, thus also changing the hierarchy in society. This time, “turbo-folk”, though still predominant in the country, was not in the spotlight. Impulses

now came from the alternative and hip-hop scenes. In Serbia, just like in the other parts of the world, political and social topics have become an important component of hip-hop as well as rap. Social and economic exclusion are important topics in this sub-culture. After more than a decade of transition and unclear social values, this new approach fits Serbia perfectly.

Marko Šelić, known as Marčelo, is an alternative hip-hop musician from Paraćin who started to use his music to explore some of the painful aspects of Serbian realities. Šelić’s music is deeply critical of the current socio-political situation. Marcelo’s 2013 song “Pegla” (Iron) talks about a young student bullied in an elementary school by his classmates. The lyrics describe a situation in which this boy is protected by an older student. Years later, this young boy grows up into a radical, right-wing hooligan nicknamed Iron. After spotting a person in the park who appears to be a homosexual, Iron beats him to death, only to see in the end that this person was the same older student who had protected him from being abused in the elementary school.

The song was well-received in Serbia, both by the media and in the social media. This has led to a new voice entering the social and political debate in the country. The aspect of the process of building civil society is essential to Serbia, where the democratic institutions are still fragile. In most cases, laws are passed in the

Parliament without wider social debates. In this particular case, Šelić has opened not only a sexual, but also religious and ethnic Pandora's Box.

What is still uncommon in Serbia is the public endorsement for the rights for sexual minorities by politicians. Every year, Belgrade faces strong international pressure with regards to the organisation of the Pride Parade. And every year, officials refuse to grant permission for the parade due to security issues. The fear is that a massive counter-protest would be organised on the same day, aimed against the organisers of the parade. Participants would become violent and severe clashes with police would erupt. In a situation in which a significant portion of the society is unwilling to grant basic rights to sexual minorities in the country, Šelić's public stance is a matter of significant personal bravery. Surprisingly, unlike in the past, the song (and the acceptance for minority rights) was positively accepted by a wide audience. In consequence, the song has become a symbol of a new set of values emerging in Serbia. More importantly, these values are in opposition to the nationalist attitudes and the same applies for the most popular "turbo-folk" genre.

Prominent negative attitudes

From the outside, it may appear that these values are promoted mainly by the younger generation that does not remember the wars of the 1990s. There is some truth to this. As various research shows, Serbian youths are in some cases expressing similar values to those that characterised Milošević's era. According to the most recent, 2011 Helsinki Committee study conducted in six Serbian cities, the attitudes of young adults are still predominantly homophobic and racist. According to the study, as many as 28.7 per cent of survey respondents represented a strong homophobic orientation, while 29.1 per cent expressed a moderate homophobic attitude. In comparison, an earlier study from 2009 showed that a whopping 60 per cent of high school students admitted that that violence against LGBT persons is justified.

The process of building civil society is **essential** to Serbia, as democratic institutions are still weak.

In 2008, research conducted by the Serbian NGO Centar za slobodne izbore i demokratiju (the Centre for Free Elections and Democracy, CeSiD) showed that 70 per cent of respondents considered homosexuality a disease. The research also showed that as many as 41 per cent of respondents expressed a negative attitude towards Albanians, while 30 per cent were negatively disposed towards Americans. In addition, 15 per cent of respondents expressed similar attitudes towards Croats. This data does not come across as positive in the context of the possible reconciliation process expected to be going on in the Western Balkans.

According to another study conducted in Serbia in March 2012 by CeSiD in cooperation with the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, a German-based foundation, the country's young adults tend to ignore the sphere of politics, feeling that they have a small or insignificant influence over it. More important, however, is that a majority of respondents believe that political parties are not to be trusted. And yet, the very same survey indicated that more than half of respondents support Serbia's rapprochement with the European Union. Only 25 per cent were against EU membership for Serbia, while 60 per cent were against accession to NATO.

A majority of young adults believes that Kosovo should remain an **integral** part of Serbia.

A majority of young adults are of the opinion that Kosovo should remain an integral part of Serbia. These documented conservative views may also explain why a large portion still prefers "turbo-folk" and Ražnjatović's music. This is a trend that was also acknowledged by the authorities. Ražnjatović was the main performer of the 2014 New Year celebrations

in Belgrade with an open concert organised by the municipal government.

All of the above examples are meant to show that, surprisingly, today in Serbia many members of the younger generation express similar values to the ones promoted in the 1990s, when the country was internationally isolated and positioned against the West. There is very little difference in opinion between that of Serbia in 2000 and Serbia in 2014. With this in mind, the popularity of "turbo-folk" comes as less of a surprise. The music itself is also finding its way into popular culture with national motifs widely seen during the Eurovision song contest organised in Belgrade in 2012. While indeed, all of this is just a fragment of deep divisions in Serbia regarding its strategic orientation and future direction.

Where to next?

Some would argue that since 2000 all of Serbia's governments have been democratic in their nature, differing from the nationalistic past of the 1990s. In the institutional sense this is true. New institutions have gained power. The judiciary is no longer a subordinate to the most powerful people in the country and its allies. Nor is the Parliament just a puppet show for the masses. New democratic laws have been adopted. At the same time, however, many Serbs still think that The Hague Tribunal is a political, not legal institution aimed against Serbs and that Kosovo is a sacred Serbian land, a priority for every Serb (even compared to the process of EU integration).


The main reason for such an attitude is the fact that the transformation, mostly forced by the EU and the US, has generated changes on the institutional and



legislative level. The change on the social level, however, has not taken place, even after 13 years. This is the sensitive issue that Šelić touched. It is the same place where various NGOs, financially supported by the EU and the US, have been predominantly ineffective in the past 20 years probably because while they target a very narrow intellectual elite, Šelić speaks to a wider scene.

“Where to next?” is indeed a key question for Serbia. In this last decade, the EU and the US have been effective in forcing Serbia to cooperate with The Hague Tribunal and extraditing the warlords who are still hiding in the country. However, this process lacks a deeper change in the attitudes of the entire society. It seems that now the new voices are finally entering the discussion. These voices, which have outgrown the country’s nationalistic past, are necessary if the changes forced by the EU are to be sustained. Alternatively, the integration process of Serbia within the EU could follow the footprints of the communist Yugoslavia, where national divisions were swept under the rug only to bloodily erupt in the 1990s.

Serbia has already “paid” with 10 years of wars and a subsequent 10 years of uncertain political and social transformation. Only now, 20 years later, is the country entering a phase where new values are being generated in the society from

the bottom up and not imposed by EU conditions. Even though this is the more difficult path, such change could benefit the country in the long term. The future of Serbia's strategic orientation will be an outcome of its wider social consensus and not a decision of the political elites. After 20 years of transformation and waiting for better life, it is something the citizens of Serbia deserve, no matter the price. 

Zoran Vučković has a PhD in political science and international relations from the Jagiellonian University.

His interests focus on post-communist transformations in the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe.

People Were Just People

YURI SEREBRIANSKI

From the very beginning of its independence, Kazakhstan has declared to be building a society of Kazakhstanis. However, with 120 ethnicities living in Kazakhstan, **this is a long process**. The dominant position of the Russian media, which maintains the strong influence of the Russian language in the state, also hinders this process.

“Pass, pass, oh, come on,” Musla shouts from the right. The ball goes straight into the hands of Igor Karpukhin, the goalkeeper. I remain somewhere on the left edge of the playing field, keeping away from the classmates’ activities. I am small, in the eighth grade and a nerd. There was no such word then; it appeared only in the 1990s. Neither did we know that Musla – a Muslim – was a Kazakh, that Tomaz was a Jew and that Igor was a Russian. We just never thought about it. We did our homework, sometimes copied from each other and played football. We had Kazakh language lessons, which everyone attended without any special enthusiasm, according to each one’s own skills. The same was with Russian, English, physics and history. In school Tolstoy is huge, Chekhov is mandatory and bourgeois, and Dostoyevsky is an overwhelming problem.

Of all nationalities

So what were we doing in those days? We studied, attended pioneer camps and gathered grass for feeding the school rabbit farm. We asked for grass from people’s yards and we were usually able to stuff our sacks with grass from the gardens. Our parents worked somewhere. The calm wind from the mountains instilled confidence in the permanence of the well-tuned living that we had.

In 1986, when the protests erupted on the central square of the capital city, I was only upset by the fact that I could not go to the shop to buy the set of soldiers that

I was then collecting. Vika Zhukova told us in the class that a car was overturned in front of her eyes. In December 1986, Kazakh youth took to the main square of the capital city, and among its major demands was the nomination of an ethnic Kazakh as head of the republic, whereas Moscow nominated the party functionary Gennady Kolbin. The manifestation was fiercely suppressed with clubs and water jets. Today, December 16th is celebrated as Kazakhstan's Independence Day.

Then at our place we also received guests – my parents' friends from the institute – of all nationalities. Now, I understand that they were of all nationalities. Back then, I thought that people were just people. Some were drinking, others listening to music and some asking me with interest about my achievements in school.

Kazakhstan has declared
to be **building** a society
of Kazakhstanis.

In autumn of 1990, our class suddenly learned that Sveta Fink was German. The beautiful blonde girl that never distinguished herself with good grades, misbehaviour or participation in school events left for Germany permanently. Then we learned that the cheerful, smiling Mariza with bushy curly hair was Jewish. She also left, but for Israel. Immediately after I finished school, the state became independent. My years at the university did not bring anything new in terms of language. The state was getting on its feet, and private funds were accumulated.

As before, Russian was shown on television. The local channels were now in Kazakh and books in Kazakh were also being published. However, the institute where I studied continued to be Russian-speaking. But everyday Kazakh was always present in our lives – in the names of shops, institutions, in mottos like “Улы октябрь жасасын!” (“Hail the great October!”), etc.

When I now read posts and articles written by nationalists regarding the fierce passion towards the oppression of the state language, I find it hard to believe. Children are the most honest peddlers of information and there were no such talks or even hints in school. From the very beginning of its independence, Kazakhstan declared to be building a society of Kazakhstanis, people who actually pay no regard to their own ethnic identity but are united by the Kazakh language and culture with the freedom to keep their cultures. There are 120 ethnicities living in Kazakhstan. We have always been proud of this multi-national heritage. And I learned that Kazakhstan is not alone in this case. As I travel around the world, I have never actually seen a mono-national state.

Today, I understand that it was the very Soviet society that was the ideal in its aspiration to be a unitary nation. But, of course, it is wrong to not be conscious of the fact that the Kazakh language was passing out of use. It was dying and practically unused in cities; and the decay of a language is a huge loss to human culture. The Kazakh identity and language are now reviving, but slower than some

would like them to. Will the new generation, born only after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the establishment of Kazakhstan's independence and even after the difficult transition period to statehood, speak a single language: Kazakh? Will Berik, Vanya and Muhammad kick the ball at the schoolyard and naturally, without a second thought, talk to each other in Kazakh? Will the transition of generations – from Soviet to Kazakh – be successful, gravitating around one nation and one state language?

Stumbling block

This is a long and natural process. Stimulating the development of Kazakh is met with controversy and inconsistencies even when it goes about the preparation of schoolbooks. What is more, the dominant position of the Russian media maintains influence of the Russian language in the state. It is Russian that serves as a communication channel with the outside world. Kazakh internet and satellite television function in this language.

Gradually, the Soviet generation living and born in Kazakhstan that knows neither the problem of language nor the state language is slowly passing away. Non-Kazakhs are abandoning regional towns. Some go to the capital city, or Almaty, and some to neighbouring Russia or even further away. Today, the non-Kazakh population that has already turned into a national minority faces the issue of self-determination – either to become a movement with the prospect of demanding special rights and conditions of life (there is a respective state authority in Kazakhstan: the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan), or to believe in the prospects of the formation of the Kazakh society.

Stimulating the development of Kazakh is met with **controversy** and inconsistencies.

The knowledge or ignorance of the state language is, to a large extent, the stumbling block. The mentality of the population is already unified, with all its benefits and drawbacks. This is why it is so difficult to adapt for those who leave not only for countries far away, but also for Russia for permanent residence. Going abroad and even living in a Russian-speaking country makes one understand that the nation of Kazakhstanis already exists.

In addition, there are people who by all means strive to hasten the transition of society to the exclusive usage of the Kazakh language. Some intellectuals try to exploit the language for their own purposes, personal public relations or to build a political career. So far, this is not a tendency, but such particular statements and actions cause the greatest outcry. The stronger such voices are the more elusive the hope is to build the nation of Kazakhs among non-Kazakh citizens. After all, the possible

Photo: Petar Milošević (CC) commons.wikimedia.org



With 120 ethnicities living in Kazakhstan, the state aims to build a society of Kazakhstanis, people who actually pay no regard to their own ethnic identity but are united by the Kazakh language and culture.

drain of 20 per cent of the state's population would be a blow to the economy.

It is not absolutely clear how children from mixed marriages could be involved in such a scenario. From the end of the Soviet period, the number of mixed marriages in Kazakhstan has been steadily increasing. In 2006, 10 per cent of all children born in the country were born to parents of different ethnicities. This percentage is maintained despite reinforced religious influences in the state. A mixed marriage in Kazakhstan as a rule is an inter-religious union. We cannot but hope that these children, when they grow up, will become the

new basis of the society, having had the opportunity to belong to several cultures at once and forming the new, singular Kazakhstani identity. So far this is a distant prospect. Right now, the opposite process of going back to cultural and religious origins is in full force.

Each family has its own story

Kazakhstan and Russia have always had friendly, good neighbourly relationships. Like football players, we kick the same historical ball, playing on one team. There were several waves of migration from Russia to Kazakhstan. Some people moved voluntarily, when the cities of Verniy, now Almaty, Petropavl and other outposts on the outskirts of the Russian Empire were built. In the Soviet period, people moved to break new ground and have stayed. Others were deported to the territory of Kazakhstan. Many penal camps and settlements were built and functioned here in the Soviet Union.


Close cooperation between Russia and independent Kazakhstan within a framework of the Eurasian Customs Union (currently Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan, with the possible participation of Armenia and Kyrgyzstan) has both political mileage and drawbacks that have already appeared. The active propaganda of resuming the

Soviet cultural values and ideas on Russian television is not so warmly welcomed in Kazakhstan. Society has reconsidered a lot during the last 20 years. The majority is not prepared to tolerate a new domination by Moscow as the decision-making centre and cultural centre prevailing with, naturally, the Russian language. Again, the Soviet Union is also remembered for these things.

The incautious actions of an ambitious neighbour may particularly affect and have already affected the attitude towards the Russian-speaking part of Kazakhstan's population. Russia should definitely take this into account. Whereas the percentage of the non-ethnic population in Kyrgyzstan or Armenia currently is not so high, in Kazakhstan it amounts to around 20 per cent. These are not only Russians. There are also Ukrainians, Belarusians, Poles and Germans, but all of them are the Russian-speaking population of the country, for the most part having no command of the state language.

The **fragile balance** inside Kazakhstani society exists and is supported by state policy.

Possibly, Russia is not conscious of the influence which its ambitious, even "colonial" as defined by some radical Kazakhstani sources, policy has on the status of this part of population. This may be illustrated by the recent situation with a unilateral decision to resume the launching of Proton carrier rockets from the Baikonur Cosmodrome located on the territory of Kazakhstan, after a previous, failed launch led to pollution of the surrounding territories by a cloud of rocket fuel vapour. This case caused a reasonable public outcry.

The fragile balance inside Kazakh society, dependent not only on internal but also external factors, exists and is supported by state policy, accustomed to the neighbourly co-existence during several generations and a wish to keep peace and stability for the majority. Maintaining this balance lies on those football players that play in the schoolyard, the future generation of the people who have not left and who live in the complicated context of the developing country. The active propaganda of resuming the Soviet cultural values and ideas on Russian television is not so warmly welcomed in Kazakhstan. 

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A Tradition of Nationalism

JÁNOS SZÉKY

Today, Hungarian nationalism stands out in Central Europe. The roots of Fidesz and its success are often misunderstood in foreign press. Its main principles are based on the narrative of the **great Hungarian past** and built on second-hand fragments of the pre-1944 ideology and a cult of national unity.

When observing the ugly manifestations of extremism in Hungary or the maverick policies of its current government, foreign commentators usually perceive the underlying nationalist sentiments, but tend to interpret them as just another brand of nationalism in “New Europe”. Hungarian nationalism, however, stands out in Central Europe. It is particularly forceful and, to use a mild term, nervous. It is always on the alert, wary of possible vicious attacks and lashing out when no one would expect, as there was no apparent or unprovoked offence. Ethnocentric national biases quite often override rational economic or social considerations or even, paradoxically, diplomatic interests. Moreover, the cult of national unity as opposed to pluralism is one of the main principles encoded in the new Fundamental Law (the constitution promulgated in 2011), resulting in a distortion of democratic political institutions.

It is quite difficult to understand present-day Hungarian public affairs without being familiar with the particular nature of Hungarian nationalism, while it is impossible to understand its nature without knowing its centuries-old historical roots.

The curse of continuity

One important feature that distinguishes Hungary from all other Central European nations is the continuity of its statehood. Ever since its foundation in the year 1000, apart from a single decade after 1849, there has always been a functioning Hungarian state. It is a source of pride for Hungarians even today, yet it also proved

to be a curse, as the rigid social, economic and political hierarchy remained intact from the Middle Ages until 1848. Much of it survived even until 1944.

The new democracy established in 1989 was thus confronted with the following dilemma: on the one hand, the Hungarian nation-state had a singularly strong and continuous pre-communist political tradition; on the other, that tradition was essentially undemocratic. Meanwhile, there had been a series of popular freedom struggles and revolutions in the nation's past, but they were all defeated sooner or later, so their political heritage was the spirit of revolt itself rather than any model for a viable political system.

Fidesz, which emerged as the dominant right-wing party in the late 1990s, consciously built up an image of the "great Hungarian past" out of second-hand fragments of pre-1944 ideology, while there was very little that left-wingers and liberals could set against the emotionally powerful, history-based nationalist agitation. Viktor Orbán's first government (1998-2002) ran a huge propaganda campaign in 2000 commemorating the millennium of the Hungarian state. Symbolically, the Holy Crown of the Hungarian kings was taken from the National Museum to the Dome Hall of the Parliament. More than symbolically, a new act of legislation stated, "The Holy Crown lives on as a relic [The Hungarian word *ereklye* is used exclusively for religious relics] embodying the continuity and the independence of the nation in the national consciousness and in the Hungarian traditions of public law." At that time, most people in the opposition were amused by the notion of the Holy Crown as the symbol of a secular republic. By 2011, the smiles froze: the second Orbán government forced through the Fundamental Law which reiterated the Holy Crown thesis (this doctrine being a 16th century invention) and dropped the word "Republic" from the official name of the country. It is now simply "Hungary".

The Hungarian state had a singularly strong and continuous pre-communist political tradition; a tradition, however, that was **undemocratic**.

The preamble to this new constitution is entitled the "National Creed", and it was admittedly modelled after the preamble of the 1997 Polish Constitution. But while the latter refers to "the best traditions of the First and Second Republics", there is no such value-oriented selection regarding the national past in the Hungarian constitution. According to the National Creed, the same Hungarian state that was founded in 1000 and lost its "self-determination" with the arrival of German troops on March 19th 1944 was resumed on May 2nd 1990 when the National Assembly was convened after the first free elections (formally putting an end to Soviet-backed communist rule).

Stressing this, one of the current government's main projects is to reconstruct the huge city square adjacent to the Parliament "as it was on March 18th 1944". The Hungarian state on March 18th 1944, however, was an ally of Hitler with a long record of antisemitic laws, some of which were even more radical than the Nuremberg laws. This is not to say that the Orbán government would accept Nazism; it goes to great lengths to prove the opposite. It is simply that the allegiance to an ideal unitary national community and the continuity and "self-determination" of the nation-state are the supreme values for them and for their voters rather than the components of a pluralistic liberal democracy.

Two kinds of good Hungarians

August 20th, the Catholic feast day of St Stephen, the first king of Hungary, is an official state holiday. The central event of that day is a procession in which the "Holy Right" – St Stephen's blackened and mummified right hand – is shown to the public. It is attended by state dignitaries of all persuasions. While the Holy Crown was created somewhat later, popular belief held that it was the very same crown that the pope sent to St Stephen in the year 1000. The cult of state continuity, hence, has a distinctively Catholic aspect to it. This is not the case with national or nation-state independence. As I have mentioned, there is another rebellious, nationalist tradition, which is very much – but not exclusively – associated with Protestantism. To name just one crucial event: in April 1849, the National Assembly proclaimed the dethroning of the House of Habsburg and elected Lajos Kossuth, a Lutheran, to be governor-president in the Reformed Great Church of Hungary's greatest Calvinist centre, the city of Debrecen.

The **division** between the mostly Catholic west versus the Calvinist east remained even after Hungary's reunification.

This dichotomy is older than modern nationalism. During that time when the Ottoman Turks occupied central Hungary (1541-1686), there were two Hungarian states: Royal Hungary in the west and the north, and the Principality of Transylvania in the east, with a buffer zone between

the two, known as the Partium ("the Parts") and the so-called Seven Counties in the northeast. By dynastic treaty, the Habsburgs ruled Royal Hungary, while Transylvania was more of a Polish-style commonwealth with elected princes, though under Turkish suzerainty. The Reformation was victorious in the 16th century, but unlike in Poland, the success of Counter-Reformation in the 17th century was far from complete. It was most effective in the regions closer to Vienna, while the Seven Counties and the Partium remained staunchly Protestant (with Debrecen emerging

as “the Calvinist Rome”) and Transylvania was a haven of religious tolerance with a mostly Calvinist protestant majority. Although Royal Hungary was multi-ethnic and under Austrian-German rule, most of the buffer zone was homogeneously Magyar. In Transylvania, the political community was dominated by Magyars and Szeklers (an ethnic group of debated origin, given collective nobility, which many consider to be “more Hungarian than Hungarians”).

The division between the mostly Catholic west, ethnically more open and pro-Habsburg, versus the Calvinist east, which was stubbornly “true Magyar” and anti-Habsburg, remained even after the end of the Turkish occupation when Hungary was reunited. Within time, two permanent nationalistic traditions developed. Each had its own behavioural patterns, political

language and traditions. Meanwhile, the tension between the lack of national sovereignty (that is, being ruled from Vienna) and the well-developed internal autonomy resulted in two more definitive features shared by both traditions. The first was an obsession with written law as the prime medium and subject matter of politics. The second feature was the emergence of a culture of grievances, as the game of home politics was mostly about detecting, and protesting against, non-Hungarian infringements upon the ancient rights and privileges of the nobility. Both are very much alive today.

After 1920, ethnic purity, Hungarian traditionalism and an authoritarian national collectivism became **uncontested values.**

A blueprint for future revolutions

More important, however, are the basic differences in political strategy between the two divisions. The conservatives held that the partial loss of sovereignty was an acceptable price for internal autonomy and building personal and national wealth. Their method of dealing with the authorities was bargain and compromise. For the rebels, any loss of sovereignty was intolerable and the lack of full national independence was seen as an obstacle to achieving national well-being. They detested compromise. While the ruling elite followed a conservative philosophy most of the time, the rebellious option has always been much more popular among the general population. I wonder if there is a Hungarian town without a Kossuth Street (the square next to the Parliament is also named after Kossuth, considered by many as the father of Hungarian democracy), while much fewer streets are named after Ferenc Deák (“The Sage of the Nation”), who was the architect of the particularly fruitful 1867 compromise.



Photo: Einstein2 (CC) commons.wikimedia.org

A memorial in Báránd Hungary to Trianon depicting Greater Hungary. The main dividing line between the left and right in today's Hungary is whether one "grieves Trianon" or not.

From the 17th century onwards, there were revolts against the Habsburgs or, seen from another aspect, against the millennial Hungarian Kingdom under the Holy Crown. Out of these, the War of Independence (1703-11) led by Francis II Rákóczi was relatively the most successful. Rákóczi and the section of the estates that supported him managed to set up a parallel state that existed for several years. They set the blueprint for later struggles and revolutions. Militarily, the endeavour was heroic and sometimes victorious but ultimately hopeless as it was based on foreign policy miscalculations. On the other hand, it had a democratic character compared to the region and the age (serfs were allowed to serve in the army and were promised emancipation after the end of the fights; the nobility's traditional exemption from taxes was abolished).

The 1848-49 revolution and War of Freedom followed the same pattern, as did the 1918 revolution that was terminated by a Bolshevik coup in 1919. Except that during the democratic phase of the 1918-19 revolution there were no military victories at all, as the new government first refused and then was unable to set up a national army. So it was the communist regime's turn to play the part of glorious losers. Foreign policy miscalculations were there all the while. Even the 1956 revolution had essentially the same positive and negative sides, and it deliberately used 1848 language and imagery. The term for the military aspect of the Rákóczi experiment, 1848 and 1956 is the same: *szabadságharc*, literally "freedom fight". The Orbán government uses the very same term when it comes to its campaign against the IMF or foreign-owned public utility companies, tapping the reserves of centuries-old resentment for which non-Hungarians are the enemy and compromise is a dirty word.

Orbán and his court ideologists have never been at a loss when they had to ignore contradictions. They belong to the nationalist ruling elites that rely on popular votes. So the elitist non-republican tradition of the Holy Crown can live side-by-side with the quixotic populist tradition of the freedom fighters. The former is utilised when the main point of interest is neutralising democratic institutions and the rule of law; the latter is the main vindication for arbitrary decisions in foreign affairs and economic policy.

The Trianon trauma

Short-lived revolutionary episodes were followed by long periods of conflict-ridden but essentially peaceful evolution; the most successful of these was the age of the dualistic Austro-Hungarian Monarchy (1867–1918). It was called "the happy peaceful times" in the calamitous decades that followed. After the Compromise of 1867, Hungary found itself to be one half of a middle-ranking European power. It had its own cabinet and bicameral parliament (only foreign, monetary and military affairs were shared, although Hungary had a small home defence force of its own). It was finally reunited with Transylvania. It experienced sustained economic growth that brought it closer to Western Europe. Its government was not democratic in the modern sense, as only six per cent of the people had the right to vote, but it was parliamentary and liberal. The large Jewish population, emancipated in 1867, was rapidly assimilated and ran much of industry, finances, commerce, the press and even agriculture. By the end of that period, there were Jewish cabinet ministers. It was a liberal and capitalist success story.

After 1918, all this was shattered. While for all the other Central European states gaining or regaining national independence was a source of joy and self-confidence, in Hungary it coincided with the nation's greatest historical disaster. With the Treaty

of Trianon in 1920, Hungary lost 68 per cent of its population and 72 per cent of its “millennial” area, including the whole territory of present-day Slovakia, Transylvania, the Partium and Fiume (now Rijeka Croatia), its only seaport. The historical kingdom was a multi-ethnic state with a slight Hungarian-speaking majority; therefore, much of that loss was inevitable (although most of the political elites had not been aware of the danger). What made the shock unbearable was that roughly 30 per cent of ethnic Hungarians became citizens or subjects of other (hostile) states.

The main dividing line between the left and the right is still whether one “grieves Trianon” or not, 94 years after the treaty and its effects.

The ruling elites blamed the liberal “excesses”, modernising trends and Jewish over-representation for bringing about the disaster. Liberalism and urban capitalism were equated with Jews, while ethnic purity, Hungarian traditionalism and a kind of authoritarian national

collectivism became uncontested values. Most of the elite saw the redistribution of Jewish wealth and a curtailment of Jewish rights as the remedy for social and economic ills. It was this popular ideology, rather than Nazi influence or pressure, which resulted in the deportation and death of the majority of Hungarian Jews within a few weeks in 1944. Also, as the western democracies had shown no intention of redeeming the injustice of Trianon to any degree, it was irredentism that drove the Hungarian political elites to Hitler’s arms (between 1938 and 1941, most Hungarian-inhabited regions were awarded back to Hungary).

Today, 94 years after the fact, the main dividing line between the left and right is still whether one “grieves Trianon” or not. This is what foreign observers seldom take into account. The Orbán government respects the post-1945 anti-racist taboos scrupulously, but apart from that, the old responses to the Trianon shock such as anti-liberalism, a suspicion of markets, statism and authoritarian national collectivism are still the attributes of the “national” side just like they were in the interwar period. It is worth keeping in mind that there is not a single liberal conservative or centre-right party in the Hungarian Parliament today.


Healing the wounds of Trianon

How can the Trianon trauma be so persistent almost a century after the fact? The answer is simple: because of the communist dictatorship. First, there was hope for 25 years that the dismemberment of the country was redeemable (at least partly). After the Second World War, however, Stalin insisted on restoring the Trianon borders. When the Treaty of Paris confirmed this in 1947, Hungary was on the verge of the communist takeover. So by the time the public could have confronted the fact that

the division of the Hungarian cultural nation was irreversible, there was no free public sphere where “grieving” could be done and no free international scene where the Hungarian state could or would have spoken out for the rights of Hungarian minorities. The official line was that the treaty was unjust, but it was a response to the oppressive ethnic policies of the Hungarian ruling class, while among “brotherly people’s democracies” the treatment of national minorities cannot be a problem.

Meanwhile, the *népi* (*völkisch*, *narodnik*) intellectuals, successors of the interwar agrarian socialist movement among writers, ethnographers and sociologists, who were the only non-communist intellectual-political cluster that was now officially tolerated, made the situation of Hungarian minorities beyond the border their central political issue. It was quietly supported by the party-state leadership, which was at loggerheads with Nicolae Ceaușescu’s regime in Romania. When the process of democratisation began in the late 1980s, the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF), the first legalised non-communist political group, grew out of the *népi* movement. After the transformation, MDF occupied the niche of the largest centre-right party for some time. When the taboo on Trianon discourse was at last lifted, it was only natural that the intellectuals around MDF (who later opted for Fidesz) made it their cause.

In this respect, the referendum in 2004 about extending Hungarian citizenship to possibly all ethnic Hungarians living outside Hungary’s borders was a turning point. The initiative came from a dubious ultra-nationalist group, and Fidesz embraced it mainly for tactical reasons. The background slogan was “we can finally heal the wounds of Trianon”. The referendum failed because the socialist-liberal government of the time ran a populist counter-campaign, pretending to protect welfare achievements from poor Romanian Hungarians and people were still wary of Fidesz as they suspected that dual citizenship is just a costly ploy to gather pro-Fidesz voters abroad. This suspicion was justified later.

Afterwards, however, Fidesz made the left-wing and liberal parties and intellectuals the targets of permanent attacks for being “traitors of the national cause”. At the very first session of the new Parliament in 2010, Fidesz enacted dual citizenship, referring to the real will of the people, while the socialists, who internalised their own defamation, also voted for it with three exceptions. Ninety years after the fact, the anniversary of the Treaty of Trianon on June 4th was declared, paradoxically, the Day of National Unity. This, however, is quite characteristic of present-day mainstream Hungarian nationalism. The nation is united by the grievance of separation and one cannot be a part of that unity if one does not believe in it. 

The Myth of Central Europe

SAMUEL ABRAHÁM

Using and understanding the concept of Central Europe is a daunting task. It exists on several levels – historical, political, intellectual and literary. To borrow E.H. Carr’s concept of the study of history, **trying to understand Central Europe** is like being on a boat in a vast ocean. Where and how we steer it determines the outcome of our search.

Research on Central Europe is often tainted with ideology and very quickly becomes dated by political developments. One might also question the aim of studying Central Europe when the concept seems to be of no relevance today. Even Milan Kundera, when he was approached for permission to reprint his famous 1984 essay “The Tragedy of Central Europe”, saw his text as a product of a particular era and refused to have it brought back to life at a time when those conditions and atmosphere were no longer present.

It is also questionable whether one should enter the debate about Central Europe three decades after the last major eruption of the topic in the 1980s. The last debate was so rich, multi-levelled, inconclusive and controversial that no short essay could ever cover it with any fairness. Since the fall of the communist regimes, general interest, media attention and scholarly reflection surrounding the concept have dwindled. No post-communist society has paid any attention to it and each country has been busy transforming itself in isolation, directing its attention to Brussels or Washington and only marginally to its neighbours.

Heralds of crises

We could, or perhaps should, conclude that the transforming post-communist countries have had no interest in anything that was written about or done during the long genesis of Central Europe prior to 1989. However, there are several aspects to the genesis of the concept of and debate around Central Europe, a debate that

still resonates, directly or indirectly, in our intellectual discourse today. This is so despite very different predicaments characterising the evolution of Central Europe, which encompassed the twilight of the Habsburg Monarchy, two world wars and the experience of the two worst dictatorships of the twentieth century. Compared to that, we live in a dream world of peace and stability tainted only by the glitches of economic downturns.

Still, according to some authors, developments in Central Europe herald political crises in Europe as a whole. A number of authors – Kundera, Claudio Magris, Václav Bělohradský and György Schöpflin – argue that Central Europe somehow represents a preview, a premonition or an “early warning system” about what awaits Europe. What could it be that makes the Central Europe of the past a forewarning about the Europe of today or the Europe that is to come? This is the key question worth exploring to reflect back on Central Europe as a way to mirror the perspective of Europe today.

Today, there seems to be relatively **nothing** that holds the concept of Central Europe together.

Is “Central Europe” a misused and misguided term? Does it refer to something that still exists? Or was Central Europe, in spite of its ethnic and cultural diversity, a source of some kind of unity of shared experience? What were the bonding elements and do they still exist? Was it its subjugation to the Soviet Union that caused the outburst of discussions and studies in the 1980s? These were a few of the many questions I encountered while reading piles of invariably great texts on the topic. Two things were notable: first, the vast majority of these texts belong to a period before the fall of the communist regimes in 1989 and, second, it seems that once freedom arrived, the discussion ended. It was not that the discussion had reached a dead end; it was simply that political events had made the debate obsolete. Today, there seems to be nothing to hold the concept of Central Europe together. Many authors legitimately ask whether it was just a convenient tool, a myth discarded when it was no longer of any use.

Let us look at the origin of the term and see whether one can trace the elusiveness of the concept to its sources. Interestingly, the concept and name “Central Europe”, or *Mitteleuropa*, were absent during the 19th century and, as Norman Davies discovered, only appeared in the early 20th century. Thus, the Golden Age of Central Europe was only given this name retroactively, in order to legitimise the historical concept. In principle, there is nothing wrong with that; most historical epochs received their names *ex post facto*. However, it could also be, as Eric Hobsbawm reminds us, that all old days become the good days as long as they get to be old enough. Still, looking back at any region of Central Europe around the turn of the 20th century it is clear that there was a richness and diversity in the region that

has disappeared with the fall of the Dual Monarchy. Kundera, reflecting in 2005 on the difficulty of defining the gel for the regions, saw the unity as almost accidental and unintentional. Often, the essence of Central Europe is best depicted in literary language and for that Joseph Roth is the most prescient. When he describes the quintessential Central European, Count Morstin from Lopatyny, a village in Eastern Galicia, there is flair of nostalgia, diversity and beauty irrevocably lost: “Like every Austrian of that time, Morstin was in love with the constant in the midst of change, the familiar in the variable, the dependable in the midst of the unaccustomed. In this way what was foreign came to be homely to him, without losing its timbre and home had the reliable charm of the exotic.”

Disruptive unity

The 20th century brought a false sense of unity to the region that was also very disruptive. Indeed, it made it an object of history. The turning point for most authors is the year 1945. From that point, the concept received a triple blow. First, defeated and divided, Germany could no longer be the linguistic or cultural centre of the region. Second, the majority of Jews perished during the Holocaust and, after the Second World War, those who did not emigrate became fully integrated into the individual societies rather than contributing to a cosmopolitan gel that could hold Central Europe together. Finally, at the Yalta Conference, the three victorious powers divided the region. The Iron Curtain that descended physically prevented any interaction among the societies in the region.

On the one hand, Germany had the lingua franca, rich culture and political ambition to oversee the region. Before the Nazi period, the German conception of Central Europe provided cultural unity. The dominant culture that united Germans spread into Central Europe as well, integrating the non-German elite. All this ended with the defeat of Nazi Germany in 1945.

“Central Europe as a civilisation project was crushed by the Nazi war machine,” lamented Karl Schlögel. After the war, German minorities were forcibly removed from various Central European countries and Hitler’s legacy made it forever impossible for Germans to discuss the restoration of Germany to its pre-Nazi position.

The concept of Central Europe was naturally embraced by the Jews, who lived in various societies while preserving their religion and customs. However, during the 19th century, while emancipated, Jews found themselves increasingly isolated among new Central European nationalists, who often defined themselves negatively, in opposition to other nations. In Gellner’s words, Jews were “not altogether integrated and accepted and often made to feel uncomfortable” by the majority population.

Paradoxically, the Jews were most integrated in Germany as poignantly described by Amos Oz in a book appropriately titled, *Pity of It All* lamenting the end of this unity. In addition, the German-Jewish symbiosis was also regarded as a unique unifying element in whole Central Europe. The extermination of the majority of the Jewish population removed this unique bonding element. During the revival of Central Europe in the 1980s, Erhard Busek wrote that “the rediscovery of [the] destroyed and forgotten Jewish world in Europe is one of the key elements of the new discussion about Central Europe.”

The result of the Yalta Conference was the division of Central Europe and, apart from West Germany and Austria, the transformation of the rest of the region into Soviet-dominated

Whether Central Europe is a myth or not depends on one's point of view.

Eastern Europe. The divisions of Yalta caused a subtle change of focus for authors reflecting on Central Europe. Whereas previous writings on Central Europe had looked forward to the creation of political units, they later became more nostalgic and backward-looking, always relating to culture and a common mind-set. Prior to 1945, most authors and some politicians wished to form a political union, a natural arrangement for a historically and culturally cohesive region. As late as 1942, for example, Milan Hodža, a Slovak politician exiled in the United States, wrote a book called *Federation in Central Europe*, in which he laid down plans for a new political unit after the war. Hodža was the last prime minister of Czechoslovakia before Munich in 1939. Until 1918, he was a member of the Hungarian Parliament, and later became a member of the Czechoslovak Parliament. Having had first-hand experience of politics both in the Austro-Hungarian Empire and democratic Czechoslovakia engulfed by Hitler, he felt the need to create a strong Central European Federation after the war in order to protect small, weak states from becoming victims of major powers.

A few decades after Yalta there was utter silence about Central Europe. To write about it in any communist country would have been illegal and somehow pointless after the triple blows inflicted by the war. A natural candidate to explore the topic would have been Austria, but it was fully paralysed by its own doubts and unclear identity. No longer threatened by Germany and separated by the Iron Curtain from its neighbours, Austria searched for its new identity by distancing itself from “Eastern Europe” and clinging to the West for its own convenience and safety.

Return of the debate

It was four decades after the war before the concept of Central Europe came back. And what a debate it was! It was initiated by exiled writers and intellectuals

from the region but also by authors from Austria (Busek, Pelinka) and Northern Italy (Magris). Not a single author wrote about future political plans for the region – this would have meant defying the iron logic of the Iron Curtain and the political compact between the two superpowers. The debate was at least on two levels. The first was related to a nostalgic rediscovery of the somehow interrelated, but lost world of Central Europe – its literature, philosophy and politics. This nostalgic looking-back took place during a period when the region was divided. The Soviet Union, through its policy of “divide and rule”, kept its satellites isolated from each other. The second level of the debate was concerned with negatively defining the various subjugated nations vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. And which nations were those? Czesław Miłosz provided a useful rule of thumb: “Every country [that] was, in August 1939, a real or hypothetical subject of the deal between the Soviet Union and Germany.”

A number of authors, starting with Milan Kundera, have reminded western politicians and intellectuals that the countries of Central Europe are not – historically, culturally or geographically – part of “Eastern Europe”. Kundera’s essay was originally called: “A Kidnapped West or the Tragedy of Central Europe”. However, when it was published in 1984, *The New York Review of Books* took only the second part of Kundera’s title, judging by the content of the text, the idea of “a kidnapped West” was of equal importance. In fact, the Czech translation of the essay – though not authorised by Kundera – was titled just that: “Unesený západ”.


The publication of Kundera’s essay was followed by an intense debate among Czech and Slovak dissidents. Some accused him of excluding Russians from Europe, others of making Czechoslovakia responsible for having a communist regime while a third group criticised him for writing about a place where he was not living. Perhaps the most humorous remark on Kundera’s text was by Ivan Sviták, who lived in the United States at the time. Sviták, a prominent but eccentric and outspoken exiled Czech philosopher said that the essay by Milan Kundera “aroused more interest about Czech problems than did all the Czech émigré organisations combined together. However, I can find with great difficulty a sentence in it that I would agree with. Interchanging literature and politics is our national misfortune.”

Central Europe today?

Paradoxically, with the fall of the communist regimes in 1989 the topic of Central Europe has no longer been a point of focus for these newly liberated societies. No one seemed interested in harnessing the potential of the rich debate that has remained

in the air since 1989. Some claim that as soon as the Soviet Union's domination ended, the concept of Central Europe, having fulfilled its goal, was simply dropped. An Austrian political scientist, Antonin Pelinka, who was prolific on the topic in the 1980s, was outright frustrated with developments in Central Europe. He claimed that after 1989 the region has been characterised by a lack of cooperation and an unwillingness to share: by ethnic egoism, unredeemable nationalism and egomaniacal madness. There was one political project, however, after 1989 that seemed to correspond with the spirit of Central European cooperation and friendship: the Visegrad Group initiated in 1991 by three former dissidents Václav Havel, Árpád Göncz, and Lech Wałęsa, then the presidents of Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland respectively. The primary aims of the group were to ordinate and mutually assist each other in entering NATO and the European Union. Actually, the Visegrad Group's creation was partially a response to the "ethnic egoism, unredeemable nationalism and egomaniacal madness" that was growing in 1991. The three presidents were disturbed by developments in their societies.

Whether or not Central Europe is a myth depends on one's point of view and on what one expects from it. Certainly, it is a myth if viewed from the perspective of a Hodža who wished to build a political successor to the Hapsburg Monarchy. It is also a myth if we perceive the region as a geographically and politically cohesive unit that was only forcibly separated by the Iron Curtain and the Soviet strategy of "divide and rule". Once free, it has not come back together. What Václav Bělohradský writes about Kundera is valid for the whole concept of Central Europe: "We have to remind ourselves that as a literary construct, Kundera's idea of Central Europe was very useful; as a historical concept it is not realistic."

Perhaps a better term than "myth" for Central Europe is "metaphor". As Claudio Magris writes, "Kundera deprives Central Europe of any political or historical foundation and hence makes from Central Europe a sheer metaphor." Indeed, Central Europe lacks solid and exact borders. Culture, however, does not need those. 

*This text is an adaptation of an essay titled "Central Europe: Myth, Inspiration, or Premonition?" which originally appeared in the book *Yet Another Europe after 1984: Rethinking Milan Kundera and the Idea of Central Europe*, edited by Leonidas Donskis and published by Rodopi Press, Amsterdam, 2012; as well as in *In the Mirror of Central Europe and Slovakia*, published by IRIS, Bratislava, 2012.*

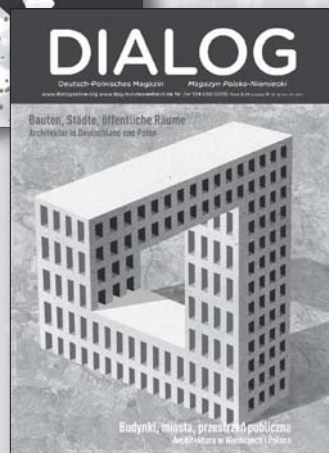
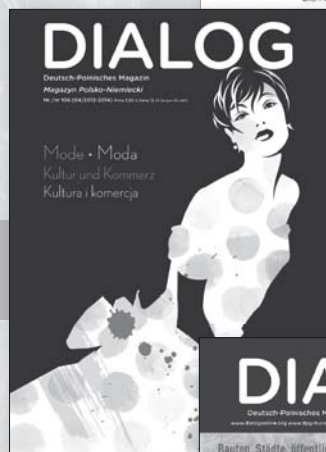
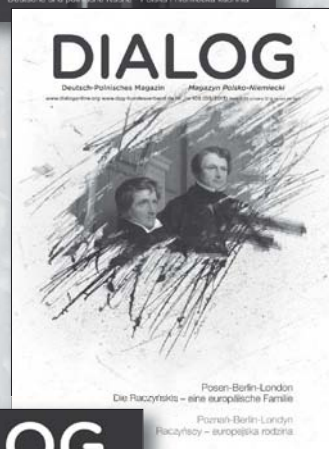
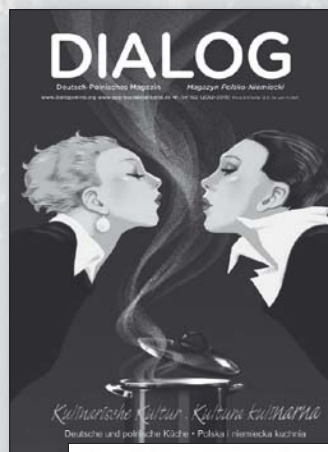
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Growing up in Kundera's Central Europe

JONATHAN BOUSFIELD

It has been 30 years since Milan Kundera published his essay titled “The Tragedy of Central Europe” and many ask if the phrase Central Europe is even necessary anymore. For Kundera, it was largely defined by its novelists. Hence, how do contemporary novelists who grew up in Kundera's Central Europe understand its meaning today?

Thirty years ago the Czech novelist Milan Kundera dealt with cultural estrangement and its consequences in his celebrated essay “The Tragedy of Central Europe” (first published in the French journal *Débats* in November 1983, then in the *New York Review of Books* the following April), sparking off a long-running debate about the fate of European cultures caught on the “wrong side” of the Cold War divide.

Kundera's essay initially made for pessimistic reading. Not only did it argue that Central Europe constituted a “kidnapped West” abducted by an alien, Byzantine-Bolshevik civilisation, but it also claimed that the rest of the continent was in too deep a state of decadence to be fully aware of what it had lost. What initially looked like a requiem, however, soon gained an altogether more optimistic sheen. Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in the Kremlin, the Soviet Bloc showed signs of opening its windows and then the multi-ethnic, cosmopolitan Central Europe eulogised so evocatively by Kundera was quickly re-spun as a symbol of what Europe could be again, rather than what had forever been left behind.

State of mind

Thirty years on, most of the countries in Kundera's Central Europe have been integrated into the European Union and NATO, and the very term “Central



Photo: Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung (CC) commons.wikimedia.org

“We can’t unite Ukrainians around some kind of Central European idea; it has to be a general Ukrainian idea,” says writer Yuri Andrukhovych.

Europe” is no longer necessary, either as an anti-Soviet rallying cry or a badge of cultural belonging. However, the cultural concerns addressed by Kundera have not necessarily gone away simply because the context has changed. Europe is still sandwiched between two superpowers with differing worldviews, and small nations can still be the bearers of important truths.

Both a successful novelist and an outspoken public intellectual, Milan Kundera had been blacklisted by the Czechoslovak regime during the period of “normalisation” that followed the Soviet invasion of 1968. Immigrating to France in 1975, he enjoyed huge success with the novels *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* (1979) and *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (1984), both of which brought Czechoslovakia’s recent history to a worldwide audience. It was partly thanks to Kundera’s international popularity that educated western readers spent much of the 1980s being interested in what went on in the eastern half of Europe. The fate of Central Europe was a key theme when Joseph Roth interviewed Kundera for the *New York Review of Books* in 1980, so the conversation was well under way before “The Tragedy of Central Europe” appeared in 1984. Around the same time, *Antipolitics*, the book-length essay about the East-West divide by Hungarian writer György Konrád, was published in English. Konrád’s argument was that Central Europe represented the continent’s

last great opportunity to build a social democratic space that would be neither Soviet nor liberal-capitalist in nature. Although this is a utopia, it is well worth revisiting. The *New York Times* even published a polemic between Kundera and future Nobel Prize laureate Joseph Brodsky about Russian culture and its failings. It is hard to imagine that western newspapers would ever give so much space to non-English-speaking intellectuals today.

But where exactly was Central Europe? Participants in the debate were fond of stating that Central Europe was not so much a precise region as a state of mind, although for writers like Kundera and Konrád it quite clearly corresponded to the

Thanks to Kundera's **popularity**, western readers spent much of the 1980s being interested in the eastern half of Europe.

former territory of the Habsburg Empire, the collapse of which was seen by them as an unmitigated cultural disaster. Not just because the Habsburg state seemed to represent a culturally pluralist community of many nations, but also because Vienna prior to the First World War had been the crucible of European modernism.

For the Lithuanian-born Pole Czesław Miłosz, Central Europe encompassed a whole swathe of territory that ran from “Baroque Vilnius” in the north to “medieval Renaissance Dubrovnik” in the south, encompassing pretty much everything that lay to the east of the Germans but was predominantly Catholic and Jewish in heritage. While the ethnic pluralism of Central Europe was celebrated, there was at the same time a clear view of what Central Europe was not: Orthodox Christian, Islamic or Russian.

Defining civilisation

Not everybody liked the concept. Austrian writer Peter Handke notoriously dismissed Central Europe as nothing more than a “meteorological expression”. Hungarian novelist Peter Eszterházy declared in 1991 that “a writer belongs to a language, not to a region”. Yugoslavia's Danilo Kiš trod with caution when he wrote in 1987 that “the concept of a Central European cultural sphere is perhaps more present today in the West than in those countries that ought logically to belong to this sphere”.

It is clear that for Kundera Central Europe was in large part defined by its novelists (Franz Kafka, Robert Musil, Hermann Broch and Jaroslav Hašek were his four favourites), and that the act of writing novels was one of the things that helped to define European civilisation as a whole. With this in mind, I interviewed three award-winning contemporary novelists – Tomáš Zmeskál in Prague, Yuri Andrukhovych in Ukraine and Miljenko Jergović in Croatia – each of whom spent his formative years in Kunderian Central Europe but is far too young to belong

to Kundera's generation. I asked them about whether Central Europe was still important and where, if anywhere, it could actually be found.

Born in 1966 of mixed Czech and Congolese descent, Tomáš Zmeškal created a sensation with his 2008 debut, the Prague-based family saga *Love Letter in Cuneiform Script*, winning the Josef Škvorecky Prize in 2009 and the European Union Prize for Literature in 2011. Zmeškal was the first of three writers I met and it was clear from the outset that Central Europe was for him a historical curiosity rather than a current concern. Zmeškal did, however, grow up reading Kundera's novels, alongside other "banned" writers like Josef Škvorecky and the Russian Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, whose *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovitch* was published in Czech in the 1960s before being withdrawn from public libraries after 1969.

"By the 1970s, there was a notion that if the authorities caught you reading both Kundera and Solzhenitsyn they were really going to be very nasty," he remembers. Pretty much everything worth reading had been forced off the shelves during the "normalisation" campaign of the 1970s, when pro-Soviet communist leader Gustáv Husák clamped down on anything that smacked of subversion. "In many ways the ground for the Prague Spring had been prepared by writers like Kundera, Havel, Seifert and Prohaska," Zmeškal explains. "So it is no surprise that after the Prague Spring the communists decided that they had to silence writers. And the silenced writers really were the best ones – when I was growing up you couldn't find anything worth reading in the library.

"I remember reading a 1969 polemic between Kundera and Vaclav Havel as a teenager after finding the original newspapers somewhere in the cellar", Zmeškal recalls, "and it is a brilliant exchange of views between people who were at the peak of their powers." Kundera accused Havel of moral exhibitionism, encouraging people to indulge in futile acts of resistance; while Havel considered Kundera's faith in culture to be excessively romantic. "It was a period when Czech intellectuals really mattered, whereas nowadays they don't. And there is a certain discontinuity in Czech intellectual life anyway: Škvorecky lived in Canada, Kundera is still in France; few of our generation have ever met writers like this in person, and I know very few older colleagues have ever spent time drinking with them."

Differentiation

The former Yugoslavia was the only communist country in which Kundera's writings were freely available. His novels were enthusiastically devoured by a young Miljenko Jergović. Born in Sarajevo in 1966, Jergović is the most widely-translated of Croatia's contemporary novelists. His latest book, the monumental part-novel, part family autobiography *Rod (The Clan)*, was published in Croatia at the end of 2013.

“In the Yugoslavia of the 1980s, Kundera was an intellectual best-seller” Jergović remembers. “And by no means was he just for intellectuals. By about 1985, just about everyone who read books at all was reading Kundera. Regardless of what people might have said, Kundera wasn’t treated as a subversive writer in Yugoslavia. He was to us a witty and very realistic author and virtuoso, whose novels, or episodes of them at least, deserved to be re-told and shared with one’s friends.”

The “Tragedy” essay was published in Slovene in autumn 1984 and in Croatian the following year. Throughout the late 1980s, the Yugoslav press was full of the debate about Central Europe, largely because Slovene and Croatian writers saw it as an opportunity to differentiate their cultural space from the other, “Balkan”

Yugoslav republics. Indeed, contemporary Croatia is one country where the idea of Central Europe still hovers in the background whenever cultural identity becomes the subject of public debate.

Adherence to a Central European idea often says more about where you don’t want to be than about where you actually belong. As Miljenko Jergović says, “It’s the context that defines our positions on Central Europe, turning every conversation about it into a reactive conversation, as if ducking blows in some imaginary boxing match.”

If there is one place where the debate still makes Kunderian sense then it is Ukraine, a country that still straddles the historical fault-line separating Central Europe from the “Byzantine” East. It is a country whose eastern half has been in the Russian cultural orbit since at least the 17th century, but whose western half spent much of its history under the Lithuanian Grand Dukes, Habsburgs or Poles. Here, the debate about belonging to Central Europe, or indeed any Europe, remains very much alive.

Born in Ivano-Frankivsk in 1960, Yuri Andrukhovych is one of the most prolific and influential Ukrainian literary figures, with five novels and numerous collections of poetry and essays to his name. He was awarded the Herder Prize in 2001 and the Angelus Prize for Central European literature in 2006. My conversation with Andrukhovych took place in a Lviv café several months before the Euromaidan demonstrations took off in Kyiv – the benefit of hindsight only makes his observations even more pertinent.

“Maybe it’s in the nature of Ukraine,” he says. “It’s simply too big to be absorbed into some kind of European standard. In one half of the country people don’t have any idea about any kind of European values; while here in Lviv, for example, people talk about them all the time.” Andrukhovych is aware that the concept of

The ground for the Prague Spring had been prepared by writers like Kundera, Havel, Seifert and Prohaska.

Central Europe means little to the predominantly Russian-speaking populations of eastern Ukraine.

“We can’t unite Ukrainians around some kind of Central European idea; it has to be a general Ukrainian idea. So we have to do this work with other parts of Ukraine first of all, and then propose a common Ukrainian vision of what Europe means to us.” It is a particular tragedy for Ukraine that no government so far – least of all the Yanukovich administration – has succeeded in articulating a general Ukrainian idea that would have at least some meaning to people in all corners of the country.

My Europe

In his 1994 essay “*Erc-Herc-Perc*”, Andrukhovych described how his grandmother saw Franz Ferdinand being driven around Ivano-Frankivsk (then Stanisławów in the Austrian-ruled province of Galicia) in an open-topped car, just weeks before his assassination in Sarajevo. It is a key image for Andrukhovych, not just because it provides us with a bit of family history (his Ukrainian and Silesian German forefathers could only ever have met in the *multi-kulti* world of the Habsburg Monarchy), but also because it places western Ukraine firmly within the Central Europe of archdukes and dashing hussars.

“We needed a certain amount of Habsburg mythology in the 1990s to provide us with an alternative model for the development of a new Ukrainian culture”, he explains. “We felt that no one in the wider world really understood that Ukraine was different from Russia, and re-awakening the Habsburg heritage of western Ukraine served as a useful tool to persuade them otherwise.”

Ukraine can be seen as the
last frontier of Kundera’s
Central Europe.

The book *Moja Europa (My Europe)*, co-written by Andrukhovych and the Polish writer Andrzej Stasiuk in 2000, was in many ways an attempt to reconsider the nature of Central Europe for the post-1989 generation. The book’s subjective, autobiographical style conveyed a strong sense

of shared belonging, but left the question of Central Europe’s nature and whether it is a reality or a utopia very much open. “There was an attempt to deal with the topic in an emotional, poetic, way, free from the traditional geopolitical dualism of East and West,” Andrukhovych now says.


However, the book did include Andrukhovych’s definitive statement on where, geographically, historically and psychologically, Central Europe actually was. “The fact of living between the Russians and Germans is Central Europe’s historical mark of character; Central European fear historically oscillates between the raising of these two alarms: either the Germans are coming, or the Russians are coming.

Central European death is a prison death or a concentration-camp death, and by extension a collective death.”

One cannot help feeling that *Moja Europa* would be a very different book if it were rewritten today: “The drama of the situation between East and West is still very relevant to us Ukrainians, whereas for the Poles it is already decided; for them, further discussion is no longer required.”

Indeed talking to Andrukhovych leaves one with the impression that Ukraine is the last frontier of Kundera's Central Europe left, where the struggle between a society that aspires to pluralism and an unforgivingly mono-cultural rival is witnessed with indifference by the rest of the continent. According to Andrukhovych, “The Russian sphere openly declares itself to be an alternative to western civilisation. And for advocates of the Russian sphere there is always a categorical ‘either/or’. There is no room for compromise.”

Some years ago, Yuri Andrukhovych was involved in a project called “Potyah 76” (“Train No. 76”), a website that presented the Central European idea in the form of an international train, each of its carriages devoted to poetry, prose, non-fiction and so on. “The 76 was the train that ran from Gdańsk on the Baltic Sea to Varna on the Black Sea, passing through western Ukraine on the way,” Andrukhovych explains. “After the fall of communism, the number of passengers dropped and the route became shorter and shorter – the final version of the 76 ran from the Polish border town Przemyśl to the southern Ukrainian city of Chernivtsi before it was finally abolished for being unprofitable.”

It is all too tempting to think of the Central European idea itself as this train, lying abandoned in a railway siding somewhere in western Ukraine, its writers gazing forlornly from fogged-up windows. But as long as they are still writing, it is still worth talking about the train. 

Jonathan Bousfield is a freelance writer specialising in Central European culture and society.

He is a regular contributor to the Croatian daily newspaper *Jutarnji list*.



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We Needed Victory, Not Heroism

Interview with Andrzej Wajda, Oscar and Palme d'Or-winning
Polish film director. Interviewer: Grzegorz Nurek

GRZEGORZ NUREK: From your biography, we learn that you were born and raised in Suwałki, a small town near the Lithuanian border. Can you talk a little bit about your childhood experiences in Poland?

ANDRZEJ WAJDA: When I was a little boy, my family lived in Suwałki. However, we would rarely leave the city. My father was an officer with the Polish army and his salary was quite modest. He had to support his two school-aged sons and a non-working wife. My mother, even though she was a teacher, could not find employment for a simple reason: back then, both parents could not receive a state salary. In fact, my father postponed the decision to get married until he became a colonel and could afford to start his own family.

The years of our youth were limited to life on a military base. We were fascinated by the army and the parades, the cavalry and summer and winter manoeuvres,

such as when the entire 41st infantry division skied in formation. Those are unforgettable images. However, the base was situated quite far away from the city and I wasn't particularly happy that I had to leave home every day at seven in the morning to get to school by eight. In 1935, our family moved to Radom. There, I attended school but also learned how one street, Malczewski Street, divided two separate worlds. On one side, there was a base and the officers' house, while on the other there was the Jewish district. Its inhabitants spoke a different language, as before the Second World War, 80 per cent of Polish Jews listed Yiddish or Hebrew as their first language; they had different customs and traditions. I did not see boys from this district in our school. My friendships with Jews, such as with Jerzy Lipman, a fantastic cameraman, started only when I was in film school.

What was it like when you were interrogated by the NKVD (secret police) in Kraków in 1946?

Pomorska Street was the office for the secret police at that time. It was inhabited by “advisors”, or NKVD officials. In the hallways, we heard the voices of Soviet officers. It wasn’t until Communist Party First Secretary Władysław Gomułka guaranteed order in Poland to the Soviets that the Soviet advisors and specialists were removed.

I was arrested in 1945 in the flat of Wiktor Langer, an officer in the anti-Nazi, anti-Soviet Home Army (Armia Krajowa). A trap was set up and everyone who knocked on his door was arrested. I did not realise that this officer was deeply involved in blocking communists from entering Kraków’s city council and that he was under permanent surveillance by the secret police. This is how I got caught into the claws of the secret police. Thankfully, they had nothing against me, apart from the fact that during the war I was a soldier with the Home Army. I was released thanks to a bribe that my uncle, Gustaw Wajda, had paid, something that I learned about 30 years later.

You also learned much about your life from a book recently published in Poland titled *Andrzej Wajda. Podejrzany (Andrzej Wajda: Suspect)*. The book describes many years of your invigilation by the secret police, and its scale indeed was very large. Altogether 22 secret agents were delegated to spy on you and their

work was supervised by 30 officers, your wife’s apartment was bugged and attempts were made to discredit you. Your first files were prepared in 1950, but since 1977, activities aimed at discrediting you were intensified. What surprised you the most in this book?

What surprised me the most was the fact that in the free and independent Poland when the Law and Justice (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość) party came to power, the first step that was taken by some politicians was to check out my files. At that time I wasn’t a senator anymore, nor did I play an important role in politics. I was just making films.

What’s interesting here is how the extreme right is capable of going after anybody. Under communism, Polish secret agents were paid to fill up these files, often with forged data. Today, however, nobody attempts to check the credibility of the content of those files, whether the information included is factual or made-up. Instead, an a priori assumption is made that whatever is in the file must be true. Based on the files, people were accused of cooperating with the communist state, whether it was true or not. Such was the state at that time and anybody who wanted to make films had to make them in the context for which the political situation allowed. It is difficult to comprehend that the Law and Justice Party is going after people using such files. The rest that was in the book, meaning the communists’ surveillance, did not surprise me at all.



Andrzej Wajda with his wife Krystyna Zachwatowicz in 2010.

When Solidarity was founded in 1980 and the workers' strikes began at the Gdańsk Shipyards, I went there and met with Lech Wałęsa. I made the film *Man of Iron* upon the request of one of the workers. When I entered the shipyard, I heard: "Please make a film about us!" "How?" I asked. "A man of iron," they said. And I had the title. I started to make

the film right after the victory because I hoped that it would be screened in the cinemas before something bad took place in Poland. My friends in Solidarity were upset with me because in the last scene of the film a party activist says to the journalist "After all, this agreement isn't valid. [It's] just a piece of paper." "Why?" he asked. "We won and you made such

an ending?” Time showed that these words were a prophecy: General Wojciech Jaruzelski was preparing to introduce martial law.

In Russia, the screening of your film *Katyń* on public television became an important event. Russian human rights defenders, invited by then-Polish Ambassador Jerzy Bahr, watched it at the Polish Embassy in Moscow. It was then when the former Soviet dissident Sergei Kovalev said: “Poles, please forgive us”. There was also a letter prepared and signed by Polish intellectuals and addressed to the Russian nation asking for reconciliation. Despite these and other gestures, Polish-Russian relations are constantly being spoiled by hooliganism or political games of nationalistic politicians on both sides. What should be done to change and improve these relations and marginalise these acts of hostility?

It’s difficult to answer this question as there are historical grievances that all political groups, whenever they see their own interest, can reference. I know many Russian artists and I know that the difficulties they faced when dealing with the authorities were incomparably greater than ours. I was happy that *Katyń* was screened on the Kultura TV station and later on the national programme of Russian television and that the message that the murder of Polish soldiers was a Stalinist crime reached a wide audience.

This film was seen by several million Russians.

In communist Poland, we used to say that a person’s attitude towards the Katyń massacre was a measure of his attitude towards the People’s Republic of Poland. In other words, when somebody believed that the murder had been committed by the Soviets, it meant that this person was not accepting communist rule in Poland. This is how the communists presented it. The Katyń case was surrounded by a public lie. Indeed, the screening of the film in Russia gave great hope for improving Polish-Russian relations. In Poland, on the other hand, I was subject to many attacks, mainly for presenting a character who was a good Russian. But the scene with the Soviet officer was based on authentic facts, on the memoirs of the widow of a murdered Polish officer. What’s more, among the soldiers of the Red Army there were people like Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. I was intrigued and thought how would he have behaved if he had found himself in the situation of that officer? One righteous person is enough. But a Christian has to notice that and show it on the screen.

We also need to remember that the Katyń forest is a site where, next to the hundreds of thousands of murdered Polish officers, other victims of the NKVD are buried, such as members of the Russian intelligentsia. When I visited the site with Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk and President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin, we walked from the Polish officers’ tombs to the Orthodox

church built there to commemorate the murdered Russians. I thought that there was something symbolic in the fact that the Poles gave an example how to commemorate the memory of the victims of the Soviet system.

In the 1980s, there was an idea that you would make a film based on a script written by Solzhenitsyn. The film was to be a story of the suppression of the revolt in a Soviet forced-labour camp by the NKVD. You did not pursue this idea. Why not?

We need to remember that at that time Solzhenitsyn lived in the United States. Had I made this film back then, I would also probably have had to emigrate. This would mean making films for a foreign audience. What films and for whom?

These times as well as the first years after communism are also a topic of your most recent film *Wałęsa: Man of Hope* (*Wałęsa. Człowiek z nadziei*). The script for this film was written by Janusz Głowacki, who has written for you in the past. Głowacki admitted that many scenes were not included in the film. What proportion of the material was cut out from the final version of the film? Is this something you do with every film?

The problem was how to present the protagonist's life in flashback. Janusz and I agreed that the film would finish with two scenes, the first showing Wałęsa leaving his home on the first day of the strikes and the second would show him

jumping over the wall of the Gdańsk Shipyard. But this version did not fit. Now, the film starts with the failure of the 1970 workers' protests and finishes with Wałęsa's speech to the United States Congress. When I started working on the film, I first filmed the scenes that in the script I liked the most. In the beginning I also had a feeling that I was lacking a comprehensive and cohesive vision for the film. We had two scenes of Oriana Fallaci's interview with Wałęsa. However, when filming these scenes I noticed how Robert Więckiewicz (the actor playing Wałęsa – editor's note) was playing with Wałęsa's words. I thought that we could do more of that and make a few more scenes with Fallaci. Evidently, every man (a politician or an actor) starts to behave differently when in the company of a woman. He starts acting, wants to make a good impression and get her attention to what he is talking about. That's why this interview also revealed Wałęsa's true personality.

Between the scenes of the interview, we showed the political events that depict Lech Wałęsa as being much wiser than many of our opposition politicians. He used common sense and the instinct of a simple man; he knew that bloodshed would mean tragedy and that we needed victory, not heroism. All in all, what I wanted to show in the film was how people who were around the Solidarity leader wanted to push him towards more radical positions, while thanks to his common sense he knew how to deal with the communist authorities.


In Poland, Lech Wałęsa generates political emotions. But many also would argue that as a character he is not a typical figure. Can we find in Polish literature a figure that would be a comparable character? In other words, had Adam Mickiewicz, Juliusz Słowacki or Stanisław Witkiewicz (Witkacy) envisioned a Pole similar to Lech Wałęsa?

I would prefer not to make such comparisons to the writers you mentioned, as they often use negative characters. We've decided to present Wałęsa starting from the 1970s. For Wałęsa, the fact that the communist authorities massacred workers was an unforgettable lesson. The authorities officially representing the working class were ready to sacrifice the workers' blood. In 1980, Wałęsa was richer in these experiences and would abstain from violence. In the interview with Fallaci, he refuses to accept the suggestion that the Russians would enter Poland with a military intervention. Many of us were convinced that this could happen but Wałęsa insisted: "No, they won't enter". How did he know? That's what amazed me, his understanding and good sense of the political situation.

The film ends with the scene of the address the US Congress in which Wałęsa says "We, the people..." Now, years after

that speech, at the screening of the film organised for American Congressmen in Washington, DC, which was attended both by Lech Wałęsa and Robert Więckiewicz, Wałęsa bitterly added: "Today I would have to say: 'We the divided people!'"

Let me ask you about the 21 demands of the Interfactory Strike Committee. Is it true that you were ordered to remove them from your film *Man of Iron*?

I was called by the then-head of Polish cinematography and ordered to cut out not one but 21 scenes from the film. My wife Krystyna Zachwatowicz and the production manager Barbara Ślesicka told me then: "This is like the 21 strike demands; don't agree to it and don't cut out anything." Solidarity supported me. I have to say this was the only moment in my life as a film director when someone defended my film like that. People from all over Poland wrote letters, their reaction was so effective that the film was not only saved from the censors' cuts, but also screened during the film festival in Cannes and I received the Palm d'Or. Today, the award can be seen in Kraków at the Jagiellonian University Museum. I owe it to Solidarity. 

Translated by Iwona Reichardt

Andrzej Wajda is a Polish film director. He received an honorary Oscar in 2000 and a Palme d'Or in 1981. Four of his films were nominated for the Best Foreign Language Oscar. He is known especially for such films as *Kanal* (1956) *Ashes and Diamonds* (1958), *Man of Marble* (1976), *Man of Iron* (1981), and *Katyń* (2007) and his most recent film *Wałęsa. Man of Hope* (2013).

Grzegorz Nurek is a freelance Polish journalist.

Integration is the Only Choice

Interview with David Usupashvili, Speaker of the Georgian Parliament. Interviewer: Elżbieta Kustra-Pirweli.

ELŻBIETA KUSTRA-PIRWELI: Since we last met in 2009, many things have changed in Georgia, the two most important of which are the changing of the ruling power and the shifting of the new political system from a presidential republic to a parliamentary one, where the majority of power is concentrated in the office of the prime minister and in the Parliament. From the perspective of 2009, did you expect such major changes in Georgia in such a short period of time?

DAVID USUPASHVILI: The year 2009 was one of major disappointment for myself along with a lot of people in Georgia. It was disappointing mainly because of the performance of Mikhail Saakashvili and his team. In 2004, after the Rose Revolution, they received a unique chance to lead this country towards democracy, peace, European integration, transparency and accountability. By 2009, however, we were disenchanted. Poverty was growing, democracy was shrinking and the August 2008 war made our security even more difficult and ruined the country.

I believe that the situation in 2009 demanded change. Unfortunately, the political opposition was very fragmented and Saakashvili was still very successful on the international stage, shaping his image as the only pro-western leader in the country despite his mistakes at home. The opposition was seen in the outside world as fragmented, incapable of change and mostly pro-Russian or based on communist nostalgia. Unfortunately, the local elections in 2010 didn't give us any hope for a better future. In general, political life was disappearing step-by-step as Saakashvili overcame the crisis after the 2008 war. By dealing with different political leaders through various manoeuvres, he effectively weakened any potential challenger.

The emergence of a completely new actor changed the situation. Bidzina Ivanishvili declared his political intentions in October 2011, and this changed the landscape of the Georgian political system. That was not a logical step for the development of the political system. The emergence of a new charismatic, strong leader meant that partisan politics

were on hold once again and that politics was dominated by personality-based political rivalry. However, this was the fault of the outgoing leader and not of the incoming leader.

Has the whole process gone beyond your expectations?

As politicians and Georgian citizens who witnessed this from the inside, we knew that there were many weaknesses in Saakashvili's power structures. We knew that his number one strength was a weakness: the monolith of power. It was enough to remove one stone and the monolith would collapse. Besides, we knew the real mood of the people. We knew that even supporters of Saakashvili, for example headmasters and school teachers who had to publicly support him, privately believed something different.

It was clear that by the end of 2011, Saakashvili enjoyed no more than 30 per cent support. The task was how to unite the 70 per cent of voters clearly against Saakashvili. For my own Republican Party, which was chosen by Ivanishvili as a strategic partner since the very beginning, this question was also about if we would be able to hold together long enough. It's important to remember that Ivanishvili declared his political aims in the autumn of 2011, but elections were still one year ahead. This one year was quite a long time to wait, since everybody wants change immediately. As soon as we held a big rally in Tbilisi, people said: "Okay, so let's go and demand his

resignation." It was very difficult to keep the process under control.

Another major task was to better explain the situation to the international community. Ivanishvili's starting position was rather difficult to understand. Politicians, especially those in Brussels, might have read in the media that a billionaire from Russia wants to take power in Georgia. For Saakashvili, it meant that in international circles people were even more eager to forgive his mistakes. Otherwise, how would they tolerate Saakashvili's very first move against Ivanishvili's when he stripped the latter's Georgian citizenship from him? In normal conditions, this would be enough of an argument to isolate any political leader of a democratic country.

The Republican Party is a member of the Georgian Dream coalition, whose leader and creator was Ivanishvili. After his resignation in 2013, does the former prime minister still have influence on the political situation in Georgia and your party's decisions within the coalition?

In real life, miracles don't happen. Just hoping that the day after Ivanishvili resigns his influence and involvement in discussions or the decision-making process within the coalition will disappear is too naïve to believe and nobody was expecting this. What we planned was to gradually decrease Ivanishvili's role in the coalition's decisions. At the same time, it doesn't mean that we are building some artificial walls between us. We are



Photo: OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (CC) www.flickr.com

David Usupashvili is the speaker of the Georgian Parliament and member of the Republican Party, part of the ruling Georgian Dream coalition.

all trying to adapt ourselves to this new reality. His influence on public life will have a different form and meaning. Some sort of relationship will be continued, but we have to be very careful in order not to intermingle politics and personal relations.

Ruling the country by means of a coalition is not an easy task as parties have to often compromise with each other. In your opinion, will the coalition manage to remain until the next parliamentary elections in 2016 or are there already some visible cracks?

First of all, we are a real coalition. It is not just an artificial division between one monolithic team. It is true that the parties that are in the coalition have their own past and their own future. What unites us is the present. Smaller and older parties like the Republican Party and bigger and newer ones like the Georgian Dream Party have the understanding that we need each other if we have to deal with some of the difficulties of ruling in a coalition. This is a very pragmatic and rational approach.

Is the coalition 100 per cent guaranteed to last until the scheduled elections?

Well, nothing is guaranteed, not even within a single party or within a coalition. However, this is our firm decision. We Republicans had our congress two months ago and we elected a new chairman. I had my last speech as chairman of the party, in which I mentioned it very clearly about the coalition, that the Republican Party is going stay with the coalition to the end. This means that if something happens, we will be the last to leave. And we encourage our partners to have the same approach.

What achievements can the coalition already boast in the one and a half years of rule?

One-and-a-half years can be a long time but on the other hand it is not that long. We spent most of this time in a cohabitation process with a president who held all the constitutional power, though de facto he was powerless, but still he was able to make a lot of obstacles. In other words, the Parliament had to overcome about 30 of his vetoes, delaying progress.

At the same time, we can say that we made a very successful first wave of reforms in the judiciary. We made the Council of Justice more independent and we empowered individual judges. We have started local government reforms and the Parliament is actually completing the adoption of a new code, which is an essential part in building a strong democratic state. We have begun addressing the needs of the people by introducing a health care system that

covers the most vulnerable populations. We are supporting rural communities that were officially ignored by the previous government, which had no programme for agricultural development. We have introduced a new social package for vulnerable people such as pensioners, the disabled and single mothers. The main challenge, however, is the economy, which is not growing as fast as we would like.

In international relations, the main challenge standing ahead of your country is successfully signing the Association Agreement with the European Union. What chapters of this agreement might be the most problematic to close before September? What needs additional attention?

Fortunately, there are no substantial issues left for negotiations in the agreement. There are only technical issues. Therefore, there is no subject on the table between Georgia and the EU that could delay the process.

Yet Georgia may face a difficult period regarding relations with Russia. Could it interfere in Georgia's aspiration towards the final signing of the Association Agreement?

We saw very clearly that Russia is doing everything possible to prevent the Eastern Partnership countries from joining the association agreement. Without going into the details of what is happening in other countries, I can certainly state several


facts about Georgia. First, it is more than clear that there is no considerable political partner for Russia in Georgia. In the other countries, certain internal political forces have become partners with Russia aiming to prevent these countries' path towards Europe. In Georgia, this is not the case. Politicians who advocate for Russian ties versus European ones are very marginal and this is a reflection of the mood of the population.

However, this fact is not something which should lead us to the conclusion that the game is over. Russia still occupies Georgian territories. Some segments of Georgian society still have nostalgia for the times of the Soviet Union. This exists, of course, in every post-Soviet society where unemployment is high and the social needs are not satisfied. If the European Union is presented as an organisation only concerned about LGBT rights, which will force a change in Georgian traditions, the people start thinking that maybe that path is not for them after all. Therefore, I believe the Georgian government and our partners in Europe need to do a better job in order to explain to the Georgian population what risks and concrete benefits Georgian citizens will get from visa liberalisation

and from the signing of the association agreement.

Alexi Petriashvili, state minister of European and Euro-Atlantic integration, recently stated that regarding Georgia's integration with NATO, we should expect similar results as with the EU. What does this mean?

For Georgia, European and NATO integration is not the best choice among many others. For us, European and NATO integration is the only choice. Saying this, I understand that I am making a statement that can make my country very vulnerable, but I believe that people who see the reality don't need a reminder to understand that this is the only good choice we have. Therefore, we are interested in this process just as we are interested in strengthening of our statehood, ensuring the existence of this country for our children and grandchildren.

I believe that 2014 will be a decisive year for Georgia. We will sign the Association Agreement, we will make progress in regards to NATO integration and we will see the fruits of our economic policy and greater democratisation programmes with local elections in June. 

David Usupashvili is the current speaker of the Parliament of Georgia. He is a member of the Republican Party which is a part of the ruling Georgian Dream Coalition.

Elzbieta Kustra-Pirweli is an international relations specialist focusing on the South Caucasus region. She has served as deputy spokesperson of the European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia (EUMM) in the regional office of Gori.

Energy Security through Cooperation

An interview with Urban Rusnák, Secretary General of the Energy Charter Secretariat. Interviewer: Martina Cebecauerová

MARTINA CEBECAUEROVÁ: It has been almost 20 years since the signing of the Energy Charter Treaty in 1994. How would you evaluate the achievements regarding the cooperation within the charter's framework?

URBAN RUSNÁK: I firmly believe that the Energy Charter process, as it was intended at the beginning by its initiators, has met its original expectations to a very high degree. I believe that the Energy Charter Treaty has created a legally binding framework for international energy cooperation in the wider north Eurasian region from the Atlantic to the Pacific Oceans. This helps countries plan and cooperate with each other in a predictable way and protects energy investments and promotes the investments in the member states of the Energy Charter. What's more, the framework provides sensible rules for transit and the trade of energy sources, strengthening the national sovereignty of all member states over

energy resources. The treaty also provides dispute settlement mechanisms for certain conflicts during exploration, work or investment in the energy sector.

I think that the biggest concern related to the Energy Charter Process is the very fact that out of the original signatories, five countries – Australia, Belarus, Iceland, Norway and the Russian Federation – have not yet ratified the treaty. This means that the treaty constituency is not fully consolidated. I believe that the biggest challenge for me as secretary general is how to address the reasons why these five countries have not ratified the Energy Charter Treaty. Last year, I launched a consultation process to address this very issue and there has been some progress. Therefore, I am cautiously optimistic about the prospects for the ratification for some of those countries of the treaty but, of course, I cannot expect the same for the issues which have accumulated over 15 years to be solved in one or two years.

What are the reasons why these countries have not ratified the treaty?

Each country has its own specific reasons. Many of the reasons why the countries are reluctant to ratify the treaty have been linked to the fact that the Treaty and Energy Charter process should be modernised to meet the challenges emerging in the energy field over the last 20 years. For this reason, we have launched a process for the modernisation of the Energy Charter, and we believe that within this process we will be able to address some of the root causes that get to the heart of these concerns. This process of modernisation and consolidation is very closely linked to a third very important challenge, which we face: the process of enlargement and the expansion of the Energy Charter. Here, I have to admit that we had a very important achievement last year with Afghanistan becoming the 54th member of the Energy Conference. This is the first time a new member ratified the treaty in over a decade. This illustrates that the process is alive and the treaty continues to expand. In addition, we have three other countries in the pipeline: Montenegro, Jordan and Pakistan.

You mentioned that Russia was one of the countries that have not ratified the treaty. In fact in 2009, the Kremlin announced it would opt out of the charter altogether. What have been the consequences of Russia's decisions for the charter as a whole?

The Russian Federation signed the Energy Charter Treaty in 1994. Between 1994 and October 2009, Russia had been



"Europe is still the most important market for Russia, even if this market is shrinking," says Urban Rusnák, Secretary General of the Energy Charter Secretariat.

implementing the treaty provisionally. In 2009, the Russian leadership made a decision to withdraw from the provisional application of the treaty and has indicated that it does not intend to become a contracting party to the Energy Charter Treaty or the Protocol on Energy Efficiency and Related Environmental Aspects.

To understand this decision, I think it is important to remember the international energy situation in 2009. It was a year with a major disruption of gas flow from Russia through Ukraine to Europe. The Energy Charter process contains provisions to solve disputes, but in 2009, none of these provisions was enacted. In fact, the Energy Charter was even blamed as a reason behind the disputes. The second reason for

Russia's decision is related to the fatigue inside the Russian Federation relating to the lengthy, on-going negotiations over transit protocol. Transit protocol was an issue which had been discussed in the Energy Charter process for almost a decade but, unfortunately, it was not completed successfully mainly because two sides, Russia and the EU, failed to agree on common rules. The Russians eventually came to the conclusion that Energy Charter process is not bringing any satisfying results, so they stopped the provisional application of the treaty.

But it is important to note that despite the Russian withdrawal from the provisional application of the treaty, Russia is still a member of the Energy Charter Conference. It participates on many different levels as an active partner in the process.

I would like to make it very clear that the Energy Charter is much more than relations between Brussels and Moscow. More and more countries are interested in the Energy Charter process and their number is expanding. We have seen expansion to the southern Mediterranean, while in Africa, Morocco signed the Energy Charter declaration last year. Jordan is about to ratify the treaty. We expect Yemen and Lebanon to sign the Energy Charter declaration soon. So the process continues beyond points of conflict.

Many European countries still rely on Russian oil and gas. Being fully aware of this, Moscow uses this leverage as a political weapon. The cut-offs in

2006 and 2009 were illustrative of how fragile the Central and Eastern European countries are. Given the current circumstances with Ukraine, how likely is it that the energy security of Central European countries will again become threatened?

I think that in 2006 and especially after 2009 the countries that depend on oil and gas transit through Ukraine from Russia have learned a lot. Due to some changes and the developing internal markets of the European Union, I do not see any imminent threat to the energy security of the Visegrad (V4) countries regardless of the current state of affairs between Russia and Ukraine. Since 2009, it has been proved that it is technically possible and commercially viable to import gas in reverse flow from the West to the East. Recent discussions in Slovakia examined how to facilitate the reverse flow from Slovakia to Ukraine; the same was done from Poland to Ukraine as well as from Hungary to Ukraine.

The second issue that is important for Slovakia is that of transmission. The importance of Slovakia as a key transmission country in the Central European region is diminishing now that there are pipelines bypassing Ukraine and Slovakia, such as the North Stream or the upcoming building of the South Stream.

Still, the process of greater energy security within V4 countries is not finalised. What is the most important step right now?

I think that from this perspective, the internal market of the EU is the right way to develop. We know that an interconnector between Hungary and Slovakia is in process; the region is more and more linked to a chain of north-south interconnectors in planning or partly in operation. So I am quite confident that the V4 countries have learned from the crisis in 2009, and they will not be threatened anymore by relations between Kyiv and Moscow.

How do you interpret the failure of the Nabucco Pipeline, the project aimed at delivering Caspian gas to Austria? In place of the Nabucco project, the second option of the Trans-Adriatic pipeline was chosen. What will its impact on the countries of Central Europe be?

The decision in favour of the Trans-Adriatic pipeline was not a surprise. The Nabucco Pipeline was very prophetic and built on expectations from a different time. The Nabucco project was formulated before the economic crisis and it was expected that the gas market in south-eastern Europe would grow much quicker than it did. Instead, the market has shrunk. Europe is consuming less and less gas. Therefore, the decision to opt for the Trans-Adriatic pipeline was very much dictated by basic economic realities and fundamentals. Whether or not the Nabucco West Pipeline could still be implemented is a question very much linked to faith in the South Stream project. It would be

hard to imagine that the two projects would be implemented parallel to each other. So let's wait and see how the situation will develop.

I don't believe that the failure of the Nabucco Pipeline predicts failure in energy security strategies for Central Europe. It was certainly a very important project, but there is no market for this gas. And it is very hard to build any long-term project based only on the expectation of a disruption of gas supplies from Russia. If the contracts from Russia are fulfilled, there will be abundant gas in Central Europe and it is hard to find a client who will buy the Caspian gas from the Nabucco; this was exactly the reason why the gas went to Italy and not to Central Europe.

Russia has been trying its best to maintain dominance and prevent further diversification of the energy supply in Europe. However, Russia does not lack demand on the other side of the world, such as the growing energy demands in China. Is there a chance that Moscow will turn its back on its European partners and find a new, larger consumer market in Asia?

All countries are free to make a choice to whom and where they sell their natural resources. It is very well-known that the Russian Federation has been negotiating with the counterparts in China for a very long time about supplying gas to them. However, there is still a gap between Russian and Chinese expectations regarding price and supply.

Until the price issue is solved, Russia will face difficulties selling gas to the eastern markets.

China relies more and more on supplies from Central Asia. There are already two pipelines built from Turkmenistan via Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan to China and a third pipeline through Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan is in the works. This creates competition for the Chinese market, so Russia certainly has to compete for this market. But the question of price is crucial to making any decision in the long term. Personally, I think it is very hard to predict when and if at all the price expectation from Russia and China would be met at a point which would make a contract possible. They have been discussing this for a decade.

Is there any possibility that Russia would completely give up on Europe?

No. Europe is still the most important market for Russia, even if this market is shrinking. Russia has lost its dominant position as a major gas supplier last year, being overpassed by Norway. Currently, Norway is the biggest gas supplier to the European market.

With a growing need for diversification and alternative energy sources, shale gas has been put forward as an attractive option. How do you assess the future chances of this energy source?

Shale gas has a very important potential. It has already shown its importance as a game changer on a

global scale. Technological advances in the United States have made it possible to extract gas from shale, which was not technically possible 10-15 years ago. This new gas has already influenced Europe. The greatest potential in the region is certainly in Poland. To what extent these expectations will be fulfilled is also a matter of available technologies and market price. The geological formations in Poland are not the same as they are in the United States, so the technology will need to be adapted to local conditions. Certainly, there are regulatory issues as well as land ownership, all of which could slow down the development of the shale gas industry in Poland.

I think that the question of whether shale gas has a future in Europe and in Poland is very much linked to the price of gas. If the price of gas declined as we have seen in recent years, then it would be difficult to make this exploration economically viable. I don't exclude the possibility that exploration could continue, and certainly this shale gas could have a very important role as a guarantee for the national energy security for Poland in the medium and long-term.


In Western European countries, alternative energy sources such as solar, wind, biomass and geothermal energy are becoming more attractive. What are the chances for their development in Central Europe?

The attractiveness of investment options in the unconventional energy resources is very much linked to state

policies of subsidising new sources. However, this quest for subsidising renewable energies went a little too far, and the economies and citizens of Europe are not ready and able to pay and sustain the high cost for these renewables. We have seen within the Energy Charter process a growing number of arbitration cases where the states have retroactively changed its rules for subsidising different tariffs or schemes. Since the economies could no longer sustain those fees, it brought about disputes between the investors and the states. Therefore, I don't really agree that it is an attractive option.

So you do not support alternative energy such as solar, wind and biomass?

Personally, I believe that technological progress should be supported in a rational

way. The subsidies should be calibrated as carefully as possible. If you over-subsidise something, then you are distorting the market. If you look at the wholesale electricity market in Europe, you will see that the market on a European scale was distorted by different kinds of subsidies to renewables, but also to coal and nuclear. That being said, I personally support renewable energy. I believe that it will play a very important role in the future. But for the next decade or two, we will still have to rely on fossil fuels with renewables being a supplementary resource of energy. When technology matures and costs decrease, we will witness dramatic changes in the broader energy sector, not in Central Europe, but globally. 

Urban Rusnák is the secretary general of the Energy Charter Secretariat, an international organisation based on the Energy Charter Treaty. He holds an MSc from the Moscow University of Oil and Gas, and a PhD in Public Administration and Political Sciences from the Institute of Social Sciences of Ankara University.

Martina Cebecauerová is an editorial intern with *New Eastern Europe*. She has a BA in International Relations and European Studies from Metropolitan University Prague.

Made in Serbia

GINANNE BROWNELL

In the 1970s and 1980s, Serbia was not only home to Yugoslavia's textile industry, but also a **fashion mecca for the region**. Following the collapse of Yugoslavia and the slow recovery after the wars of the 1990s, Serbia's fashion industry is once again becoming a cultural bright spot for the country.

Salma Hayek took her time looking through the racks at Supermarket, Belgrade's first concept fashion store. The Mexican-born actress was in the Serbian capital in 2013 filming a thriller and on a free day she decided to peruse what the store, which focuses much of its collection on Serbian designers, had to offer.

"She came in and asked if this was a spot for Serbian designers," said Slavko Marković, the founder of Supermarket. "We told her it was and she started shopping. She was very studious, going from one piece to another, really examining the [collection.]" In the end, Ms Hayek purchased 10 items, including a pair of trousers by designer Marina Mićanović, two skirts by Super Rumenka by Dejana Stanojević and a dress by Jelena Stefanović.

A fashion springboard

It was a coup for the concept store, which celebrates its fifth anniversary this year and will be opening an outpost in Berlin's Bikini Berlin Centre in the spring, not only because Hayek is a Hollywood A-lister but also because she knows a thing or two about fashion; she is married to François-Henri Pinault, the chairman of Kering, which owns high-end labels including Gucci, Saint Laurent and Balenciaga.

"She is a superstar and her husband is very well-known in the fashion world, so it was a very big distinction for me that she would wear one of my pieces," Stefanović said in a phone interview. "I was very, very pleased that someone like that would be fond of something from here. I am very proud to put 'Made in Serbia' on my labels."

The fashion scene in Serbia generally, and Belgrade specifically, has been gaining more critical attention over the last several years thanks not only to the creation of the fashion spots like the Belgrade Design District and concept stores like Supermarket. Other famous clientele who have visited Supermarket include Scottish actor Gerard Butler, Serbian model Nataša Vojnović and Serbian tennis player Viktor Troicki. The growing importance and relevance of Belgrade Fashion Week, which this spring will mark its 18th anniversary, has also increased international attention on Serbia's emerging fashion industry.

The fashion week has already served as a springboard for many designers, including Dejan Despotović, Tatjana Tatalović, Ana Ljubinković, George Styler and Roksanda Ilinčić, Serbia's most famous fashion export. A favourite of celebrities

Belgrade Fashion Week has served as a **springboard** for many Serbian designers.

including Michelle Obama, Kate Middleton, Gwyneth Paltrow and Penelope Cruz, Ilinčić opened up her first flagship store in London's Mayfair in the early part of 2014. Though Belgrade will likely never become an international fashion centre like Milan, London or New York, the Serbian capital is certainly becoming an important player in fashion not only in the Balkans, but across Eastern Europe.

"All designers from the region want to come here to present their shows, so Belgrade is the place for new designers," said Nenad Radujević, the founder of Belgrade Fashion Week and also the director of Serbia's first private modelling agency, Click Fashion Studio. "So I think Belgrade will be a hub of fashion for the region for sure."

Cultural bright spot

The last two decades have not been easy politically, economically or culturally for Serbia. Spring 2014 marks the 15th anniversary of the NATO bombardment of Belgrade, which left the already-beleaguered country even more isolated than it had been after the series of wars that tore apart Yugoslavia in the 1990s. Viewed as the pariah state in Europe for years, Serbia has struggled to gain admission into the European Union, with membership talks beginning in earnest January 2014 after the country showed efforts to improve ties with its former province of Kosovo. Foreign investors have been deterred from investing because of the country's political instability, which included the ousting of Slobodan Milošević in 2000 and the 2003 assassination of Prime Minister Zoran Đinđić. What's more, the unemployment rate has hovered around 23 to 25 per cent over the last few years.

Economic and political problems have also wreaked havoc on the country's cultural scene. Due to a lack of funding, several museums in Belgrade, including the



Photo: Djordje Tomic, Fotonimages

A number of designers, stylists, critics and managers have helped grow the Serbian fashion industry domestically and internationally.

Museum of Contemporary Art and the National Museum, have had to temporarily close their doors until more money is made available for renovations, infrastructure and maintenance costs. Artists, musicians, filmmakers and designers have had to make due with very little money going towards culture. It is hoped that the newly-appointed Minister of Culture Ivan Tasovac, a concert pianist and director of the Belgrade Philharmonic Orchestra, will be a positive step for culture in Serbia.

Despite all the obstacles that the industry faces, fashion has become something of a cultural bright spot for Serbia, with a number of designers, stylists, critics and managers who have helped grow and promote the scene, both in Serbia and internationally. Historically, Serbia in the 1970s and 1980s was not only home to Yugoslavia's textile industry, but was also a fashion mecca for the region.

"Yugoslavia, and specifically Belgrade, was really trendy," said Dragan Mrdja, a New York-based shoe and clothing designer who left Belgrade 25 years ago. "It was very much a fashion-forward place. There was this amazing rock-and-roll scene and everyone was so full of imagination and very individual in expressing that."

But as the country moved from socialism to capitalism and as the wars caused mass devastation across the region, the industries quickly died.

"We have a strong history of textiles here and during the days of Yugoslavia, most of the factories were based in Serbia," said Nenad Radujević. "We had big

international companies like Pierre Cardin producing here. I do think it is possible to redevelop those things again and that there is opportunity for our industry here.”

Radujević said he was inspired to start a fashion week after being invited to the Paris Fashion Week in 1995, when he spent two weeks talking to designers, fashion critics and stylists. “It was a great experience,” he said. “So we started it in 1996 [in Belgrade] and it was not really ready but we decided to start anyway and show that it was possible. We had three days of [catwalks], lectures and round tables and it was successful.”

Radujević stated that the Belgrade Fashion Week is the oldest fashion week in Eastern Europe and that people from across the region, including from Russia, Hungary and the Czech

Belgrade Fashion Week now draws fashion designers from all over the world.

Republic, came to see how they were able to put a fashion week together. Ilinčić showed some of her student collections from London’s Central Saint Martin’s at Belgrade Fashion Week, investing the proceeds she made from modelling back into her production.

Zona 45

The spring/summer show in 1999 was cancelled because of the NATO bombings of Belgrade. But ever since, the fashion weeks held in spring and autumn have continued uninterrupted. “During those years, nothing was happening in Belgrade,” said Ana Ljubinković, sitting in a small smoky Belgrade café a few blocks from her colourful atelier in the Belgrade Design District. “All the galleries were shut down and it was really depressing. So that fact that there was a fashion week was spectacular. It was really dynamic and gave me a reason to work.”

In the early days, Belgrade Fashion Week would show spring/summer collections in the spring, “which was pointless,” said Katarina Mootich, a London-based Serbian shoe designer. But over the years it became more professional, with designers not only becoming more clued-in on how the fashion industry worked, but also with more and more brands from abroad coming on to the Serbian market, designers realised they had to be more competitive to survive.

Nowadays, Belgrade Fashion Week not only draws fashion designers from the countries of the former Yugoslavia, but from countries like Germany and Greece as well. “Greek designers are going into new markets like the Middle East, Russia and Serbia because of the stagnant market at home,” said Dimi Gaidatzi, a fashion journalist who has written for the *Financial Times* and the (now-defunct) *Greek Vogue*. “Due to the proximity and the special relations between the two countries, with



The growing importance and relevance of Belgrade Fashion Week, which will mark its 18th anniversary this year, has increased international attention on Serbia's emerging fashion industry.

both a shared history and shared Orthodoxy, Greek designers are definitely looking to show in Serbia.”

Radujević said that there had been plans back in 2008 to have a Balkan Fashion Week held in Serbia, where designers from the former Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Greece would present their works in one fashion showcase. But the financial crisis took its toll and the project was never able to get off the ground. However, Radujević and his colleagues in Zagreb and Ljubljana recently started a project called Zona 45. Its name comes from the fact that Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia all have the 45th parallel running through their countries. The project showcases at each city's fashion week some of the best designers from the former Yugoslavia. “So we have tried to make it a nice platform for designers from our area,” Radujević said.

Experts say the fashion week and those behind it have contributed greatly to not only promoting the fashion industry inside Serbia but also highlighting Serbian designers during fashion events in places like London and Paris. For example, last year, George Styler (whose real name is Đorđe Tamburić) presented his collection along with two other Belgrade-based designers, Ana Ljubinković and Ivana Pilja, at the small Serbian fashion showcase L'Impossible during London Fashion Week. Impressed by his collection, Styler was invited back to London Fashion Week in February 2014 to show his new collection at the Ones to Watch show. Styler said that one of the biggest problems on the Serbian fashion scene is that there are not enough good fashion critics and journalists who have a broader view of fashion.

“During my last fashion show, one of the editors of a famous licensed magazine in Serbia sat in the front row and typed on his mobile the whole time,” Styler said. “He left my show after a few minutes and went to the VIP room and laughed at my creations on social networks. But a few weeks later, the same collection [was] selected by British fashion experts and editors for the Ones to Watch showcase. So many fashion designers are better appreciated in the world than in their own country.”

Hampering growth

Another positive step for the Belgrade fashion scene was the setting up of the Belgrade Design District in November 2010. Located in the Čumićevo Sokače, the first shopping mall in Belgrade that fell on hard times after the war, the Design District houses several small fashion and jewellery boutiques.

“Our aim is to develop the mall in all ways of design and art,” said Emilija Petrović, a fashion designer who is the president of the Belgrade Design District Association. “All designers believe that the Belgrade Design District is important because [Serbs] and foreigners who visit Belgrade can meet with the Serbian fashion scene all in one place.”

Though there are cracks in the pavement and it seems slightly remote despite its location off of one of the main thoroughfares in Belgrade, the indoor/outdoor mall is a bustling place, a hip hub in the city. Stefan Siegel, the founder

Quality and **imagination** of designers continue to propel the Serbian fashion scene.

of the online fashion website Not Just a Label (NJAL), visited Belgrade in 2012 and said he was impressed by the mall. “It is a more accessible market and maybe less expensive than a place like Supermarket,” Siegel said in a phone interview. “It is such a great idea to give central retail space to emerging designers.”

While there are a lot of positive signs on the Belgrade fashion scene, there is also a host of issues that designers, stylists and fashion experts point to as seriously hampering the scene from growing. One of the biggest issues is that because Serbia is not a member of the European Union yet, it is difficult to get access to textiles and fabrics. “I think one of the most difficult things is trying to do a collection in a specific colour,” said Ljubinković. “For example, if I wanted to do a whole collection in mint, wool, silk, cotton and so on, it would be impossible because simply if you find one texture in mint, you are lucky. When I travel I always have one bag for fabrics. It is not really a solution though, because I end up with only fabric for five outfits and I need material for way more than that.”

That limited access to fabrics means that collections are often very small, bespoke and made-to-order. Unlike in other fashion capitals, where the collections that are shown on the catwalks are already being manufactured, Serbian designers often wait to see what pieces garner interest during showcases like Belgrade Fashion Week and then produce accordingly.

The mother of invention

“With the economic problems comes the difficulty to work as you really want to,” said Dejan Despotović, who moved to the United States a year ago to work

as a creative consultant for a New York-based designer. “There is no way to find fabrics in big quantities, so that makes us do smaller collections.” Stefanović, who is also a theatrical costume designer and counts actresses like Branka Katić as part of her clientele, agreed that necessity is the mother of invention when it comes to Serbian fashion. “Maybe because of a lack of materials and finances, we had to make something without anything,” she said. “So we started using our imagination much more than if we had everything we needed in front of us. Maybe it is a good thing that happened.”

Another problem is that of exporting collections abroad. Though most Belgrade-based designers have websites, selling their pieces online can prove next-to-impossible. Serbia has the PayPal system, but it only works in one direction, meaning that Serbs can purchase items from abroad, but people abroad cannot use PayPal to purchase things in Serbia.

“When PayPal came to Serbia, I thought, ‘Yes, this will solve my problems,’” Ljubinković said. “But it is more like you can pay out, but you cannot get money with PayPal. It’s exhausting and if it is not one problem, it is another.” Therefore, many designers have taken to having Serbian friends who live in European Union countries registering their companies there and getting European tax IDs. The designers then physically carry their collections with them, on flights or by cars, into the EU.

Until recently, jewellery designers also faced an additional problem of exporting metals abroad. “There was still an embargo from the 1990s that forbid the export of metal, which was strictly linked to the arms industry but it had an effect on the jewellery industry as well,” said Siegel. “There was a problem where they were creating massive heavy rings and they could not use DHL or UPS to get the pieces out of the country. So when I was there, we had a meeting with the trade minister and we found a small loophole. Now, these designers can export rings under a certain type of legislation. So step by step, designers are able to access other markets as well.”

Despite all the issues that the Belgrade fashion scene faces, there is a strong belief that, in the end, the quality and imagination of designers will continue to propel the scene forward. “We produce good quality clothes and I think that is one of the greatest things about designers here,” Stefanović said. “They invest in the way clothes are made and they are not pieces you would throw away after a year. We are not based on trends. I hope that we will be seen as having many talented designers and more people will be interested in what we have to show the world.” 

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An Agent of the Polish Cause

MAŁGORZATA NOCUŃ

An analysis of the biography of Aleksander Lednicki – a Polish lawyer, publicist, social activist and politician who died in 1934 – sheds new light on **Polish-Russian cooperation at the beginning of the 20th century**. Lednicki's intellectual path shows that this lawyer argued that a policy of “isolating” Russia by Poland would be fatal.

“I remember how once, many years ago, my father took me after dinner to the study room in his house in Warsaw and said: ‘I have a pleasant surprise for you.’ He opened one of his desk drawers and took out a series of photographs which, as it turned out later, were given to him by the Polish Embassy in Moscow, where they were accidentally saved and found after the nationalisation of our estate,” wrote Waław Lednicki, the son of Aleksander Lednicki, in the first volume of his *Diaries*. In his *Diaries*, Lednicki's son talks about looking through his father's photographs. This was a nostalgic experience for him as the photos were of a world that had vanished. They showed the Lednicki estate in Borek near Smolensk, Russia, as well as distant relatives and friends who had spent the summers there together.

“The camera captured these precious moments and preserved them, yet nothing of these times has remained. When and how have they disappeared? In what kind of abyss? The abyss of time? Could it all disappear in space?” asked Waław Lednicki in his memoirs.

Polish patriot

The Lednickis lost everything, including their vast properties in Russia and works of art (before the First World War the Lednickis' net worth was estimated to be several million roubles; by comparison, the annual income of a Russian minister was 25,000 roubles) in the October Revolution. The entire Lednicki family – Aleksander's wife Maria, his son Waław and daughter Maryla and Lednicki himself – had to

flee Russia for Poland. In Moscow, then torn by a bloody upheaval, they would have been destroyed. Interestingly, it was the Polish and Russian communist activist Felix Dzerzhinsky who helped Lednicki leave Russia for Poland: when Dzerzhinsky successfully escaped from his exile in Siberia he found Lednicki, gave him money and helped him get to Vilnius. Dzerzhinsky, who went down in history as one of the fathers of Russian terror, saved his compatriot from death at the hands of the Bolsheviks.

The loss of material goods can thus be explained by the course of history. At that time, the new Russian authorities, completely taken over by the Bolshevik revolution, confiscated everyone's estates. It smeared the Russian intelligentsia and the Poles. How, then, can we explain that along with the loss of his property, Lednicki lost his position? How is it possible that one of the most popular social activists of Tsarist Russia, who even had his picture printed on matchboxes and who was the author of one of the most interesting concepts of Polish-Russian cooperation and of dialogue between Moscow and Warsaw, is today completely unknown? In the publication *A Decade of a Reborn Poland: 1918-1928*, Lednicki was mentioned among the 300 greatest Poles of the First World War and the first decade of Poland's independence. After 1928, Lednicki's name faded into historical obscurity, to the point that in Poland today only very few would recognise it.

Without a doubt, Lednicki's greatness was tarnished by accusations of his pro-Russian positions, of being a "Russian patriot" and his excessively close ties with Russia. Cooperation with Russia, particularly at the political level, has always sparked controversy in Poland. This is why it should be emphasised

that Aleksander Lednicki, although as an activist he proclaimed the necessity of Polish-Russian dialogue and cooperation, was at his core a Polish patriot both in Tsarist Russia and in Poland. Lednicki moved to Warsaw after Poland regained independence in 1918, where people who did not like him accused him of being a "Russian agent" or a "German agent". The most vociferous of these accusers was Zygmunt Wasilewski, a pre-war essayist and activist with the Polish National Movement.

Meanwhile, Aleksander Lednicki's family home in Minsk was a place saturated with Polish patriotism and Lednicki took that Polishness with him. After the premature death of his father, Lednicki was raised by his grandfather Franciszek and mother Rozalia. Like his father, Lednicki's mother participated in the 1863 January Uprising against the Russian Empire and carried with her the trauma of the insurrection's

How is it possible that one of the most popular activists of Tsarist Russia and author of a key concept of Polish-Russian cooperation is **completely unknown** today?

failure. In its aftermath, the Lednicki home was also a place for the classic debate between the “elder” and the “younger” Romantics. For Lednicki’s grandfather, the uprising was a senseless massacre that led to the greater Russification of the Poles while his mother believed that Poland had to fight for independence. Despite these differences in opinion, both Lednicki’s mother and his grandfather provided Aleksander and his sister with a patriotic upbringing. As a result, Lednicki grew up respecting Roman Catholicism, Polish literature and traditions. He made this seen in his adulthood, which he spent in Russia, where he went to study and begin his professional career. In his salon in Moscow he hosted many Poles and never denied them help. On the contrary, Lednicki took part in various aid activities directed at the Poles and was also a financial supporter of Polish culture.

Promoter of dialogue

It should be emphasised that Lednicki was a promoter of dialogue between all Polish political groupings of the interwar period, a concept that was foreign to most of the country. He invited to his salon both activists who shared his views, but also those who did not such as Zygmunt Balicki (a politician with close ties to the National Movement). Lednicki believed that the Polish *raison d’être* lay in a dialogue of diverse ways of thinking and that this dialogue should also be joined by the representatives of the influential Russian intelligentsia.

On the eve of the Bolshevik Revolution, Lednicki was among the wealthiest people in the Russian Empire.

Lednicki claimed that greater collaboration between Polish and Russian liberal-democratic groups was necessary. He organised Polish-Russian conferences in Warsaw and in Moscow. Pavel Milyukov, a Russian activist of the Constitutional Democratic Party, wrote that Lednicki, “born in Lithuanian Minsk in an environment of impoverished Polish nobility, learned early in life about Russian culture. But we knew that he was always a fiery Polish patriot and this fortunate connection of two cultures was the basis for friendship with tight circles of Muscovites representing the Russian intellectual elite.”

Although Aleksander Lednicki intertwined his professional career with Russia, he remained a Pole until his death. Lednicki went to Moscow to study as a young man with a poor background. His family sacrificed greatly for his education, but, on the eve of the Bolshevik Revolution, Lednicki was among the wealthiest people in the empire. Lednicki’s career as a lawyer and a politician, which brought him considerable financial profits, was possible only thanks to the support of some important Russian intellectuals. He was a student of an attorney named Trostiansky,

a highly respected specialist in the field of civil law. After having finished his legal studies, Lednicki did his apprenticeship with Trostiansky and later began working in his office. After Trostiansky's death, Lednicki took over the office and gained respect in legal circles, mainly due to his willingness to take difficult cases. His motivation for work wasn't only money. For example, he decided to represent Pushkin's peasants in a civil suit against Prince Gagarin, which was unprecedented in Tsarist Russia. After a few years, Lednicki was recognised as among the top attorneys in the Russian bar. He was an excellent orator and his speeches have been inscribed in the history of the Russian legal profession.

Contemporary memory about Lednicki remains in the legal profession. In the times of Tsarist Russia, he gained fame as an attorney and was mentioned among illustrious members of the Russian bar as Fyodor Plevako and Dmitry Stasov. He dealt not only with criminal but also political cases. However, the memory about Lednicki as the author of an unusually interesting concept of establishing Polish-Russian relations (in a political context, but also on the level of social, cultural and economic cooperation) has practically not survived. It is cultivated only in a closed circle of historians.

Supporting Russian democracy

The debate surrounding the normalisation of Polish-Russian relations before the onset of the First World War was limited to two concepts. The first was the concept of federalism, whose father was Marshal Józef Piłsudski (advocating the creation of a federation of independent countries bordering Russia that would then be a buffer zone for Poland) and the concept promoted by the National Democrats, who discussed creating Polish autonomy within the Russian state. What should also be noted is that although there were politicians among the National Democrats who supported far-reaching cooperation with Russia, some such as Zygmunt Balicki understood this cooperation more broadly than Roman Dmowski, the "father" of National Democracy. Balicki was a supporter of creating Polish military divisions fighting side-by-side with Russia.

Lednicki emphasised cooperation with the Russian Constitutional Democratic Party (to which he himself belonged) even though he had earlier established the Polish Progressive-Democratic Party. Lednicki also did not belong to the Polish Caucus in the Russian Duma. The caucus was dominated by the National Democrats, who Lednicki ineffectively tried to convince to cooperate with the Constitutional Democrats, informally known as the Kadets.

Taking advantage of his authority and broad circle of acquaintances among influential Russians, Lednicki became a spokesman for supporting the nascent

Russian democracy (he saw its beginnings in the establishing the Provisional Government in March 1917, which was headed by Georgy Lvov) and convinced members of the government to take one uniform position in regards to the necessity to establish an independent Poland. Lednicki had earlier believed that the creation of an independent Poland should be a “minimum programme”. But after 1916, when he co-established an underground caucus called the Russian Friends of an Independent Poland Caucus, he supported the complete independence of Poland and began to proclaim this idea in the Russian press. In Lednicki’s correspondence with representatives of the Constitutional Democrats, he demands that in the manifesto of the Provisional Government there be a phrase discussing the “independence”, not the “autonomy”, of Poland.

While historians have tended to believe that Russia’s greatest failure was the victory of the October Revolution and Vladimir Lenin’s rise to power, Lednicki placed his emphases differently. In his opinion, Russia’s greatest failure was the fall of the Russian Provisional Government of the Duke of Lviv and the death of Russia’s nascent democracy.

Not Ukraine, but Lithuania

After moving to Warsaw, Lednicki continued to be involved in Poland’s eastern policy, which can be found in essays, numerous speeches and reports that he left behind. His idea of Poland’s cooperation with the Soviet Union (whose policy was decidedly anti-Polish in nature) is particularly interesting. In the 1920s, the Polish intellectual elite favoured the concept of Poland’s cooperation with Ukraine and acting in favour of the creation of an independent Ukraine (the Ukrainian and Belarusian territories were to be a buffer zone for Poland). This was a view

Lednicki’s views during the interwar period were unusually **bold**.

Lednicki did not share. “I believe that the mistake of eastern policy is investing great energy to promote Ukrainian independence with a knife aimed not at the Soviet Union, but the nation of Russia. This knife hits a vacuum. Orthodox Ukraine will flock

towards Orthodox Russia not only because of religious similarities, but also because of economic ties. Bolstering its uniqueness undoubtedly lies in our interest in precluding the creation of a centralised Russia in the future. However, building great federal plans on this uniqueness is a big loss of energy and strength,” he wrote.


Lednicki’s views at that time were unusually bold. Additionally, he did not agree on the isolation of the Soviet Union. He believed that cooperation with the Soviet political elites and the investment of capital in Bolshevik Russia were indeed impossible, but he also thought that the development of trade between Poland and

Russia was necessary. Lednicki believed that Poland's interests in Russia would be more secure if Warsaw would lead them in an alliance with France.

After the 1917 October Revolution in Russia and the Polish-Bolshevik War, which left Russia enfeebled and many of its regions affected by famine, Lednicki answered the question: "Should Poland participate in the rebuilding of Russia?" Lednicki pointed out that Poland's geographic location was a source of danger, but also of potential benefits because it bordered Bolshevik Russia.

He did not support the isolation of Russia on the international arena either: "Poland cannot play an independent role in rebuilding Russia, Poland is interested in a key role being played in this rebuilding by powers which are overall and a priori favourable to Poland, and above all France."

Lednicki's views did not influence mainstream Polish foreign policy. He was incapable of finding common ground with either Piłsudski or the National Democratic politicians who accused him of being a foreign agent. He was known as "the patriot from Petersburg" and "the man for whom one fatherland was not enough". These accusations led to Lednicki's isolation and tragic suicide. Along with his death, the memory of his intellectual heritage almost died out.

Many of Lednicki's theses are no longer relevant in the changing geopolitical context. However, the important work of "talking with Russia as it is" as well as work in favour of Polish-Russian dialogue was undertaken by Lednicki's son Waław. Thanks to these efforts it was possible to create the first department of Russian studies in Poland (at the Jagiellonian University) and to also develop a division within the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs that deals with the analysis of affairs in Russia and, more broadly, the East. Today, while maintaining the correct proportions, when the dialogue between Poland (and the West) with Russia is difficult, sometimes impossible, it is good to recall figures such as Aleksander Lednicki and his son Waław. They worked in a much more complicated context, when Poland had just regained independence and the world was on the threshold of another armed conflict, the Second World War. 

Translated by Filip Mazurczak

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A Nationalist Empire

MAREK WOJNAR

Ukrainian **nationalism** during the interwar period was not only an ideology promoting a new model for Ukrainians. It also proposed radical political change in the region and the internal reconstruction of the state.

When nationalist Ukrainian politicians Rostyslav Novozhenets and Yuriy Shukhevych recently declared the need to connect the Ukrainian state in the future to Lemkivshchyna, the Chełm Land and the San Land during the 92nd anniversary of the Day of Ukrainian Unity, a wave of outrage splashed across the Polish media. Few noticed, however, that the echo of Ukrainian imperialist concepts from the early 20th century could be heard in these seemingly unimportant statements.

When we consider the roots of the dream for a “Greater Ukraine”, it is difficult not to mention Mykhailo Hrushevsky. The father of Ukrainian historiography, Hrushevsky wrote descriptions of the “ethnically Ukrainian lands”. The territory considered to be Ukrainian by Hrushevsky stretched from the Kuban and Ciscaucasia in the east to the Chełm Land and Lemkivshchyna in the west to the Starodub lands in the north and the Crimea to the south. What Hrushevsky sketched in the form of an ethnographic concept was quickly adapted as a practical belief.

In 1900, a young lawyer named Mykola Mikhnovsky published a pamphlet called *An Independent Ukraine* in Kyiv. In this publication, he proposed the idea of a “one, only, indivisible, free and independent Ukraine from the Carpathians to the Caucasus”. Mikhnovsky’s ideas were not particularly popular in the slightly socialistic spiritual climate of the Ukrainian revolution. His thought, however, has survived and was reborn in a much more radical form during the interwar era.

The Ukrainian Intermarium

Dmytro Dontsov, the most influential thinker from the nationalist camp, described in fact as the “godfather of a generation”, gradually arrived at the need for building Ukraine up into a great power. In the 1920s, in a piece published in Vienna titled *The Basis of Our Politics*, Dontsov supported leaving Eastern Galicia to Poland. This proposal did not by any means result from his particular sympathy towards the Poles. On the contrary, Dontsov, convinced of the perennial conflict between Ukraine and Russia, was willing to surrender some territory to Poland only in the name of a struggle against a common enemy. In this way, the Ukrainian thinker arrived at the idea vividly reminiscent of the Intermarium concept, referencing the idea promoted by interwar Polish leader Józef Piłsudski that the states of Central and Eastern Europe should create a federation with the ultimate aim to balance Russian and German power. Dontsov argued that for Ukraine, it would be beneficial to “create a solid bloc of nations from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea. Because of this, a strong Romania, Hungary and Poland are in our interest.” England’s domination over the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles, blocking Russia’s access to the Mediterranean Sea, was also meant to complete this idea.

Dmytro Dontsov believed in a Ukraine that was a **great power**, in perennial conflict with Russia.

Shortly thereafter, Dontsov decidedly changed his opinion on the question of Ukrainian territory. He did not only abandon his desire to cede Eastern Galicia to the Poles, but he also came to consider Poland to be an outpost of the Soviet Union. For Dontsov, the concept of a “militant West” was first fascist Italy and next Nazi Germany. In *Nationalism*, a book published in Lviv in 1926, he wrote (following Herbert Spencer) that “Imperialism is not only ‘banditry’, but at the same time performing civil duties in the civic interests created by nations and designated for them. There are more and less valuable nations: those that can govern others (and themselves), and those that cannot.” The way in which he viewed “less valuable” nations can be seen in his words published in *Literaturno-Naukoviy Vistnik* during the trial of Sholom Schwartzbard who murdered Symon Petliura, a leader of the Ukrainian national independence movement. Dontsov argued then that Ukrainian victory is more important than the lives of not only thousands of “Schwartzbards” but also of their compatriots.

Dontsov enhanced his imperialistic leanings in subsequent years with the concept of “ancestor worship”, glorifying the great past of the Ukrainian nation. The most important element of this idea was the interpretation of the history of the Cossacks as a military order. Naturally, this imperialistic ideal was related



Photo: Unknown (CC) commons.wikimedia.org

Demonstration in Kyiv in 1918. The poster reads: "Long live a free Ukraine".

to territorial claims. Dontsov opted in favour of the Ukrainianness of Crimea, the Donets Basin and even Moldova. Although the main ideologue of Ukrainian nationalism did not create the concept of Ukrainian nationalistic geopolitics, nor did he systematise the problems of internal relations in the state, others would shortly follow his path.

The Black Sea doctrine

An interesting proposal to create a Ukrainian empire was presented by Yuriy Lypa, who created the concept of the "Black Sea Doctrine". This nationalist thinker from Odessa was not closely linked with any group, though he temporarily collaborated with the magazines edited in Lviv by Dontsov. Lypa's doctrine was included in his *All-Ukrainian Trilogy*, which consisted of the essays "Ukraine's Destiny", "The Black Sea Doctrine" and "The Division of Russia". The Black Sea Doctrine, although it is a form of organising the geopolitical space, is to a large extent based on entirely different premises. As opposed to most of his colleagues from the nationalist camp, Lypa did not think in the categories of the Ukrainian nation, but of the Ukrainian race. Lypa's understanding of the Ukrainians consisted of a mixture of diverse peoples who, over the course of many historical eras, settled near the Dnieper River. However, according to Lypa, the Ukrainians have inherited most of their

traits from the Cucuteni-Trypilian culture, though their natural striving towards the sea should be attributed to some Hellenic elements, and their military nature came from the Goths. Having contrasted the Ukrainians with those he considered steppe peoples (the Russians) and those who had settled near the Baltic (the Poles), he began to organise the geopolitical space by the Black Sea.

Based on this concept, Ukraine was to cover the territory more or less corresponding to the ethnographic boundaries allotted by Hrushevsky. A vast territory and demographic clout (nearly 30 million people) in this regard would make Ukraine the most powerful nation bordering the Black Sea. An essential element of Lypa's idea of protecting the Ukrainian state before the establishment of a common boundary between Poland and Russia was an alliance with Belarus. The alliance with Ukraine would also

The image of Ukraine presented in Stsiborskyi's draft constitution would not have been much different from the **totalitarian** regimes of the time.

secure Belarus its very existence. To the south, Ukraine's most important ally was to be Turkey, which after losing its empire turned its eyes towards the Black Sea. A particularly important element of the constructed Black Sea territory was the unification of the Caucasus into one state. The Ukrainians living in the Caucasus region were to be the agents of this process. After this process would be completed, Ukraine would then gain entry into Iran, opening a window to the Indian Ocean. Of lesser significance to Lypa's concept was Ukraine's alliance with Bulgaria, which was conditioned by the cultural similarities of both Slavic nations. When we look at a map of the confederacy of the Black Sea nations proposed by Lypa, we see that he nearly changes the Black Sea into his own internal lake. The only exception was Romania, which Lypa spoke about with great aversion, considering Suceava to be an old Ukrainian city.

For Lypa, the Black Sea Doctrine was only part of the ideas related to reshaping the Eurasian space. In order to weaken the imperial potential of the Soviet Union, the Ukrainian theoretician proposed its division according to national boundaries. Lypa was convinced that both Soviet and Tsarist Russia are a fake creation blocking the development of the nations inhabiting it. Interestingly, he considered the Muscovite nation to be the most oppressed of them all. Thus, he proposed detaching Muscovy from Ukraine and removing Siberia, Central Asia and the Caucasus from the empire. Naturally, performing such a geopolitical experiment would effectively secure Ukrainian interests. In this scenario, Ukraine itself would comprise a nation of comparable demographic and territorial potential to that of its northern neighbour. Meanwhile, with its powers concentrated on the Black Sea, the Ukrainian state would dominate that region.

Towards Kazakhstan

The concept of an imperial Ukraine was popular among the thinkers associated with the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN). “No healthy nation would limit itself, but it will seek external expansion. And here on its road it meets other nations troubled with similar tasks and interests, but of the opposite vector. This is how the phenomenon of imperialism is created,” argued Mykola Stsiborskyi in his 1935 work *Natiocracy* published in Paris. Stsiborskyi was considered to be one of the most eminent thinkers in the OUN, openly demanding the expansion of Ukrainian territory to all the ethnographic territories accordingly with the formula “from the San River to the Caucasus” and beyond. Discussing the issue of Ukrainian emigration, Stsiborskyi asked the central authorities to coordinate it within the Caucasus, the Caspian Steppe and even to Kazakhstan. The Ukrainian thinker in no way hid that this could comprise a method of annexing these territories leading to a stronger totalitarian Ukrainian state.

The idea of Ukrainian
imperialism can be detected in
the nationalist programme of
the political party Svoboda.

Another thinker connected with the OUN, Dmytro Andrievsky, spoke in a similar tone. According to Andrievsky, Ukraine lying on the border between the East and West, and at the same time connected culturally with Europe, was the factor on which the geopolitical space should be reorganised in Eastern Europe. He

argued that only an independent Ukrainian state within its ethnographic borders could be a barrier to Russian imperialism. According to Andrievsky, Poland was too weak and too far to the West to oppose Russia.

The image of Ukraine that can be inferred from Stsiborskyi’s draft of a Ukrainian constitution would not have been much different from the totalitarian regimes of the time. Moreover, it would be safe to say that the Third Reich and Mussolini’s Italy were inspirations to the OUN. Based on the project drafted by Stsiborskyi, the chief of the nation would be at the head of the state and be responsible only before God, the Nation and his own conscience. The head of state not only had the right to inaugurate the parliament and government, but also retained influence over the nominations of high-ranking officials as well as military leaders.


Ethnically, Ukraine was to be almost entirely a monolithic state. The vast majority of the national minorities living in both the cities and the villages were to be physically destroyed during the first days of the national revolution. Stsiborskyi foresaw forced deportations for those who remained. An exception could be made only for national minorities described as “belonging to nations not antagonistically disposed to the Ukrainians”. In this regard, the opportunity to survive was given to Greeks, who for centuries inhabited the coasts of the Black Sea, and Germans,

as long as their fatherland would not undertake policies contrary to the national aspirations of the Ukrainians. It needs not be added that the last formulation gave rise to broad speculation and interpretations.

Legacy

The most important theoreticians of Ukrainian imperialism did not survive the war. Having served as a doctor in the ranks of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, Yuriy Lypa died in 1944 in a confrontation with the Soviets in the Carpathians. Mykola Stsiborskyi, who had stood at the side of Andriy Melnyk since the time of the schism in the OUN, was murdered three years earlier in Zhytomyr probably by a member of Stepan Bandera's competing faction. Dmytro Dontsov lived until the 1970s; in his later works he dealt with radical forms of theosophy. The ideas of Ukrainian imperialism had survived, first among émigrés and later in a resurrected Ukrainian state.

Their echo can be detected in the nationalist programme of Svoboda, one of the current political parties in Ukraine. This is evidenced by a reference to the idea of a Baltic-Black Sea axis and the proposal of making Ukraine an atomic power. Svoboda also takes the role of a normal opposition party and clearly tries to avoid revisionist rhetoric. However, it is also no secret that "on the street" the situation is somewhat different. During numerous patriotic ceremonies in Carpathian Ruthenia one can see nationalist activists with signs reading: "One Great, Conciliar Ukraine from the Poprad River to the Caucasus". Imperialistic slogans are also present in the activities of politicians not connected to Svoboda. The previously mentioned Rostyslav Novozhenets published a guide in 2010 in which he calls Kraków an ancient Ukrainian city. Elements of imperialistic ideology also characterise the activities of many radical nationalist (if not neo-Nazi) internet portals.

The imperialistic theme does not play a significant role in contemporary Ukrainian nationalism. Even if it does appear, it usually is not connected with revisionist postulates. However, taking into account both the great problems of the contemporary Ukrainian state and the general tendency of the weakening of nationalistic moods with the improvement of material conditions, it should be inferred that the concepts of Ukrainian nationalism will remain permanently only on the fading pages of the books of thinkers from the last century. 

Translated by Filip Mazurczak

Mirrors of Fate

UILLEAM BLACKER

The municipal museums of Lviv and Wrocław provide an excellent opportunity to understand and **compare the history of two cities that shared similar fates**. Both museums are situated in a central location in beautiful historic buildings, but take a very different approach to present their stories.

Lviv and Wrocław are often mentioned in the same breath, most often because pre-war Polish Lwów found a reincarnation of sorts in Poland's new post-German city on the Oder. Part of the city's new population came from Lwów, while much of its intellectual and academic elites consisted of those displaced from Poland's former third-largest city. One can even find real, physical pieces of the Polish Lwów in Wrocław, such as in the monument to Aleksander Fredro that stands on the main market square; the Raławice Panorama, originally opened in Lwów in 1894 to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Polish revolutionary Tadeusz Kościuszko's famous victory against the Russian Empire, then transferred to Wrocław after the war and re-opened only in 1985; or in the collections of the famous Ossolineum library, also partly transferred to Wrocław from their original home.

But the two cities are not only connected by historical circumstance. In many ways, their fates mirror one another. Both cities moved across a border as a result of the Second World War. They experienced large population shifts and changed their "national affiliations". At the same time, the German Breslau became the Polish Wrocław, while the Polish city Lwów became the Ukrainian Lviv.

Microcosms

In both cases, large parts of the post-war population (in Wrocław, almost the entire population) found themselves in an unfamiliar city surrounded by material traces of foreign cultures, but also confronted by the sudden absence of those who

had inscribed those traces on the city landscape over the centuries. There are, of course, crucial differences: Wrocław had a Polish past, but it was a distant one, stretching back into the Middle Ages, and the Polish presence in the city before the war was very small. Meanwhile, Lviv also had a distant Ukrainian past, but, in contrast to Wrocław, it had a substantial pre-war Ukrainian presence and had been the focus of intense conflict between the Poles and the Ukrainians only 20 years before the Second World War. This difference notwithstanding, comparing the two cities provides fascinating insights into the memory politics characteristic of cities with a history of large-scale, forced population transfers.

The city museums of Lviv and Wrocław both provide an excellent microcosm through which to compare the different political memories available to cities facing catastrophic historical discontinuities. Both museums are situated in central locations in beautiful historic buildings. Wrocław's city museum is in the 18th century baroque Royal Palace, once home to the Habsburgs and later to Prussian nobility. Meanwhile, Lviv's city museum is located in the striking Renaissance-era Black House on the city's main square.

This, however, is where the divergences begin. While the Wrocław museum dedicates part of its exhibition to telling the story of the building itself through its various incarnations, it is difficult to find any similar information about the curious Black House. The reason for this perhaps lies in the basic self-definition of the respective museums: Wrocław's official name is the Municipal Museum of Wrocław, a branch of the wider Wrocław History Museum and, true to this definition, it tells the story of the city and its development from its beginnings to the present, including the history of this prominent building. By contrast, the Lviv museum is part of the Lviv Historical Museum, which has multiple branches, but its main historical exhibition, discussed here, purports to tell "The History of the Western Ukrainian Lands" and thus is wider in scope than its Wrocław counterpart, with little time for the intricacies of the history of one building, and far less focus on the city as such.

However, the primary difference in focus is not geographical, but rather thematic. Wrocław's main exhibition on the city's history, "1000 years of Wrocław", opened in 2009. It starts with the city's early beginnings, with a room dedicated to the medieval Polish presence, including an early Jewish tombstone. It then goes on to tell the story of the city, incorporating whoever might have inhabited it, regardless of nationality. The museum traces the city's development and the major political, cultural and religious trends that swept across it as symbolised in its more prominent inhabitants, most of whom are, until the second half of the 20th century, wealthy German men. This story is illustrated with portraits of the people in question,

documents and various artefacts illustrating the history of the city. This is a story of the city and its people, albeit to a great extent restricted to its elites.

The story of a national movement

Lviv's museum, on the other hand, tells the visitor nothing of the development of the city, nor does it mention its most famous inhabitants. Instead, the museum recounts the story of the political and armed struggle for Ukraine's independence from the point of view of the western regions of Ukraine. This is the story not of a city, but of a national movement. The city itself is not entirely absent from Lviv's exhibit: one can find some old photographs of Lviv and accounts of important events such as the trials of Ukrainian nationalists accused of terrorism by the Polish authorities, illustrated by newspaper reports in both Polish and Ukrainian pasted to the walls. However, this is basically the extent of the Polish presence in the exhibition: little is said of the city's generations of Poles other than their role as oppressors of Ukrainians. There are details of the activities of nationalist groups in the city and of events such as the conflict over the city with the Poles in 1918-1920 as well as the short-lived declaration of independence in 1941.

Archbishop Andrey Sheptytsky, the Ukrainian Greek Catholic metropolitan of Lviv, who spent much of his life living and working in the city, is represented,

Lviv's city museum says nothing about post-independence: a curious omission for a museum that focuses exclusively on the fight for that independence.

although other figures with a less direct connection with the city are more prominently featured. Stepan Bandera, the most prominent wartime leader of the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists, was not a native of Lviv and spent only a few years of his life living there, yet he appears repeatedly throughout the several rooms

of the exhibition. Even in a small, separate side exhibition showing examples of heraldry from the museum's collections, a portrait of Bandera appears, inexplicably, among the regalia of various noble families who were mainly Polish, although this fact is assumed to be obvious by the exhibition and not elaborated on at any length.

The focus on figures like Bandera and the history of the nationalist movements in western Ukraine in the main exhibit of the city museum is all the more surprising when one considers that the Lviv Historical Museum recently opened another separate filial dedicated to the "The Liberation Struggles of Ukraine", which covers most of the same territory. Indeed, Bandera and nationalist political and military organisations are, naturally, absent from the other sections of the museum situated

nearby – those dedicated to archaeology or ancient history – but here the exclusive focus on Ukrainians and also on the wider region rather than the city are consistent.

The Poles are thus significantly absent from both museums, but for quite different reasons. Wrocław’s museum barely mentions the Poles in the middle sections of its display, covering the centuries of Habsburg and Prussian rule, since Poles contributed little to the city in this time. By contrast, Lviv’s museum barely mentions Poles, yet its main exhibition covers the period from the 19th century to the mid-20th century when Poles were the majority in the city and made a significant contribution to its development. Other minorities such as the Jews, the city’s second-largest population group before the war who also contributed greatly to the city’s social, political and cultural fabric, are dealt with curiously. Jewish life is largely ignored, though there is a small section on the Holocaust and the city’s

Nazi concentration camp. The issue of possible Ukrainian collaboration in the persecution of Jews, such as in the infamous Lviv pogrom of 1941, the subject of a lively debate and research over recent years, is ignored. There is also an unacknowledged clash in the close

Poles are significantly **absent** from both museums, but for quite different reasons.

juxtaposition in the exhibit of the section on the Holocaust with, for example, a display on a Ukrainian division of the SS, something that demands, at the very least, some considerable contextualisation.

Post-war depictions

The museums come slightly closer to one another when representing the post-war developments. The processes of population transfer are muted in both cases. In the Lviv museum, the deportation of the Poles is basically ignored. In the Wrocław museum there is a room which deals with the subject, reproducing posters giving orders regarding “post-German” property and some basic information, but the experience of the deported Germans remains unexplored and the exhibition quickly moves on from this highly significant moment to the post-war decades.

Both museums combine narratives of resistance to communism with details of everyday life, which can, in the latter case, even border on the nostalgic, providing a jarring, though perhaps not unexpected juxtaposition. In the Lviv museum, a stylish example of a Soviet bicycle stands under a large sign reminding visitors of the vast number of victims of the Gulag, while the Wrocław museum combines images of anti-government strikes and rallies with artefacts of popular culture and everyday life.

Another divergence occurs at the exhibitions' ends. Wrocław's museum closes on an optimistic note, showcasing the city's most recent developments and emphasising its new, modern, European existence. Lviv's city museum has nothing to say about the post-independence period: a curious omission for a museum that focuses exclusively on the fight for that independence. The latter fact speaks of what is probably one of the Lviv city museum's main problems, and a factor that distinguishes it from its Wrocław counterpart: funding. The Wrocław museum underwent a major refurbishment before re-opening in 2009, and is beautifully presented, featuring multimedia displays, audio-guides, art installations and sound effects. There is also descriptive information in three languages in each room. True, the Wrocław museum remains, nonetheless, quite a traditional exhibition: objects, paintings and documents are safely hidden behind glass around the walls and the information panels in each room are very small and brief; sometimes hidden in corners so dark it is hard to read them. In this sense, it shares its basic form with the Lviv museum. Despite this lack of willingness to venture any distance beyond traditional museum patterns, the exhibition remains attractive, spacious and well-laid out, and the effects of its overhaul are plainly visible.

Lviv's exhibit appears to have changed very little since it was opened in 1995 and is clearly lacking in funding or initiatives to update it. The city museum,

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like most museums in Ukraine, is not generously funded and cannot dream of the financial resources allocated to Wrocław's museum (here, the latter's emphasis on EU membership is significant). Yet funding for various commemorative exhibits can and has been found in Lviv, whether from the city

council or other sources, in recent years. Construction of three new memorials to the city's Jewish past are underway, for example, and the Lviv Historical Museum itself seems to be not entirely devoid of new funding as the opening in 2012 of the new filial dedicated to nationalist struggles for independence suggests. The opening of this exhibition must surely present an excellent opportunity to re-vamp the centrally-situated exhibition on "The Western Ukrainian Lands". The fact that there seem to be no plans for doing so is a great pity for the city, which is attracting more and more tourists every year, but for whom the nationalist exhibit, with its descriptive information in Ukrainian only (guided tours are available in other languages) will seem not only incomprehensible, but embarrassingly antiquated.

Funding, however, is one problem. Attitude and inertia are another. As it stands, Lviv's municipal museum is hardly representative of the city's rich history. This

history could be turned into a fantastic museum that would be a potentially significant tourist attraction in a city where one is, sadly, more likely to find accessible information about the city's past from a themed restaurant than from its museums. It would not even take interactive digital displays or hugely innovative exhibits to accomplish this, but simply recognition that the city museum should tell the story of the city and not a political movement. The museum clearly has objects that relate to the diverse fabric of the city's past, as its heraldry exhibit shows. These kinds of objects could be brought out and displayed to illustrate the city's dynamic development and the presence of its Poles, Jews, Armenians and others alongside the Ukrainians, in place of the many political pamphlets and propaganda posters that dominate the current exhibition.


This is not to say that the museum should go out of its way to celebrate Poles, Jews or anyone else. It does not have the same "problem" as the Wrocław museum does, in that in telling the story of, say, the 18th century in Breslau, it is difficult to carve out a space for Poles. There is always, in any historical period, a Ukrainian story to tell in Lviv and the museum should certainly see it as one of its main tasks to draw out that story and present it. This is an important task with regard to both locals and visitors: for locals, the disputed history of their city and its often foreign-seeming heritage can be the source of some anxiety and confusion, and a highlighting of the continuity of the city's Ukrainian presence and of the past of co-existence of Ukrainians and others in the city would serve to address this; for visitors, especially Poles, a sensitive telling of the Ukrainian story will help to balance the somewhat bitter and one-sided impressions of the city's past that Polish visitors sometimes bring to the city, which they often see as still "theirs".

Important questions yet to be answered

It would, of course, be a positive step if the Lviv city museum would recognise the tragedy of the city's Polish and Jewish communities (other than in a small corner on the Holocaust). This would represent an important gesture of empathy towards former neighbours that would doubtlessly be met with appreciation and a reciprocal recognition of Ukrainian historical suffering. Of course, this would also mean going the extra mile, and perhaps such an open emphasis on the other is asking a little too much at this stage. Even in the different circumstances of Wrocław's current museum, it is arguable whether the extent of German suffering is really acknowledged. In the case of Lviv, in the first instance it would help simply to acknowledge the presence of the former neighbours as more than representatives

of an oppressive state, at least as existing alongside Ukrainians as normal people who called the city home.

In the end, however, Lviv's city museum also has a different, perhaps even more pressing problem. Before attempts to deal with the subject of the city's lost communities, it would first need to more accurately reflect the past of the city's Ukrainians. At the moment, the wider, diverse range of Lviv's Ukrainians is largely ignored in favour of a narrow political narrative. In the grand scheme of the city's past, this narrative refers to a significant but relatively small number of political activists over a relatively short period of time in the first half of the 20th century. There are whole swathes of history and thousands of people to whom this narrative bears little direct relation. What about Lviv's Ukrainians who were not nationalists? What about their interactions with their Polish and Jewish neighbours? What about their everyday experience of their city? It is ironic that in focusing entirely on the political and military activities of the Ukrainian nationalist organisations, little room is in fact left to describe what life was actually like for ordinary Ukrainians living under authorities that often relegated them to the status of third class citizens. How did it feel to be in this situation?

There are other important questions to be asked about the city's Ukrainians. What was life like for women, for example? What were the conditions of working people? What kind of entertainment did people enjoy? What was it like to be a child in Lviv? What games did they play and how were they educated? All of this is missing, replaced by politics, antique guns and faded propaganda. 

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Burdened by Backpacks

A conversation with Magda Vášáryová, Slovak politician and diplomat. Interviewer: Dorota Sieroń-Galusek

DOROTA SIEROŃ-GALUSEK: It was your initiative to start a series of debates to discuss social problems organised by the Bratislava-based foundation Via Cultura in four Central European cities: Kraków, Budapest, Brno and Bratislava. Among the participants of the debates are experts, journalists, teachers and students. The title of the debate series is “Backpacks”. What does this mean?

MAGDA VÁŠÁRYOVÁ: I have always been amazed at a certain Central European tendency. On the one hand, we have artfully cut ourselves off from the past, which in the Slovak case means our fascist or communist past. We quickly forget and erase from our memory everything that is difficult and shameful. By doing so, we try to not look back on things. On the other hand, we can't get past a certain impasse as if we were constantly being blocked.

The Czechoslovakia of the interwar period was among the 10 fastest developing countries in the world, but ever since then we've been declining. Even though we became independent

20 years ago we have not been able to cure ourselves from old complexes. This is what bothers me the most. I have a feeling that indeed we can make a breakthrough, climb up and do it quickly. But, at a certain point, our old backpacks may open up. The backpacks that, for the moment, we've forgotten we've been carrying around with us. These are, of course, metaphorical backpacks that are cluttered with some old unnecessary debris. Suddenly, they started dragging us down. Hence, I asked myself a question: what do we carry in these backpacks? That is why I proposed the debates, which focus on four main topics: nationalism, antisemitism, the evasion of responsibility and anti-liberalism.

Let's start with nationalism...

The danger of nationalism lies in the fact that it can take up different forms: closeness, hatred, racism, chauvinism and all kinds of “isms”. We talked about this during our debate in Kraków. Of course, such phenomena take place everywhere around the world, but what I want to focus on especially is Central Europe.

It's worth remembering that it was here that the two world wars began and the place with the largest number of victims.

In the debates, I want to encourage youths (high school and university students) to start reflecting together on these difficult issues. I believe that this confrontation of intergenerational perspectives can be very interesting.

I belong to the generation that won freedom in this part of Europe. Today, the young generation has opportunities that were unimaginable for us: the internet, a good command of English which they learn in schools, freedom of travel and opportunities to study abroad. If we add to all of this the fact that within the European Union we can live and work just about anywhere, we can say that this young generation undoubtedly sees the world as a much more open and friendly place than my generation saw when we were growing up. Yet despite all this freedom, there is still a burden that is felt in this generation. These are those metaphorical backpacks that they did not pack themselves but are carrying around just like the rest of us Central Europeans.

Today's young people were born in free and independent states. For them, freedom is something natural, something taken for granted. For your generation, freedom is an achievement, something that has been won. This was something that inspired you to conduct the debate series. What other differences have you noticed in this new generation?

When I look at the younger generation I see some lurking dangers. For instance, when I compare them to my generation, I can clearly see that they read much less. For this reason they are much more prone to being manipulated. Think about what the media feed us with these days: fear. Even though there is no military conflict, we still live in fear. The media are the beneficiaries of this state of fear. People who are afraid are easier to be steered. They also trust that the media help them avoid dangers. But the truth is that today's media are very poorly informed. I say this based on what I see in Slovakia where the media no longer create their own opinions and just pass information from other sources. As being the recipients of these messages, instead of reflecting over the issues and making our own judgments, we have no choice but to listen to what someone else says.

I fear that today, despite access to the internet, young people are much less critical. That is why we came up with the idea to encourage them to join this debate. We want to have these discussions recorded and available online. I hope that this not only will allow the viewers to see different points of view, but also show how people of different viewpoints can talk together in a cultural manner.

We are once again witnessing the revival of those "isms" which you referred to earlier. It turns out that the slogans about openness and the need to build a European community planted by your generation into our

Photo: From the archives of Magda Vášáryová



way of thinking are not the priorities in today's social discourse. Instead, we are inundated with slogans encouraging exclusion. Where did we go wrong? What mistakes have been made?

I am a sociologist and that's why I know that there is no such a thing as a mistake. We can't programme societies. We can't even programme nature. We can present excuses that we had good intentions, but we cannot take responsibility for not fulfilling somebody's dreams of an ideal world. Even though it is common and quite comfortable to be able to say that this world is not meeting our expectations. But is it really our job to implement other people's dreams?

Systemic and societal changes have led to some great expectations. Earlier generations did not enjoy such prosperity. But very few people make comparisons; they instead demand more and more. The Christian ethos has been disappearing

and with its disappearance goes this awareness of the worldly and post-mortal life. Even priests talk less about it. What matters is the here and now, what I want and what I need. I call this a revolution of greater expectations and here is where I see a threat: our needs and expectations have increased, but it is others who are responsible for our comfort and prosperity. This is, of course a simplified image, but one that portrays certain tendencies and dangers. Thankfully, some sociologists suggest that from this state of chaos new elites will emerge, ones that read and are neither hysterical nor bored. And although these elites will constitute a very narrow group, they will be a group that will understand the functioning of the state. A question that remains is whether this elite, which is today still at the school age, will be shaped in the Orwellian-style or raised in the spirit of humanism.

Are these issues going to be the topics of the next meetings?

In addition to nationalism, the second serious problem we would like to start discussing is antisemitism without the physical presences of Jews. After the Holocaust, I see some sort of perversity in instigating the opinion about the threat coming from Jews. Have people forgotten so quickly? Is the young generation already lacking a sense of real threat that we return to this horrible game of scapegoating? The third issue I would like us to cover is anti-liberal attitudes. In our part of Europe the thinking always was the following: first comes the nation, then our own, individual freedom.

Maybe here we should ask a question: what role does the Church play in this process? Also, while today it's not really appropriate to use anti-liberal slogans, but even this does not stop many from calling their adversaries neo-liberals. I can see some young politicians in Slovakia whose fathers and grandfathers were high-ranking officials in the Communist Party and I am under the impression that they have been raised in households where they learned these negative connotations that come with the word "neoliberal". And yet we need to keep in mind that it was exactly anti-liberalism that was the main weapon of the communists!

The fourth issue here is why do we still feel as victims to history? We constantly blame others, never ourselves. Even in contemporary politics, even though we've been in the EU for 10 years now, we are not really rushing to take responsibility for the

greater European community. To illustrate my point let me quote the Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán: "We don't want to live in a European empire that has its centre in Brussels and that tells us what we should do on the peripheries."

Today, young people in Slovakia believe that the western model of democracy isn't worth anything and that everything should be decided by means of referendum. Some would even like to elect judges or prosecutors this way. And while referenda are needed and justified, they cannot be a means for deciding on everything. What's more, when in excess, they can be even disorganising.

Perhaps people today feel that there is no vision in politics? They remember that change in this part of Europe was possible thanks to a long-term vision.

Indeed, politics these days is more short-term. Nonetheless, it does not mean that steps are not taken to provide security for the future. I must say that in Slovakia there is some vision, including that of become a country with a high ecological potential and a modern energy mix. We've been talking about education reform and this is a vision for at least 30 years. We have to come up with a new model for children, school-aged youths and university students. Our current minister of education believes that we should not introduce the English language until the fifth grade as it turns out that Slovak children have problems with the Slovak language and are having difficulties keeping up with the programme. This is a topic of debate as it is quite clear

that the earlier children start learning English, the greater the chance that in the future they will become students who will be able to keep up with the Swedes or the Norwegians.

Maybe we are still victims to the thinking that a vision means a complete change of the status quo and not a process of small steps?


Yes, by doing so we aim for some idealistic construction. And yet, the first president of Czechoslovakia, Tomáš Masaryk, taught us that what really counts is this everyday work of the small steps. We politicians still think that we've been called upon for heroism and not the down-to-earth, tedious work.

Can we teach people to treat politics as a responsible public service?

I think this is something we learn at home. In the very same way we learn at home how to use a fork and a knife. Home is the first place where we acquire our attitudes towards the public sphere. In other words, it is the family that teaches us how to behave with regards to the state. It is at home where a child can learn that it is the government's fault that dad lost his job. And this child may hold on to

this vision in adult life. This is something we may not see at first glance, provided everything is going well. However, the mechanism itself seems so strong to me that sooner or later it comes back, especially in crisis moments.

I am under the impression that we don't have adults educated to live in democracy and take responsibility for it. How else can we explain the low turnout levels during elections if not by a lack of interest in taking responsibility over the decisions that have to be made? This refers to many spheres. Today's parents don't want to take responsibility for their children. Just look at the statistics: when a handicapped child is born, as many as 98 per cent of fathers leave such families. Young people are also evading responsibility. They prefer to just enjoy life.

The only thing we can do is encourage people to take responsibility within different projects and activities. The greatest strength lies in the family, which is the first entity that teaches responsibility. Later in life we learn it through literature, film, art and culture. I believe they all could have an educational value in this respect. 

Translated by Iwona Reichardt

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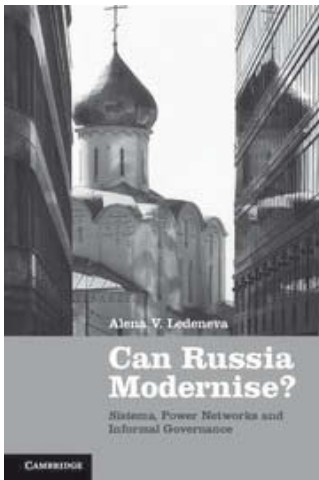
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Russia's Modernisation

ROMAN BÄCKER

Since 2011 there has been a slowly **growing crisis of legitimacy** as well as signs of reconfiguration in the Russian political system. This means that the chances for Russia's modernisation are much higher now than they ever were during Medvedev's presidency and his poorly outlined reforms.

A discussion on the book: *Can Russia Modernise? Sistema, Power Networks and Informal Governance*. By: Alena V. Ledeneva. Publisher: Cambridge University Press.



“Can Russia modernise?” is one of the key questions in the debate on the future of the Russian Federation. A positive answer here means that Russia will not only continue to last, but also will have a chance to keep its position among the great global superpowers. Not having such chances may mean that Russia awaits the sad fate of becoming a more peripheral state, and a country with an increasingly lower level of stability and predictability. In the case of the latter, questions regarding the shape of this modernisation – such as if it would be authoritarian, based on the free market with minor elements of the rule of law, or democratic and fully introducing the principle of the rule of law – become secondary.

However, returning to the first problem presented here, i.e. Russia's chances for modernisation, it can only be assessed based on the answers to two entirely different questions. Namely, can this modernisation be top-down? And the second question: what are the chances for a bottom-up modernisation in Russia? Based on the experiences of Dmitry Medvedev's presidency and his administration's attempts to inefficiently implement a programme of poorly outlined reforms,

which in fact meant introducing some minor legal changes and the project of the Skolkovo Innovation Centre (more resembling a Potemkin village than Silicon Valley), it is quite justified to say that the top-down modernisation in Russia has found itself at an impasse.

Top-down?

This state of impasse became evident after the introduction of some reforms, such as the inclusion of at least part of the anti-system opposition into the political system (such as the mitigation of the system of registering political parties or Alexey Navalny's run for mayor of Moscow), into a coherent set of changes stabilising the legal context of a functioning political system. The latter was most evident in the introduction of the mixed electoral system in the Duma. But does pointing to this impasse automatically allow us to say that top-down modernisation is impossible in Russia? I wouldn't risk such a hasty assumption based on short-term political shifts. Instead, it is probably much better to take into consideration the conditions that are necessary and essential for top-down modernisation to occur.

These conditions are the main topic of Alena V. Ledeneva's recent book titled *Can Russia Modernise? Sistema, Power Networks and Informal Governance*, which was published last year by Cambridge University Press. Ledeneva's argumentation is based on the belief that Russia's modernisation is possible as long as the following conditions are met: limitation, fragmentation and submission of the *sistema* to the rule of law. The word *sistema* is understood by Ledeneva in a number of ways, but is used primarily in the book to refer to the essence of the social system based on informal personal connections, which allows a relatively smooth redistribution of public goods. The elements of this system are a vertical hierarchical structure of public authority, a range of personal circles of dependency around the Kremlin as well as the system of "open secrets" (which everyone knows, but no one talks about). They also include the following mechanisms of social life: the *krysha* (a patron's care of a client), the *otkat* (a part of the earned money or loan handed over to the appropriate official) and the *reiderstvo* (seizure of property).

Transformation from the **inside** is out of the question.

This is a comprehensive system covering the entire bureaucratic and power apparatus. Officials and officers are tied by professional and informal bonds, including those resulting from the flow of bribes. Double loyalty plus the spirit of corporatist exclusivity make it a colossal and relatively uniform social entity. This in turn means there is no ground to believe that there are any factors that could prove favourable for a process of fragmentation, namely the group losing its sovereign social role in the Russian authoritarian system. Ledeneva concludes

her book with the following words: “The main implication of the ambivalence of *sistema* is that its leader is also its hostage.” Even if that conclusion was accurate (which is highly questionable), it is extremely pessimistic. It appears that there is a lack of any social force that could limit the functioning of *sistema* from the inside. All things considered, transformation from the inside is out of the question.

Ledeneva, however, fails to mention one key factor – the Russian economy, which is heavily based on natural and energy resources as well as a powerful arms industry. Consequently, it is subject to what Richard Auty once called as the rule of “the resource curse” and which indeed has virtually affected all the countries with an economic structure similar to Russia, with the exception of Norway. Based on this rule, countries dependent on resource exports (and additionally weapons with average technological capability) are also heavily dependent on global market prices and are at risk of structural inability to diversify the economy. Since a relatively small number of people is usually employed in the resource and arms sectors, high unemployment poses a threat often masked with extensive social programmes. Characteristically, there is also a risk of underinvestment in other branches of the economy and a negative correlation between resource rent and social capital. The state feels no need to introduce an effective tax system, encourage civic activity or at least take into account demands from other pressure groups apart from those related to the resource, military, security or bureaucratic sectors.

This results in a structural inability to initiate reforms in an authoritarian political system where the ruling elites, as reasonably pointed out by the Polish political scientist Andrzej Polus, are dependent on resource rent and do not need to seek social support. Seemingly, it is the resource curse more than anything else that can be seen as the main cause of the structural inability for top-down modernisation.

Or bottom-up?

The question that remains is can change be possible in a situation when prices for natural resources collapse and there is a very low global demand for arms? Assuming such a highly hypothetical scenario regarding Russia (a country in possession of the widest range of resources in the world and diversifying energy recipients), a positive answer to this question seems even less probable than it would to any other country in the world. What's more, it even allows us to presuppose a further decrease in the volume of goods available for distribution. Such a situation could also mean that in order to maintain the right balance the weakest of the social groups from the distribution system, those that pose the lowest threat to the stability of the entire system, are to be eliminated. Even more threateningly, this could lead to a significant increase in the level of inefficiency of the entire system.

The previously mentioned strategy would not bring tangible results, particularly in the context of the decreasing revenues from the resource rent. However, it is only then, in this very extreme situation, that there is a chance for fragmentation within the bureaucratic and power apparatus. Having said that, we should keep in mind that this scenario is less likely to occur than a more conservative stability mainly due to the very low innovation potential of the administrative elites on the regional and federal levels.

All in all, Russia's chances for introducing top-down modernisation is not very likely and requires many conditions. Does this yet mean that the bottom-up approach is more likely? For Ledeneva the answer here is "no". Although she points to the December 2011 protests as initiating a wave of "reflexive modernisation" in Russia, i.e. an independently-achieved change of political and electoral behaviour, she also states that the protests were an expression of personal dissatisfaction rather than a de-legitimisation of the system. Their aim was to eliminate Putin and his close circles rather than introduce changes in the governmental system. Such an opinion is, to a great extent, an excuse for the lack of a wider reflection over the potential role of civil society in making a modernisation breakthrough in Russia. To a great extent, this argument is justified. Time has shown how the anti-system opposition in Russia proved unable to formulate a strategic and precise political programme. The Coordinating Council of the Opposition, elected in mass elections, did not even survive one term, meaning that the opposition did not manage to permanently institutionalise itself. The reasons behind it are a high level of marginalisation, a very high level of fragmentation and an inability to gain permanent support even at the municipal levels. These factors are sufficient enough to state that the opposition's assets are very low, and so is the level of their ability to implement a breakthrough in the political system.


Slowly growing crisis

In Russia, the communication channels continue to be largely undisturbed. This statement particularly holds true regarding the use of new media, but also refers to the independent newspaper *Novaya Gazeta*, Echo of Moscow radio and the marginalised TV station Dozhd. Hence, the level of the de-legitimisation of the *sistema* described by Ledeneva is actually very high and not limited solely to the younger generation living in big cities. A large number of initiatives are undertaken independently from any opposition groups. Also, high levels of both civil awareness and activism are seen when the status of some social groups is violated. All of these facts suggest that social unrest might still emerge in Russia and it might be initiated on a large scale accompanying a large political crisis. Even now, although

there is a visible lack of national charismatic leaders, there is no shortage in terms of experienced organisers of civil and political activities.

Despite a lack of national charismatic leaders, there is no lack of **experienced organisers** of civil and political activities.

It's justified to say that since 2011, Russia has started to see a slowly growing crisis of legitimacy of the political system. The first phase of this crisis indeed ended with the suppression of the mass protests, but the "creative class" remained empowered. Only its level of mobilisation for participation in

direct activities such as demonstrations has significantly decreased. But, since 2011, we can also clearly see a significant reconfiguration in the Russian political system. This allows us to say that the chances for Russia modernisation, although largely unspecified in the long term, are much higher now than they ever were during Medvedev's presidency. 

Translated by Justyna Chada

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A Bittersweet Experience of War



Tangerines. A film written and directed by Zaza Urushadze, an Estonia-Georgia co-production, 2013.

Zaza Urushadze's *Tangerines* is a film that deals with a topic that has somewhat been erased from today's perspective: the 1992-1993 war in Abkhazia. The issue of Abkhazia's legal status, however, remains relevant as evidenced by the Georgian-Russia War of 2008 and its further political consequences. This reason is enough for *Tangerines*, a 2013 Estonian-Georgian co-production, to spark vast interest, though the greatest strength of the film is its artistic merit which, because of its universal nature, could be of interest to a wider audience and not only to those viewers who are keen enthusiasts of the Caucasus.

Overall, the film sheds new light on a somewhat lesser-known aspect in the most recent history of Abkhazia and the war in Georgia in the early 1990s. This mountainous republic used to be a multi-ethnic territory before the outbreak of the war. Aside from the Abkhazians and the Georgians, who both claim rights to the land, the area was also inhabited by Russians, Armenians and Estonians. The first settlers from the Baltic region came to Abkhazia even before the formation of the Soviet Union. When the war broke out in the early 1990s, however, majority of Estonians decided to move back to their distant native

land that, incidentally, had just recently gained its own independence.

The main character in the film, an old carpenter named Ivo, is Estonian. Nearby lives his countryman, Margus, the owner of a tangerine plantation (hence the film's title), Abkhazia's biggest export. Both men are among the very few Estonians who did not leave. The war, however, is approaching fast. Consequently, the Estonians cannot avoid its effects. One day during the conflict, they rescue a couple of wounded soldiers who were fighting on opposite sides: one of them is a Georgian national and the other is a Chechen mercenary. Ivo gives shelter to both of them in his house. Immediately after the injured soldiers regain consciousness, their combat readiness and desire for revenge reappear. To counteract an escalation of a conflict, the old Estonian attempts to mediate the two hot-blooded Caucasians. In doing so, he uses his position of a host, and also of someone who saved their lives demanding that they do not harm each other under his roof. As a result, there is peace in the war for some time, at least on this little piece of land where Ivo's farm is located.

This film highlights faith in humanity and the human ability to be stronger than war or any ethnic, political or religious divisions. The 20th century specifically, as well as the present times, have seen on many occasions this faith put to the test. For that reason, *Tangerines* might easily be accused of naiveté and being a film that has little to do with reality. The filmmakers do not offer any simple solutions, however. To avoid revealing too much of the story, it can only be said that although there is no happy ending, war does not allow for happy endings, the belief in humanity is restored nonetheless.


Undoubtedly, one of the film's greatest strengths is the brilliant performance by the main actors. From the viewer's perspective, this lends credence to the motivations behind the protagonists' actions. Lembit Ulfsak, an outstanding Estonian theatre and film actor who plays the role of Ivo, deserves the highest praise. He is incredibly effective in the way he portrays his character lacking in anger, which clearly distinguishes him from the two soldiers whose lives he saved. Instead, he exudes wisdom and a natural air of authority.

Tangerines, a Georgian-Estonian co-production, is the first such co-production in the history of the cinematography of both countries. The film was shown at the 29th Warsaw Film Festival in October 2013 where it was well-received both by the jury and the audience. Zaza Urshadze won the prize for best director during the festival. In its comments, the jury stated that Urshadze "managed to tell a simple yet very powerful story by creating a bittersweet world, warm and delicate." The audience also chose *Tangerines* as the best feature film of the festival.

The film can be compared to another Georgian picture that was shown at the same Warsaw festival a few years ago, in 2009. It was titled *The Other Bank*. Its script was co-written by Rustam Ibragimbekov, who had collaborated with Nikita Mikhalkov in the Oscar-winning *Burnt by the Sun*. *The Other Bank* also takes on the topic of the Abkhazia war, and even more so its consequences, by focusing on the life of a young Georgian refugee from Abkhazia and tracing his dramatic journey to his homeland.

During the Cold War, Georgian cinematography, associated with such names as Sergei Parajanov, Georgiy Daneliya and Otar

Iosseliani, could easily be considered one of the most artistically prolific among all the Soviet republics. *Repentance* by Tengiz Abuladze, a film that offers a critical review of Soviet history, was awarded the Special Jury Prize at the Cannes International Film Festival in 1987 and has been rated among the most outstanding achievements of Soviet cinematography. At the same time, it is one of the most conspicuous films that symbolises the *perestroika* period.

Despite their low budgets, the two Georgian films, *Tangerines* and *The Other Bank*, have strong scripts and excellent performances. They are also a proof that Georgian cinematography still has a vast potential. The awards and acknowledgment that the Georgian films receive at international film festivals draw the interest of international audiences. All in all, their authors have demonstrated that they are able to take on difficult and complex issues and deal with painful episodes abundant in Georgia's most recent history. 

Dominik Wilczewski

Translated by Agnieszka Rubka

To Live in Europe



Цінності об'єднаної Європи (The Values of a United Europe). By: Yulia Shcherbakova. Publisher: Vydavnychyy Centre Akademiya, Kyiv 2014.

Since Ukraine gained independence, the issue of its place in Europe has been repeatedly brought up in the public discourse.

This discussion often refers to its real presence in Europe, not just rhetoric, and is focused on many dimensions. First is the social dimension, which relates to the society's dream to "live in Europe and live like those in Europe". Then, there is the cultural dimension, which is seen in the need to contribute to the common heritage of European culture and traditions. Last, but not least, are the economic and political dimensions that relate to Ukraine's state interests.

Ukraine, once a republic in the Soviet Union, took on the hardships of building its own state in the 1990s. Back then, however, the Ukrainian authorities were noticeably ineffective in carrying out reforms aimed at building a truly European state. It was also at that time when Ukraine's foreign policy became widely recognised as multi-winged with its attempts to drift between the East and the West; assuming that the country's national interest was to simultaneously maintain friendly relations with European states and a strategic partnership with the Russian Federation.

This model of multi-winged foreign policy initiated by President Leonid Kravchuk has, in fact, become an immanent element of Ukraine's behaviour on the international arena. It has been applied by almost all of Ukraine's presidents. The very same course was chosen and continued, for two terms, by Leonid Kuchma. Only Viktor Yushchenko, who on many occasions would repeat that Ukraine had chosen a pro-western foreign policy, tried to stop it. Yet, after his removal from power, there was a regress again as Viktor Yanukovich decided to revert to the path of playing both sides.

Keeping this background in mind, the recently published book by Ukrainian scholar, Yulia Shcherbakova titled *Цінності об'єднаної*

Єврони (*The Values of a United Europe*) offers a valuable analysis of the values that characterise Ukrainian society, presenting them in the context of the values that characterise societies in other European countries. The book is an attempt to find answers to questions about Ukraine's willingness to become a full member of the European Community and whether Ukrainian society shares the same value system as the ones that are observed in other European countries; or are European values as foreign to Ukrainian society as some of the languages spoken on the old continent are.

The Copenhagen criteria (the rules that define whether a country is eligible for joining the EU or not) have become the denominator of the "common values of the European Union". This means that there are clear directives as to what states aspiring to join the common European structures should achieve. However, at the same time, it is clear that Europe is a project of multiculturalism and diversity. These two features also have an influence on flexibility in regards to the acceptance of what is recognised as common European values. For this reason alone, it is even more interesting to compare the values of European societies with the values of Ukrainian society. This analytical technique, as is performed by Shcherbakova in her book, also shows that Ukraine does indeed belong to Europe.

Shcherbakova defines the values of Ukrainian society from both a historical and contemporary perspective. While explaining what she means by the term "value", she points to both material and non-material objects as well as ideas. She further suggests that values, just like everything else, undergo a process of change and function in a specific context. These two factors explain

a certain dualism in our perception of values: first of all they reflect that values have a certain abstract dimension; being an image of some sort of Platonic idea. The second dimension is the real perception of values, which reflects the features that characterise their real meaning.

The greatest contribution of this book is the presentation and analysis of the historical and political contexts that influence the process of establishing a value system in a given society and its political culture. Shcherbakova notes that in democratic societies, axiological systems tend to support the rule of law and oppose any forms of breaching it. Ukraine's political culture, as she further points out, is somewhat different in this regard. Shcherbakova believes that the Ukrainian society is characterised more by apoliticism, a lack of balance in political views, but also some needs of entitlement and its protection.

In later parts of the book, Shcherbakova analyses the catalogue of values using sociological surveys and opinion polls carried out throughout the EU. Evidently, this piece of research shows that the values which are most regarded by the European societies include: peace, human rights, right to life, democracy, rule of law, personal freedom, equal status, tolerance, solidarity, self-fulfilment and religion. Based on the results of the European Social Survey that was carried out between 2004-2005 in 23 European countries and included both the member-states of the European Union and Ukraine, the catalogue of values most valued by Ukrainian society is presented and compared with the values regarded in Europe. Interestingly, the evidence here shows quite significant differences. First of

all, it becomes quite clear that values such as tradition, security and obedience to authorities are much more strongly present in Ukraine than they are in Europe. Conversely, values such as independence and empowerment are much weaker.

These values have also had an impact on the way Ukrainian society is perceived by others. For example, when the indicators determining attitudes regarding the authorities are taken into account, we get a picture of Ukrainians as a people who value being protected by a strong state, have conservative views and are afraid of social judgments. At the same time, the research results show that Ukraine is not a monolith with regards to axiological systems and significant differences can be observed between regions. The greatest difference that has been noticed isn't between the east and the west, but rather between the west and the centre.

Another piece of analysis, namely the interpretation of research carried out by the Gorshenin Institute called "The Morality of Ukrainian Society", allows a political portrait of contemporary Ukrainian society. This portrait consists of features such as: the low level of obedience to the law (legal nihilism), building the rule of law as not being a priority, hope for the emergence of a strong leader able to fix mistakes of previous governments, hope to improve the people's standards of living, a lack of political engagement and interest in politics, a low level of activism in political, social and professional organisations, and overall low levels of trust and tolerance to others.


These values are clearly in contrast with what Europeans historically tend to regard as their

greatest achievement, namely development of democracy as the best possible political system. It is this experience in building a civil society that connects people from different European states in sharing a strong adherence to the right to decide about their lives. The Ukrainian example confirms that the process of building a democratic system needs to be accompanied by an implementation of specific values that are favourable to its existence and that need to be shared by the society. For Shcherbakova, this means that Ukrainian society still needs to put more effort into the intensification of real democratisation processes, increasing the government's accountability before the people, increasing citizen activism and initiatives, creating mechanisms for allowing people to participate in the decision-making processes, ensuring feedback mechanisms for people-government relations, creating mechanisms for recalling parliamentarians and holding those who are in power accountable (both in legal and political terms).

The Values of a United Europe presents an in-depth analysis of the value system of Ukrainian society in a context that is characteristic for a united Europe. Based on the research findings that it presents, we can notice that the catalogues of values of Ukrainian society and the European societies are somewhat different. The picture of Ukrainian society that we get from these analyses comes across as disadvantageous when compared to other European societies. What should be pointed out, however, is that there are also values which Ukrainian society would like to share and see implemented in their country, but, at least until now, have not been done. This

includes the consolidation of a democratic system and its consequences such as the rule of law, unconstrained freedom of speech and a standard of living with guaranteed social benefits.

The desire to see these values implemented in Ukraine has, more than ever, been seen in the recent social protests that took place in Kyiv and throughout Ukraine and which have become commonly known as the Euromaidan. The trigger for this social movement was also quite illustrative: the decision made by the Ukrainian government not to sign the Association Agreement with the European Union. However, as time had passed, the protests changed in nature and focused on a different issue, namely the need to change the domestic situation, which was also strongly related to the implementation of some crucial rights and values. All of these events have confirmed that Ukrainian society wants to be in Europe and is ready for this challenge. To prove so, it has paid a very high price of the lives of some of its members.

With this in mind, Ukrainians are now ready to implement European values in their country and are willing to break away from the image of being an apolitical society, incapable of fighting for its own rights. They are ready for this because they want to "live in Europe and live like those in Europe". To do so, however, they need to build their own democratic state. 

Maryana Prokop

Translated by Iwona Reichardt

Questions on the Future of Europe



*Развод по-советски.
Из сверхдержавы на
задворки глобализации*
(*Soviet-Style Divorce:
From Superpower
to the Periphery of
Globalization*).

By: Giuseppe D'Amato.

Publisher: RGGU, Moscow, 2013.

Giuseppe D'Amato's book *Soviet-Style Divorce* leaves an ambiguous impression. On the one hand, the author proposes a clear and honest story about the events taking place in the region of the former Soviet Union over the past 20 years. D'Amato avoids many stereotypes that are typical for western observers dealing with Russia and other former Soviet republics. He says openly that Georgia was an aggressor in 2008 or that it was not Soviet republics that freed themselves from Russia in 1991, but the Russian elites wanted to relieve themselves from the "load of peripheries".

However, D'Amato maintains some typical western approaches. For example, there is a classical European love for marginal Russian figures such as Zakhar Prilepin. To describe this love requires a separate essay. The phenomenon may seriously distort reality in European public opinion's perception. For example, the reader may get the impression that Mikhail Khodorkovsky, Boris Nemtsov and Garry Kasparov have a real impact on political life in Russia and enjoy great prestige. But it does not matter. If the reader wants to learn about what happened in the former Soviet

Union over the last 20 years quickly (the book is short), he or she can read it without hesitation. It is difficult to imagine a better brief history of post-Soviet Russia and its neighbours for an average European.

However, the very topic chosen by the author (the disintegration of the Soviet Union and its consequences) is so complicated that any shallow presentation of facts and dates will look as something insufficient with such a background. More than 20 years have passed since 1991, so it is already possible to draw some conclusions and put forward some serious questions. Unfortunately, neither Russia nor the West has done a serious analysis of what has happened. All that has been done has predominantly been the carrying out of a fight of ideological clichés and stereotypes. But the collapse of the Soviet Union is the brightest and nearest example of de-modernisation. It is a story of how modernity disappeared from a vast territory and was replaced by medieval feudalism.

And it is much more about Europe itself than may seem at first glance. The project of the Soviet Union was a European one. It was a project of leftist modernisation developed by European social democrats in early 20th century. Lenin and his supporters were convinced that the October Revolution of 1917 in Petrograd was to be the first leftist revolution on the continent. They were waiting for the rest of Europe to catch up.

It would be enough to imagine that had the communist uprisings in Hungary and Germany won, history would have taken a completely different path. But rebellions were suppressed and the Bolsheviks had to build communism "in a separate country". However, despite its

specificity, the Soviet Union has remained a European project of modernisation in vast areas of Asia and the Caucasus. It was a project that provided universal education and equal access to healthcare, and it eliminated poverty and narrowed the gap in living standards between the centre and peripheries. Suffice to say that in the late Soviet Union standards of living in national republics were usually higher than in the Russian Federal Republic.

But in 1991, the project called the Soviet Union was shut down. The reasons for the superpower's collapse are a topic for a long, separate conversation and this is not the right place for that. D'Amato writes about the 20 years after 1991, and these 20 years raise questions of huge complexity and importance. The first question is: how did it happen that territories with a similar level of education, equal social standards and a unified system of governance appeared literally in different worlds 20 years later? GDP per capita in purchasing power parity is an accurate measure of aggregate level of development. This indicator is calculated by the World Bank for almost all countries in the world. According to the most recent research, Russia has appeared on one pole of post-Soviet space. Its GDP per capita is higher not only than in the Baltic republics of the former Soviet Union, it is also higher than in Poland and most European countries of the former Soviet bloc. In Central and Eastern Europe, this indicator is higher only in the Czech Republic, Slovenia and Slovakia. So, it is possible to say that Russia is a fully-fledged European state in terms of the level of development.

Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Moldova have appeared on the opposite pole. These countries

are in the same group as the countries of sub-Saharan Africa. Georgia, Armenia and Uzbekistan are not doing much better. Ukraine has joined the company of North African countries in terms of development. But at the time of the collapse of the USSR, many analysts predicted a bright future for Ukraine. What went wrong? Why did some countries of the socialist camp manage to return to the previous level and even surpass it, while others have remained at the same place where they fell in the 1990s? It is a crucial question. The recent example of Greece can remind us how easy it is to lose an achieved level. The country managed to fall out of the group of rich countries in about five years.

Giuseppe D'Amato briefly mentions possible causes when he writes about the Central Asian republics. He notes that the local elites were not ready to manage independent states after obtaining freedom. They were accustomed to taking orders from Moscow and the whole strategy of development was defined by the centre of the Soviet Union. So was it the unwillingness of the elites and their low quality that led to such disastrous results? D'Amato does not answer and does not focus attention on this issue.

The second question is: why have so many countries of the former Soviet Union been captured by religious extremism? After all, the Soviet Union was not just a secular state; it was an officially atheist state. Atheism was the state ideology for 70 years. Several generations were raised in the atmosphere of Soviet atheism. But the Soviet Union collapsed, and several years later a civil war broke out in Tajikistan in which religious fundamentalists are one of the parties.


In Ukraine, there were clashes between the Orthodox and the Greek Catholics. Islamists came to power in Chechnya and threaten to seize Uzbekistan. What forced the graduates of Soviet schools and universities to come under the influence of religious extremists?

The third question is: why has authoritarian Belarus overtaken democratic Ukraine and Moldova in terms of level of development? The issue of democracy in the post-Soviet space is highly politicised. The reason is that the West has turned democracy into a tool to promote its interests. As a result, the “democrats” were often perceived as western agents in many post-Soviet republics. And that has harmed democracy seriously. One can say that the West has only worsened the prospects of democracy in the region by supporting it.

However, it does not exclude the need to address the question of whether democracy actually promotes development. Or maybe democracy is possible only after achieving a certain level of economic development? Is it a source of development or a consequence of it? The post-Soviet experience supports the latter thesis. In order to have a stable democracy, it is necessary to have a developed economy. Otherwise, democracy degenerates into dictatorship, like in Belarus, or into civil confrontation, like in Ukraine and Moldova.

A new modernisation project is being implemented right now in Europe. The European Union is, in fact, a pan-European neoliberal modernisation project. It is a dissimilar twin brother of the Soviet Union. Because of that, an unbiased study of experience of the previous modernisation project is very important for the future of the EU. But, unfortunately, European

bureaucrats are very similar to the Soviet *nomenklatura*. Soviet party officials have seen all the processes in the real world through the prism of class struggle. European officials look at it through the prism of liberal democracy. As a result, the Soviet *nomenklatura* was unable to assess the benefits of an emerging middle class, which was regarded as a bourgeois relic. By contrast, modern European officials do not see the risk of degradation processes beyond the bright facade of democratic voting, the free press and the recognition of rights of minorities.

Therefore, it is very important for Europeans to study the experience of the Soviet Union and post-Soviet states. This history tells much more about them than they may think. Hopefully, other European researchers will devote attention to this topic after Giuseppe D'Amato's book. And hopefully, they will study it as much deeper and without any ideological biases. 

Alexandr Yakuba

Translated by Igor Lyubashenko

More than an Average Zombie Thriller



Noc żywych Żydów

(*Night of the Living Jews*).

By: Igor Ostachowicz.

Publisher: W.A.B., Warsaw,
2012.

Since writing books has become a profitable part of the entertainment industry, the concept

of the writer has been dangerously pushing the boundaries of literature. Everyone can now write and many do not hesitate to take the opportunity, from athletes and politicians' spouses to television celebrities. As a result, the bookstore shelves are filled with memoirs, biographies and self-help books of dubious quality often written by household names. At the same time, fiction-writing has been reserved for professional writers who, as a rule, stay away from political issues.

The debut book by Igor Ostachowicz, the secretary of state in Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk's cabinet responsible for his public image, not only puts an end to this division but was also the cause of a great deal of commotion in Poland last year. The prime minister's image advisor decided to push the limits and break all the rules of political correctness in his debut novel.

What the reader is offered is a pop-fantasy novel juggling literary styles; sneering in tone, full of violence and dripping with sex. The main characters of the story are Jewish victims of the Second World War who, as zombies, leave their underground dwellings to be confronted with the flourishing capitalism of modern Warsaw. The book was immediately branded as scandalous. "Profane" and "pornographic" were the two adjectives most frequently used by journalists, much to the author's delight, as such comments only confirmed his earlier descriptions of a stupefied, scandal-chasing media.

Though *Night of the Living Jews* is conducive to scandal because of the author and its content, it could also be scandalous for an entirely different reason. While it is true that literary

conventions and pop culture clichés are meant to be provocative when set against each other, the book uncovers the true iconoclasm that underlies the very structure of the surrounding reality, describing the apartment block towers that were erected with no regard to the Jewish history of that area. Moreover, the "architectural concealment of facts" by the urban development of modern Warsaw is very transparent to the general public. At first glance, the book might seem to be merely a thriller, whereas it really tries to fight public amnesia and brings to the surface what has long been forgotten.

The plot is set in Muranów, a seemingly typical residential neighbourhood that, however, as historic maps confirm, was built directly on the ruins of the Warsaw Ghetto. What's more, the buildings were erected literally over human corpses as no large-scale exhumation was conducted in the area. The nation's post-war priorities to rebuild a capital city that had been wiped off the face of the earth and to bury the traumatic experiences could be treated as mitigating circumstances. It is quite telling, however, that there were no attempts at even a partial reconstruction of the old Jewish district when the Old Town was being rebuilt. To this day, the area still lacks adequate memorials, plaques and symbolic markings of the ghetto's borders. Quite the contrary, the densely built-up area of socialist communities is further clogged up by perfectly smooth modern office buildings. As a result, the history of the neighbourhood remains hidden even to its own inhabitants.

The book's message can be seen as a reflection on an arrogant style of capitalism and the idea behind it, topping even a Quentin

Tarantino-esque story. A Jewish mass grave is discovered during the construction of a gigantic shopping mall in Muranów. It does not, however, hamper the project in any way; the place is even named Arcadia. The plot of the book, alarmingly close to reality and only thinly veiled in a grotesque fantasy, revolves around this shopping centre.

The main character of the story is an everyman, a 31-year-old middle class male who puts his useless college diploma, along with any career aspirations, on the shelf and makes a living as a tile layer. His simple job not only allows for financial security and holidays abroad, but also allows him to save cash in an obsessive manner (we are in the middle of a recession, after all). Though he enjoys relative financial freedom, his life is focused on his mundane needs and his thoughts are nothing but average. He is an average Joe to the extent that we don't even get to know his real name. Skinny, his oversensitive idealist female partner, becomes the main protagonist's social conscience – unthreatening, financially helpless and distant from reality. He considers himself a decent person though he does not care much for whatever might be going on in someone else's backyard, let alone in his or her basement – at least up to the point when it turns out that it hides a manhole leading to underground canals, which have become the dwelling place for the zombies of Jews murdered during the Second World War. These zombies are stuck in mortal life by virtue of being forgotten by the public. There's no single survivor who would be able to help them enter eternity by saying prayers. Those living corpses, totally fed up with their underground

existence, decide to exit the basement and the main protagonist becomes unwittingly their guide and protector.

Ostachowicz draws an analogy between the righteous, the Holocaust heroes under Nazi occupation and action-movie superheroes. He tells a story of an everyman transformed into an avenger – a pop-culture Moses or even Saviour, like Neo from *The Matrix*. The main character takes on a mission to escort his undead friends through the commercial earthly existence towards eternity. The task is not an easy one, as neo-Nazi squads under Satan's command loiter around town while the Jews themselves would gladly stay in the earthly Arcadia, more interested in discount rates than in redeeming their souls. To make things more complicated, the shopping centre is the gate to eternity. In what would be the final battle, the shopping centre becomes a self-sufficient fortress, though a real battle never takes place. It turns out that everyone is concerned solely with consumerism.

We live in the world of simulated emotions; it is just not clear at whom they are aimed, as nobody seems to care anymore. A mindless society can digest any truth as long as it has been processed enough that it comes to them effortlessly. The same applies to a stupefied media that keeps broadcasting manipulative, contradictory messages rather than analysing and disambiguating information about the world. Initially, the author tries to communicate with this world by means of its own lingo; hence the narration typical of second-rate films. However, his intentions are modified on the main character's visit to hell, i.e. to the Auschwitz concentration camp viewed from

the perspective of modern day sensitivities. Even this scene – the most controversial in its naturalistic descriptions of group-sex and animalistic behaviours – did not manage to rank as truly scandalous.


Though the reader might be outraged by the concept itself, the passages describing the hell of the Nazi camp fail to impress even though they are reinforced with a multitude of figures of speech. The conclusion is clear: contemporary language is unable to stir real emotion. This post-modernist emotional distance also applies to the Holocaust. A description is nothing more than just that; it does not allow for any true experience and as such it can be a meaningless lure at best, merely keeping the reader's attention. Pop art has no ability to shock, as it is unable to provide a catharsis and can only oscillate between pathos and ridicule, depending on the author's choice.

Unwittingly, the novel conflicts with yet another artistic work trying to resolve suppressed topics in Polish history, Władysław Pasikowski's 2012 film *Aftermath*. The picture is loosely based on the pogrom of Jews by their Polish neighbours in the village of Jedwabne in 1941 and the decades-long silence over those events. Pasikowski told the story through pop culture clichés so that it would be understandable to mass audiences. Consequently, he failed to avoid exaggeration and the main character is presented as "the last of the righteous ones", a noble savage who, seized with rage, stands up against the whole community with an axe in his hand. And then there is his sceptical brother who changes for the better upon discovering the truth. Instead of offering a critical review of difficult moments in Polish history, the film

strengthens harmful stereotypes and slips into clichés, kitsch and absurdity. Suffice to say that the final scene shows a Jewish cemetery burning in the middle of a cornfield while the main character is crucified and nailed to a barn door by an ignorant, antisemitic mob.

Ostachowicz learns a few lessons from this experience and adopts a grotesque style as a more suitable strategy, allowing him to use even stronger stylistic figures without slipping into aesthetic ridiculousness. The writer is no less critical than Pasikowski and he is even more courageous in overusing stereotypes. Unlike the director, however, he does not use them to present some bombastic arguments; he simply plays with them. More importantly, though, the author employs irony, which is significant to note, since up until now irony had been unacceptable in the Polish public discourse on the Holocaust. As far as fundamental issues are concerned, *Night of the Living Jews* does not cross any boundaries nor does it violate any taboos. It shows, however, that any attempt at reconstructing the wartime experience for the generation that is unable to relate to their own past is bound to fail regardless of the tone of voice adopted by the artist. After all, Pasikowski took up the task with a solemn mode and did not succeed.

Ostachowicz's book is not merely a story told to a younger generation, but also a modern dance of death. Like the medieval *danse macabre*, it is an arbitrary, post-modernist memento rather than an attempt to preserve the past experiences in formaldehyde. We need to speak about the past, but we also need rhetorical devices to do it as we are left with little material in terms of memory.

Ostachowicz's novel only benefits from that. It is a neatly constructed jewel of a book, full of witty conclusions and a grotesque zombie sense of humour hardly ever used in Poland. 

Magdalena Link-Lenczowska
Translated by Agnieszka Rubka

A History of the Lithuanian World



Karklo diegas. Lietuvių pasaulio istorija (*The Willow Sprout: A History of the Lithuanian World*). By: Egidijus Aleksandravičius. Publisher: Versus Aureus, Vilnius, 2013.

Over the last 20 years, Lithuania has experienced the highest emigration rate in the European Union. Since gaining independence in 1991, its population of three and a half million in 1989 has shrunk to just under three million. National politicians have long been exploiting these statistics to demonise their opponents. While substantial emigration is an undeniable fact and a powerful political tool, those who leave are rarely treated with affection. The emigrants, so it is assumed, make conscious decisions to abandon their homes and seek material wealth abroad.

Egidijus Aleksandravičius's *The Willow Sprout: A History of the Lithuanian World* comes out at a time when debates on emigration, rather than immigration as in Western Europe, rage in Lithuanian public life and enjoy substantial

popularity. More so, the internet has enabled concerned emigrants to actively participate in the discussion about the phenomenon they themselves have collectively brought about. However superfluous these debates may be, they seldom tackle the narratives that shape the attitudes of those taking part. What Aleksandravičius examines in his superbly researched book are precisely these underlying narratives of migration. Rather than writing a history of the Lithuanians in the world, Aleksandravičius writes a history of the Lithuanian world. By integrating various stories, he draws a map that is akin to an archipelago of islands of Lithuanian identity scattered across the globe with mutual sensibilities and regional peculiarities. What also emerges is a fairly comprehensive history of Lithuania itself.

Aleksandravičius livens up Lithuanian historiography by treating diaspora history as essentially inseparable from the events taking place inside the emigrants' countries of origin. He seeks to accommodate multiple narratives, some lost, others silenced by the vociferous dominant story. In Aleksandravičius's view, some of the greatest obstacles to the formation of an inclusive identity lie in the modern Lithuanian tradition that has set, and rigidly maintained, a strict linguistic criterion of Lithuanian identity. The idolised type has been the sedentary Lithuanian peasant who is almost obsessively bound to his native patch of land. This was the image that emerged at the time of national revival and that Soviet colonialism did little to change, but much to reinforce.

Therefore, in his endeavour Aleksandravičius is compelled to reach much deeper and wider. He has to go back further in time and embrace

events and individuals who do not fit easily with the modern story of belonging. What emerges from early Lithuanian historiography is an image that is fundamentally different from the prevailing conception of the docile Lithuanian. In the 17th century history of Lithuania written by Albert Wijuk-Kojałowicz, the Lithuanians are a restless nation, rampaging across the continent, fighting battles and conquering new lands. Adding colour to this mythical image is the multi-ethnic make-up of the ancient Lithuanian nation, in which Roman ancestors mix with other long-lost European tribes. Leaving fantasy aside, the first historically recorded Lithuanian migration was the domestic colonisation within the rapidly-expanding Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Nonetheless, these Lithuanian overlords were an odd case in the history of colonialism because rather than preaching and imposing their own habits, they dissolved in the sea of their Slavic neighbours.

The fact was that for most of its early-recorded history Lithuania was a land of inward migration. Peoples from across Europe moved to populate these vast swathes of eastern land and added a fascinating layer to local life. The Jewish community, which developed its own distinctive Litvak identity, was very prominent. Some centuries later, these Lithuanian Jews would, alongside ethnic Lithuanians, move away from their ancestral land to countries of opportunity.

Scouring the long centuries of early history, Aleksandravičius briefly discusses the migration history of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth's nobility, but here the political nation often eschews clear-cut definitions and complicates their inclusion. The Polish-

Lithuanian diaspora following the partitions of 1795 or the uprisings of the 19th century was made up of individuals whose allegiances lay with lost Polish statehood rather than with either of the two titular nations that were soon to emerge in their modern shape.

The most significant page in the history of Lithuanian diaspora opens with the mass migration to the New World and *The Willow Sprout* at first glance seems to have a slight bias towards the Lithuanian community in the United States. This can be questioned, but two factors make this choice almost inevitable. First of all, Aleksandravičius often refers to the social capital model in explaining communities and in this respect the Lithuanian-Americans are outstanding. The democratic constitution of the adopted country was in many respects exceptional. It allowed for the development of social organisations and encouraged civic engagement. Migration waves were concentrated and new arrivals landed in relatively few states. Secondly, Lithuanians in the US left behind an incomparably greater number of written sources. They, it can be said with confidence, like no other Lithuanian community have been successful in telling their stories. And like no other community, they have even entered the literary tradition of the adopted country. Almost contemporaneous with the Lithuanian literary revival back in Europe was the Upton Sinclair's depiction of Lithuanian immigrants in his classic *The Jungle*.

In quantitative terms, Lithuanian migration to South America was also significant. However, be it the distance from Lithuania or the languages of that continent, communities there quickly disappeared in the Latin melting pot. In

the 1920s, the US imposed quotas for new immigrants and those willing to leave had to look for new destinations. South America was a welcoming prospect and tens of thousands of Lithuanians moved to Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay. Albeit great in their numbers, these migrants failed to form long-lasting organisations.

The New World was important for its economic and social potential, but no less significant were the eastern expanses of Russia. The eastern drift began with the partitions and the arising opportunities in the imperial administration. The 19th century saw the industrialisation of the Russian Empire and possibilities for employment multiplied. This migration, however, had its dark side. Political opposition following the two 19th-century uprisings in Poland and Lithuania was ruthlessly suppressed, and thousands were exiled to Siberia. Even more traumatic were the deportations in the aftermath of the Second World War. So all in all, Russia absorbed large number of Lithuanians, but while at the start of the 20th century its universities served as the training ground for young Lithuanians in their preparations for statehood, the ensuing century of paranoid communism and exile eliminated any venues for civic or diaspora mobilisation.

From an academic point of view, the most exciting cases in this book are those balancing on the borderline. The previously-mentioned Litvak diaspora is a challenging phenomenon in the Lithuanian narrative. These Jews straddled two worlds. They were, first and foremost, part of the Jewish diaspora. Nonetheless, they were also intimately linked with their country of origin. Their memory, their tastes and their knowledge

of Lithuanian made them inevitably a part of the Lithuanian world. South African Jewry is a particular case in point. The Litvaks formed the overwhelming majority of both Jewish and Lithuanian migration to that country.

The Holocaust severed most of these ties. The Litvaks, learning of their former neighbours' involvement in the killings, chose not to remember and the ethnic Lithuanians, under Soviet occupation at the time, did nothing to revert this amnesia. Therefore, it is odd, that *The Willow Sprout* with its recurring Jewish theme, does not discuss Jewish migration to Israel after the Second World War.

The Lithuanian-speaking inhabitants of Prussia, or the so-called Lithuania Minor, are another marginal case. For but 20 years of the 20th century they have never formed a political body with the rest of Lithuanians, but nonetheless shared a number of cultural traits, language being the most important. Previously, they tended to migrate within Germany and their expulsion following the end of the Second World War was the final stroke that cut them off from the Lithuanian world.

Aleksandravičius is also innovative in linking migration with domestic history offers an interesting perspective on Lithuanian statehood. In the last 200 years, the country was more often than not under foreign occupation. The Lithuanian pioneers in the 19th century were faced with questions of self-identification. Before the national revival had gained momentum in the late 19th century, the choice was not straightforward. The option of being a Polish Catholic or a Russian subject was far better defined than the incipient Lithuanian identity. Even so, after initial setbacks immigrants

organised and championed national self-determination from abroad. Before the First World War, the Lithuanian community “had in its numbers, density and the engagement in the fatherland’s affairs come nearest to that global state of existence that is called ‘diaspora’”. The lobbying and fundraising efforts were immense. Moreover, in the immediate years following independence, some Lithuanian-Americans tried to return with their capital but after lukewarm reception re-emigrated again rather than settled.


However, interwar Lithuania did not forget its diaspora. A common belief was that these distant lands would provide safe havens for Lithuanians trapped in the precarious European geography. Aleksandravičius, however, tries to show that this involvement was not simply the result of political calculation but a sign of a growing civic culture and the mutual respect.

The Second World War saw a mass exodus of Lithuanians. This new wave was different from all the previous ones, because of the significant number of intelligentsia. These people invigorated the diaspora’s life and, for most part, had a clear goal of wresting Lithuania from Soviet occupation. The dramatic fall of the Soviet Empire was brought hope of uniting Lithuanians, but maybe once again the émigrés did not receive the expected welcome from their liberated compatriots. And while, in Aleksandravičius’s view, the interwar Lithuania had managed to form a relationship with its diaspora, the achievements of the last 20 years are questionable.

While reading *The Willow Sprout*, one cannot escape asking the question, why has Aleksandravičius set out on this creative

adventure. Can the fragile concept of a nation be rehashed? Throughout the book he draws parallels with other European nations and their stories of migration. It is as if the book is permeated with the disappointment that the Lithuanians have failed to tell their history more like their neighbours. The Irish, the Italians and the Poles have been successful in instilling pride in their identity and narrating a grand history of their nations. In the chapter on interwar migration, Aleksandravičius offers a fascinating piece of statistics. In terms of emigrants per capita in 1928, Lithuanians came near-second to the Irish and, while the Irish have cherished their diaspora’s memory, the Lithuanians quietly shunned label of the most emigrating nation. Present-day Lithuania is not much different. Emigration is traumatic and causes tension instead of strengthening the sense of collective belonging. Therefore, Aleksandravičius’ story has the immense potential to lessen those antagonisms. The grand narrative of Lithuanian identity can be more open to individual choice and the centrality of language can be altogether reconsidered. Any citizen of the world, speaking whatever tongue, can feel that he or she is a Lithuanian and it is the imperative for the contemporary Lithuanian society to encourage this choice.

The author has left the explanation of the title to the last paragraph in his book. Anyone who has read thoroughly, however, could already guess this shrub-like tree is the epitome of Lithuanian identity. Aleksandravičius asks, “is there another tree, so lacking in height and in appearance, but so full of vitality that cannot be cleared, whose roots thrive in the most barren soil, and a broken twig quickly takes

root in a new land." And while this comparison may be unique, in the history of migration, the Lithuanians are not all too different from the other nations of Europe. By revealing this truth Aleksandravičius has definitely exposed contemporary Lithuanian public debate to the best possible treatment for those post-colonial traumas of inwardness and isolation. Aleksandravičius may be right or wrong in his narration, but it is nonetheless a heartening story and a sincere invitation to dialogue. 

Laurynas Vaičiūnas

Dissecting the Reset



*The Limits of Partnership:
U.S.-Russian Relations in
the Twenty-First Century.*

By: Angela Stent.
Publisher: Princeton
University Press,
Princeton, New Jersey,
2014.

Angela E. Stent's *The Limits of Partnership: U.S.-Russian Relations in the Twenty-First Century* is a detailed, scrupulously researched account of relations between the two former superpowers in the post-Cold War era. It is particularly valuable in its exposition of the dangers of "over-personalising" bilateral relations.

Although Stent is a professor of Government and Foreign Service at Georgetown, her book reads more like a work of history. She begins her account of post-Cold War Russian-American

relations by describing Mikhail Gorbachev's resignation from power on Christmas Day in 1991 and the relationship between Boris Yeltsin and George H. W. Bush, who was in office for almost exactly one year after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Whereas many would have expected Bush senior to be a Cold Warrior, in fact, as Stent writes, he took an ambivalent view of the collapse of the Soviet Union. Bush was not particularly enthusiastic about "exporting democracy" and Yeltsin's coup genuinely scared him. According to Stent, Bush's primary concern regarding post-Soviet Russia was that of its nuclear arsenal.

The Bush administration is followed by what Stent calls "the Bill and Boris Show", as she titles one of the chapters. According to Stent, United States–Russian relations reached a high point at this level, as Bill Clinton strongly supported Boris Yeltsin, seeing the Russian president as a bulwark against a potential reconstitution of Russian hegemony in the post-Soviet sphere and admiring his pro-market reforms. In fact, Clinton helped the Russian Federation secure a 10.2 billion US dollar loan from the International Monetary Fund to strengthen these reforms. Stent quotes Clinton as saying, "I want this guy to win so bad it hurts" during Yeltsin's 1996 re-election campaign. She also mentions, however briefly, that Clinton and Yeltsin's relations soured after the NATO bombing of Serbia.

Next, the book includes a lengthy discussion of the George W. Bush administration's downward spiral in its relations with Russia. The administration began on cordial terms with Vladimir Putin and the two men enjoyed friendly relations. However, these relations worsened due to fallout related to disagreements over the

Iraq war. Nonetheless, Bush and Putin quickly rekindled their chemistry and the former “all but endorsed” the latter’s re-election in 2004. Another challenging test for Bush and Putin’s relationship with Russia was the 2008 Russia-Georgian War. Fascinatingly, Stent reveals that while the Bush administration strongly supported Georgia in its rhetoric, it secretly did not want the Georgians to succeed and shunned the possibility of direct intervention in the matter. Finally, Stent ends her account with a description of Barack Obama administration’s reset policy towards Russia. She describes a reset policy more nuanced than its critics suggest it to be, noting, for example, that the Magnitsky Act was signed into law by Obama, much to Putin’s irritation. While the reset was one of the Obama administration’s more controversial foreign policies – it was the source of significant contention in the 2012 US presidential elections – she does not pass judgment on it. To her merit, throughout the book, Stent takes a non-ideological tone and neither criticises nor praises the American or Russian leadership very often. She finishes her book with some valuable observations, especially on the “over-personalising” of relations between American and Russian leaders which has made relations between the two countries excessively dependent on personal chemistry. She also concludes that Russian-American relations since the end of the Cold War have followed a consistent pattern of chilly relations followed by a reset.

Although Stent does not psychoanalyse the top leadership in Washington and Moscow, she does provide extensive information on the personal relationships between the Kremlin

and White House leaders. She even describes seemingly trivial discussions between the leaders, showing their significance. For example, she describes George W. Bush’s encounter with Vladimir Putin, in which the former asks the latter about the cross he wears around his neck that came from Jerusalem. Bush’s question initiated friendly relations between the two men. That is probably why the *Wall Street Journal* review of Stent’s book notes that it highlights the dangers of bilateral relations’ dominated by personal relationships. Indeed, this is one of the strong points of her work and fits the pre-Cold War pattern as well. After all, Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s critics charged that his excessively optimistic view of Joseph Stalin and cordial relations with the Soviet dictator led to disastrous consequences, especially in Eastern Europe.

Interviews with high-ranking Russian and American officials as well as secondary sources dominate the book’s bibliography. Importantly, Stent interviews not only government officials but also business and non-profit leaders. This allows for her sources to not only include “official” government perspectives but also critical ones.

While the book is strong on first-hand accounts, however, it would be even stronger had Stent penetrated deeper into Russian and American archives. The reader would benefit from a deeper analysis in the chapter titled “The Colour Revolutions”, which discusses the fallout in relations between the White House and the Kremlin during the mass demonstrations against corrupt pro-Russian governments in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan in the years 2003-2005. Stent writes, for example, that many Russians do

not even regard Ukraine as a distinct country but rather an extension of Russian territory and that the Kremlin's foreign policy has been dictated by a desire to maintain hegemony in its former colonies. By contrast, the United States has tended to support the young independent republics in their struggle for independence from Moscow, causing conflict in US-Russian relations. Stent would have strengthened the discussion here with an analysis on how this most likely led to Putin's proposal of a Eurasian Union in an attempt at anchoring the former Soviet republics as a means of re-enforcing Russian hegemony. Stent's account of the differing reactions of the United States and Russia in response to the Colour Revolutions is scrupulously researched, though, and brings to light information on how the Kremlin employed its own spin doctors in the Viktor Yanukovich campaign in 2004, while private American PR firms prepped Viktor Yushchenko.


A discussion of why Russia and the United States have clashed on the post-Soviet republics needs further exploration. Since the end of the First World War, US foreign policy has been guided by Wilsonian idealism and support for national self-determination. It is clear from Stent's presentation of facts that Russia has pursued a post-colonial mentality. Thus a discussion of the American-Russian fallout over the Colour Revolutions as a conflict of these ideas, yet another counter to Francis Fukuyama's famous claim that human affairs have reached an "end of history" and that liberal democracy has triumphed as the dominant political ideology in the post-Cold War world, would make for stimulating analysis.

Similarly, a discussion of the role of Chechnya in US-Russian relations could be further

expanded. Stent raises the issue of Chechnya with the republic's struggle for independence that has been largely marginalised by the American media, except in the context of dramatic events such as the terrorist siege of the school in Beslan or the dramatic revelation that the perpetrators of the bombing at last year's Boston Marathon were of Chechen origin. Stent provides observations on the US reaction to the political drama unfolding in Chechnya. She notes, for instance, that in the early years of the George W. Bush administration, the White House was sympathetic to the Chechen cause and sparked some minor friction with Putin over it. Yet after the September 11th 2001 terrorist attacks, the Bush administration's rhetoric vis-à-vis Chechnya evolved from cautious sympathy to pigeonholing the Chechens in the same category as al-Qaeda. A deeper look at how this plays into current US-Russian relations would have been useful.

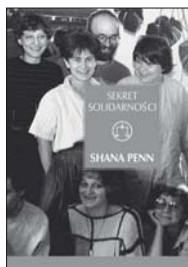
In addition to Chechnya, the Baltic states could have been another occasion for comparing the ideological differences driving American and Russia foreign policy, but also an examination of how differing historical narratives affect international relations. In 2005, on the 60th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, George W. Bush visited the Baltic states and condemned the Soviet invasion and occupation of the three republics. This led to a worsening of relations with Russia, as Moscow rejects the narrative of its role as an imperial conquering power in the Baltics. However, Stent mentions this visit very briefly and leaves the reader for wanting more.

Nevertheless, Angela E. Stent's *The Limits of Partnership* is recommended as a primer on Russian-American relations two decades

after the Soviet Union was thrown into the ash heap of history. The book makes the reader wanting more on this continuing evolving topic. Particularly beneficial would be the relationship between Wilsonian idealism and “politics as usual” in American foreign policy and exploring Chechnya as a litmus test for that relationship. 

Filip Mazurczak

Is Solidarity's Secret Still Binding?



Sekret Solidarności
(*Solidarity's Secret*).

By: Shana Penn.
Publisher: W.A.B,
Warsaw, 2014.

Shana Penn's book was published for the first time in Poland in 2003, with an introduction by Professor Maria Janion, the queen of Polish humanities. With both the outsider's mind and eye of Shana Penn and the insider's authority of Professor Janion, readers were introduced to a topic that has been totally overlooked in historical accounts and analyses of the clandestine Solidarity movement of the 1980s in Poland: the status of women in that movement, even though their contributions to Solidarity were significant.

Shana Penn reconstructed women's roles in the clandestine organisation that was Solidarity. They were brave, resourceful and reasonable, and yet they were ready to take a great deal

of risk. These women were well-educated, clear and suggestive as writers and journalists; effective as editors and distributors of books and newspapers of the *samizdat* press and good organisers. They risked their private and professional lives and tried to protect both as well as they could. They played very important roles in every kind of clandestine activity and, as Penn tells us, there was even a period when almost all the male members of Solidarity's leadership were imprisoned, but Solidarity's work continued smoothly under the anonymous leadership of women. One of them even took a man's name as her pseudonym, suggesting that the leader was, as it should be, a man. Nicknames are indispensable in the clandestine press and any kind of underground political activity, but this one was invented to suggest the leader's proper gender. Women's activity was needed and welcomed, but, as always, they were positioned in a second tier, in the shadow of men's authority. When the period of clandestine activity was over, when the heroes were awarded with social prestige, a share in power, high positions in government and their already well-known names were written down in the books of history, the women simply evaporated. How typical.

Today, after that victorious fight with the *ancien regime*, the women of Poland find themselves in a rather inglorious and defeated situation. The ban on abortion, which ended the liberal tradition lasting from 1956 to 1993, was imposed under tremendous pressure from the Catholic Church. It was the first “gift” that Polish women received from their colleagues from Solidarity (which turned out to be an increasingly right-wing organisation), with Lech Wałęsa himself leading the backlash.

Above all, this was a "gift" from Solidarity's ally, the Polish Catholic Church. Then, in the 1990s, there came more and more backlash symptoms: discrimination in the work market (higher unemployment among women); limited and expensive access to day care centres and kindergartens (there were many of them in the communist Polish People's Republic, and they were promptly closed after the advent of the new era of market economy). Then came the campaign against contraception, family planning and any form of the family that is not strictly a traditional one. Recently, we have witnessed an assault on *in vitro* fertilisation; the idea of civil partnership regulations for gays and lesbians; and, in recent months, a campaign directed against the very idea of "gender" and gender studies, which are used as a means to divert public attention from child sex abuse scandals within the Catholic Church in Poland. Consequently, the idea of gender is presented in churches and throughout the Catholic media as a symbol of decadent sexual chaos, shameless liberty with no restrictions. An agent of decline of family and children deprivation. . . All of this is happening in quite a hopeless political situation with no grassroots leftist or liberal political movements.

After more than 20 years since the change of political system in Poland, I have to admit that yes, those fantastic women from the Solidarity movement have not been treated in the way they deserved. Their accomplishments are diminished. But were they misled? Did they expect anything more? The thousands of women who took part in the Spanish Civil War of 1936-1939 on the Republican side – anarchists, communists, socialists, trade

unionists and simply Republicans – sunk into oblivion for many years, and returned only quite recently. Some of them were feminists like Libertarias, the anarchist unit from Barcelona, so they knew precisely what they are fighting for; they had both political, class and gender consciousness. In the Soviet Red Army during the Second World War, women soldiers were volunteers, and, in many cases, when they wanted to go to the front they lied about their age. For almost six decades, the topic of women soldiers was absent in the Soviet public discourse. Yes, one can say, but those were times of war, of different situations. The Solidarity movement was of a social and political character; there was a place in there to remember about equality, discrimination, democracy.

Today, as we have the privileged perspective of so many years that have passed since, we can say: yes and no. All Solidarity members could only think of those ideas as they understood them in their own time. Two years ago, Lech Wałęsa said that democracy meant living according to the principles of the majority. This definition would be decent enough if we were living in 1789. But we are not. Poland – the Polish People's Republic (PRL) – in the 1970s and 1980s was stuck in the first half of the 20th century, in its ways of understanding ideas like democracy or equality. The New Left was an American concept, not an Eastern or Central European one. We did not even have an Old Leftist tradition then, only a state administrated in a more and more soulless way according to some leftist and emancipationist ideas associated with "socialism" in a general sense. Let us also remember that Solidarity

started as a movement directed to improve the socialist system, not to overthrow it. It ended with neoliberal capitalism, which is now often called the "wild Polish capitalism".

But all of those women, fighters of revolutions, wars, activists of democratic movements thought (in the pre-feminist era) that they were fighting for more general things than women's discrimination. Sometimes, they shared quite rational, at first glance, opinions that some kind of superstitions (well, that was the word) would disappear "by themselves" when the new society would be established. Specifically, this was a reference to religion, or those connected with traditional ways of perceiving women. The big lesson was that things almost never change "by themselves".

On the other hand, in Eastern Europe and in Poland, we had a good deal of real emancipation. Women in Poland in the 1950s and 1960s experienced a real change in their position, with possibilities and opportunities. Socialist ideas were "blood" relatives of ideas of general emancipation. Even if we do not like to admit it, the People's Republic of Poland gave women access to education, to free universities and to work. In 1956, three years after Stalin's death, Polish women received the right to have abortions. True, "they received" this right and they did not fight for it, and true, they had the right to education and work, and to traditional women's position within family, which means work and responsibility. Emancipation without feminist consciousness is fragile. It could be easily lost.


So, Solidarity's women weren't cheated. They could not see themselves as a social group, as a politically bounded group. They never

thought about themselves in those terms. They were not cheated. Even if they were, they were the same as everybody else who wanted to believe that within a movement brimming with nationalistic, conservative ideas and enjoying (unconditionally, as it seemed) the support of the Catholic Church, one can build a fully civil, democratic society. Now it sounds pathetic; but then, we were not so wise, even if we were suspicious.

I remember one public discussion after the first edition of Shana's Penn book was published. On the panel were some heroines of her story, as well as one man, a respected journalist and former Solidarity activist. In that discussion, only one of the women declared that she was a feminist, and that she could see then (in 2004) that they lacked vigilance in the 1980s against conservative ideas popular in the Solidarity ranks. They lacked vigilance against backlash that came with the success of Solidarity and democracy. However, strange it may sound, one of the book's heroines, a psychologist, declared that she never "did politics", she was just a woman who simply helped and supported the right ideas. Others said that she did what she did because of moral, not political, motivations and supported her friends. The journalist participating in the panel declared that when he was kept in detention, he loved the view of one of the older women activists, a Catholic journalist herself, who, with heavy bags full of food for the imprisoned, climbed laboriously to the place of detention located on a hill. The view of this woman, carrying those heavy bags, brought him some calm. He said that she was there, caring for the men, the right person at the right place. Good

heavens, I thought then, quite a young guy saying that he had been glad to see an older woman climbing to his detention place with this burden, with kilograms of food. But, in the end, I can imagine why he was happy seeing her, and I am still angry with him.

Nevertheless, at the end of that discussion, the daughter of the psychologist finally took the microphone and said that she could remember perfectly well all those years when her mother “did nothing else but politics”. From morning to night she did politics. And just one more comment about gender consciousness in Poland. Years later, I met one of the former Solidarity leaders who changed his sex in the 1990s and went from being a man to a woman. As a woman, she was very ill and survived cancer. She was all alone, she said, and not one of her male friends from Solidarity ever showed any care or interest. For them, he was no more.

The proverb says that you can be wiser after damage. What is the nature of this damage? There was no damage. It is an exposition of the patriarchal nature of Polish culture. Now, we can see it. Shana Penn’s book helped us with this task. 

Bożena Keff

A Handbook for Gender Relations



Eastern Europe: Women in Transition, eds. Irena Grudzińska-Gross and Andrzej Tymowski, Peter Lang GmbH, FfM 2013.

Eastern Europe: Women in Transition, edited by Irena Grudzińska-Gross and Andrzej Tymowski, is a collection of articles written from the perspective of different social sciences that deal with one main topic: the transformation of gender roles and relations between men and women in the context of political change in the countries of Eastern and Central Europe after 1989. The texts, written between 1994 and 2006, naturally incline one to ask about the purpose of their publication 20 years later. The changes that have been taking place in this region and which refer to the renegotiation of the gender contract are not the only changes that have taken place there, nor are they unique in any way.

In this case, does it really make sense to devote so much attention to processes that took place a quarter century ago? To answer this question, let me point to the endless and still-intensifying controversies that surround the situation and position of women and the relations between men and women in the transforming societies of Central and Eastern European countries. Looking at these processes from the perspective of time, it becomes more and more evident that the transformation that has been taking place here is also a

gender transformation and that the process of redefining social and cultural gender roles that started in most of the countries of the region in the 1990s has not yet been completed. What is more, even membership in the European Union has not guaranteed that the equality laws binding throughout the community are being obeyed here.

In an article written by Leach Seppanen Anderson in 2006, we can, for example, see clear differences between the Czech Republic and Poland with regards to the mode and speed in accepting EU laws regulating gender equality. Importantly, these differences have not decreased with time. On the contrary, we can see an increase, which is to Poland's disadvantage. To prove my point let me note that although in Poland we have indeed already succeeded in developing a wide spectrum of feminist and women's rights organisations, which is quite different to the situation in the Czech Republic, there is still a very strong resistance against the building of relations between men and women that are free from traditional prejudices, beliefs and requirements. This resistance has been increasing recently. That is why, when reading the articles of the collection, the most interesting are those which not only describe the ongoing transformation processes, but also present the specifics of social and cultural contexts in the different countries put here under the microscope.

The authors of the articles are researchers working both in the transforming countries and outside them, observing them from a distance. Clearly, the experience of the insiders, who have experienced the social changes first-hand, influences their perspective, at


least to some degree. The example of such a perspective includes the articles published in the collection written by two Hungarian authors, Andrea Peto and Eva Fodor, who illustrate how the system transformation in their country has influenced specific aspects of gender relations. Fodor, for example, focuses primarily on poverty and the different effects it has had on men and women. She analyses two gender-induced interpretations of the so-called "gender shame" which is experienced by a man, the main breadwinner, when unemployed.

The unavoidable question that keeps showing up when reading this book is, to what extent were the concepts and methods developed by western feminism useful for the analysis of the transformation processes that took place in Central and Eastern Europe? Judging by the names in the index, where American feminists are listed in small numbers, the authors of the texts published in this collection did not use western feminism as their basis. Should this index, however, be replaced with an index of concepts, then the picture would be quite different.

Importantly, it is quite clear that the gender perspective and concept of gender itself are used throughout the book as a certain intellectual common good; the authors seem not to feel the need to make references to specific authors or definitions. The only exception is Aleksandra Hrycak in her text on Ukraine's feminist organisations. In her analysis, Hrycak consciously applies post-colonial concepts to feminist research. She introduces the topic of "hybrid feminism", which she uses to describe the tensions between local activists and their organisations and western

women's institutions equipped with much larger financial resources designed for helping women in Ukraine. Convincingly, she describes the processes of establishing institutions in Ukraine that are neither aid organisations, nor part of Ukrainian society. They are more some sort of buffer entities attracting women and organisations that are different from the rest of the society. They do indeed operate in Ukraine, but their existence is marked by being a bridge between society and foreign-based institutions. The hybrid nature of such entities means that, in being intermediaries, they not only engage with both western and local parties, but also have a specific way of participating in power relations. To illustrate this point, Hrycak gives an example of one branch of an international women's organisation that, at a certain point, had at its disposal a budget

seven times higher the amount that the state of Ukraine officially allots for programmes for equal opportunities for men and women. For this reason alone, the alienation of Ukrainian feminists employed by this organisation, who were paid western-esque salaries, was unavoidable.

This example along with other texts shows why, even though so many years have passed since the publishing of many of the texts from the collection, *Eastern Europe: Women in Transition* is still relevant today. It is not a return to the past, a long-closed chapter. It is more of a handbook that is helpful in understanding the ongoing gender transformation in this region. 

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Translated by Iwona Reichardt

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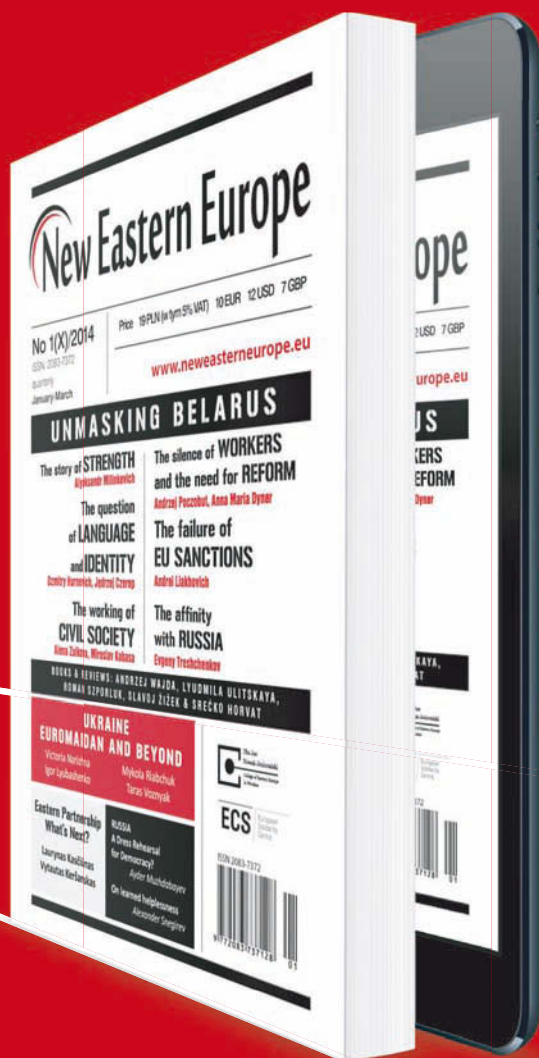
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