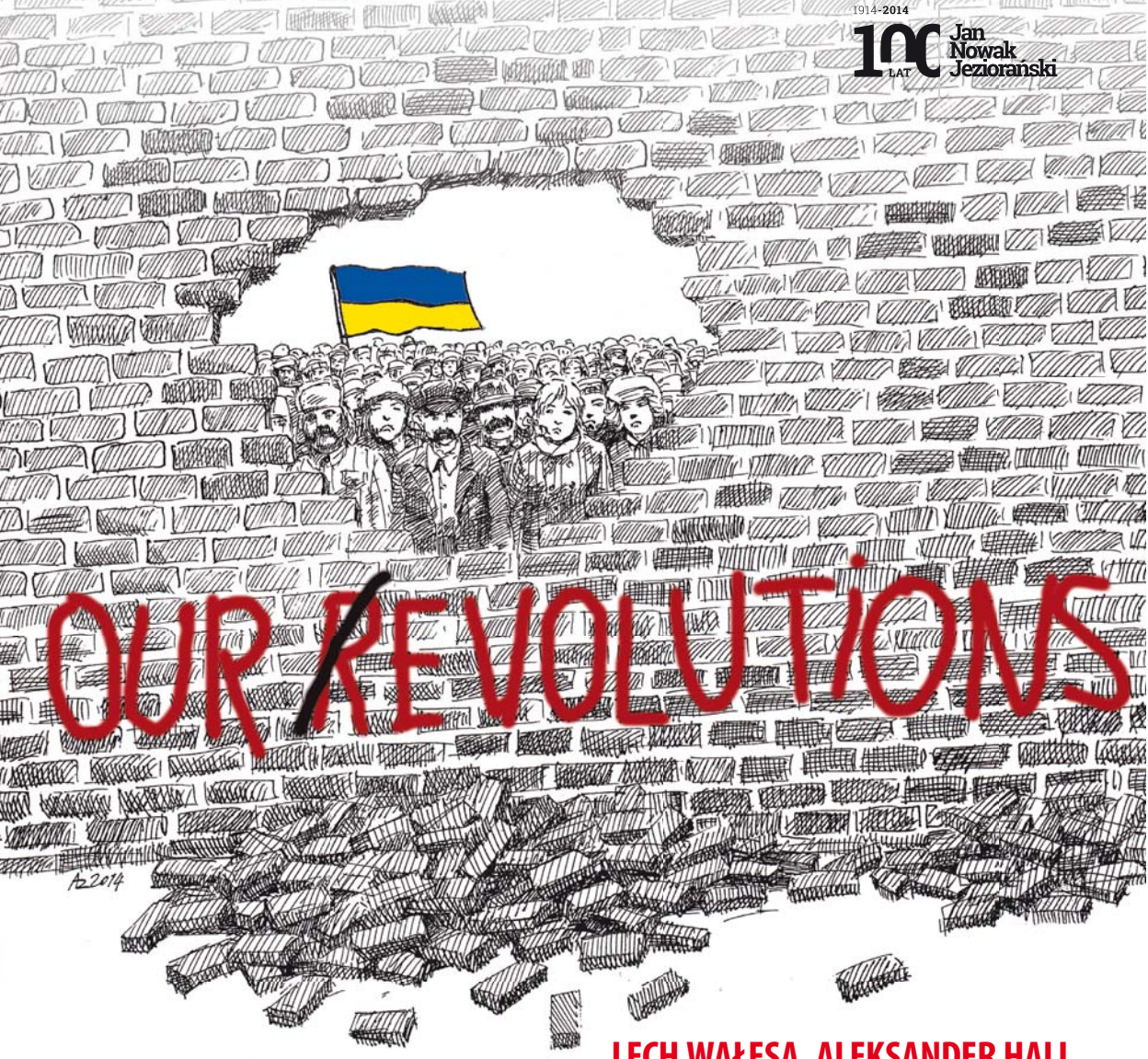
ISSN 2083-7372 Bimonthly July-August
Price 19 PLN (w tym 5% VAT) 10 EUR 12 USD 7 GBP

New Eastern Europe

No 3(XII)/2014 www.neweasterneurope.eu

1914-2014 100 LAT Jan Nowak Jeziorański



LECH WAŁĘSA, ALEKSANDER HALL
KRZYSZTOF CZYŻEWSKI, SHANA PENN
MYKOLA RIABCHUK, ROMAN KABACHIY
MILAN LELICH, ANNA KOTALEICHUK

ISSN 2083-7372
9 772083 737128 07

ECS European Solidarity Centre

The Jan Nowak-Jeziorański College of Eastern Europe in Wrocław

DID YOU KNOW...

THAT **KRAKOW** IS HOME TO ONE OF EUROPE'S MOST DYNAMIC, FORWARD LOOKING, PLURALISTIC **JEWISH** COMMUNITIES?

NOW YOU DO.

- BABY NURSERY
- SUNDAY SCHOOL
- STUDENT CLUB
- SENIOR CLUB
- HOLIDAYS
- SHABBAT DINNERS
- HEBREW & YIDDISH
- VISITOR CENTER
- MUCH, MUCH MORE...

jcc krakow

JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTRE

BUILDING A JEWISH FUTURE IN KRAKOW

jcckrakow.org
friendsofjcckrakow.org
@jcckrakow

This ad is sponsored by the Taube Foundation for Jewish Life & Culture

TAUBE PHILANTHROPIES

Dear Reader,

Recent events in Ukraine have showed that the benefits of freedom and stability enjoyed both by Western and Central European societies are still waiting for their recipients in Europe's East. The crisis also shows that the chasm between Russia and the West has deepened, which further decreases chances for normalcy in the region. It took this brutal change and the fear of its geopolitical implications to draw the attention of western policy-makers to Eastern Europe.

This magazine has covered the issue of western ignorance towards Eastern Europe on many occasions. We looked at it from different perspectives, including the misjudging of Vladimir Putin and his aspirations in the region. In this light, we believe that there is a deeper understanding of the problems of Eastern Europe in the countries which are geographically closer to the region and which in the past experienced the fears and the threats that Ukraine is experiencing right now.

That is why this issue provides readers with a reflection on the 25 years of the peaceful evolution that has taken place in Poland and links it with the revolution in Ukraine. In the opening pages, Poland's former president, **Lech Wałęsa**, admits that he was a destroyer but failed at building. His confession is followed by a portrait of Tadeusz Mazowiecki, a builder of the new Poland. In his recollections from 1989, **Aleksander Hall** makes a realistic assessment, writing that "Mazowiecki started his mission to build democracy in a situation where practically the entire state apparatus was still rooted in the previous system."

Freedom prevailed in many of the countries of the former Soviet bloc after 1989. However, as **Krzysztof Czyżewski** observes, "We needed time to understand that without equality and fraternity, freedom brings enslavement." His view is confirmed by **Shana Penn**, who writes that in Poland: "The forestalled equal rights issues never got their fair due in the wake of Solidarity's victory."

Symbolically, these lessons are being shared at a time when the Ukrainian state is seeking the path that Poland embarked on 25 years ago. Naturally, Ukraine's context is very different. The bloody confrontations in the south-east show the division within the society whose reconciliation, as **Mykola Riabchuk** puts simply, will not be easy. **Milan Lelich** echoes these words writing that "even if the anti-terrorist operation succeeds and the armed separatists are defeated, the minds of hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of residents of the east of Ukraine will remain injured by Russian propaganda."

These and many other observations that have been made in regards to Eastern Europe, as well as the rewarding feedback we receive from our readers and reviewers, have convinced our publisher to turn *New Eastern Europe* to a bimonthly magazine. We welcome this change with enthusiasm, believing that from now on we will be able to engage in even deeper intellectual discussions on the future of Europe and the world.

The Editors

Contents

Opinion and Analysis

Interviews

Reports

History

People, Ideas, Inspiration

Books and Reviews

New Eastern Europe
www.neweasterneurope.eu

EDITOR AND PUBLISHER
The Jan Nowak-Jeziorański College
of Eastern Europe in Wrocław
office@kew.org.pl
www.kew.org.pl

CO-EDITOR
European Solidarity Centre
ecs@ecs.gda.pl
www.ecs.gda.pl

EDITORIAL OFFICES
New Eastern Europe
ul. Mazowiecka 25 p. 606
30-019 Kraków
editors@neweasterneurope.eu

European Solidarity Centre
ul. Doki 1, 80-958 Gdańsk
tel.: +48 58 767 79 71
ecs@ecs.gda.pl

Ministry of Science and Higher Education
Republic of Poland

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

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Republic of Poland

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

Circulation: 6000

Printing:
Drukarnia Kolejowa Kraków Sp. z o.o.

International Distribution:
www.pineapple-media.com

Printed in Poland

Together for Eastern Europe
GDAŃSK ECS

Only When Forced Do I Look to the Past

A conversation with Lech Wałęsa, Polish politician and leader of the Solidarity trade union, Nobel Peace Prize Winner and President of Poland (1990-1995).
Interviewers: Łukasz Wojtusik and Iwona Reichardt

ŁUKASZ WOJTUSIK & IWONA REICHARDT: This year in Poland, we are celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Round Table talks and the semi-free elections which took place on June 4th 1989. These events initiated a peaceful transformation that spread throughout the region of Central and Eastern Europe. Your contribution to this process is unquestionable. We are curious, however, what is your attitude towards celebrating these anniversaries?

LECH WAŁĘSA: I am not interested in that at all. What I am interested in is today and tomorrow; not the past. Neither anniversaries nor reflections on what happened in the past interest me. I look to the future. What happened in the past is now history; the future is important.

Are you then saying that you don't like making a balance sheet of what happened in the past?

No, I don't. What is there to make a balance sheet of? I leave this to others. I have no memory in regards to the past. I never reflect on it. I focus on solving tasks. Of course, sometimes I am forced to look back, mainly by journalists, historians and prosecutors. Then I need to reflect. But only when forced, do I look back. Never of my own accord.

Wouldn't you agree, however, that it is often the historical context that hinders us from moving forward?

The problem lies somewhere else. Until the end of the 20th century, there were national interests and here in Poland we were fighting against communism. Now, the borders are no longer here. But we Poles have to remember that our

historical experience is very different than that of other nations. We have always been between Russia and Germany. For centuries we had to keep up our guard, trying to determine from which side we may get attacked. This constant state of readiness made us develop something that other nations don't have – an ability to foresee things. Why did we win the battle against communism? The whole world did not believe that we could. We won because we had this ability to foresee. We knew that there was a chance. It was not a big chance, but it existed. The world did not see it. Nobody was listening to us then.

We even foresaw the Second World War. We foresaw it coming and warned the world. Only the world did not want to listen. Nobody wanted to lose their lives for Gdańsk. For them, it was a local problem. Only when the war reached the West did they remember what we had said earlier. Now, think about the end of the Second World War. Again, we told the world that Stalin would cheat us all. And what? They broke diplomatic relations with our legal government. They accepted Stalin and we had to fight for the next 50 years.

Even now we have this ability to foresee, even if we are not aware of it. We disagree because we know that what is happening is not right and that this is not what we were fighting for. That's not what the EU should look like. That's not what our behaviour towards Ukraine should be. We know it because we can see it and we can feel it. But we don't have enough power. To put it another way – they are listening to us but not completely. And here I keep repeating – solidarity! Who is supposed to do this if not Barack Obama? If not NATO? And what are they doing? God only knows. Again, here we are talking, but they aren't listening fully.

Do you see a solution to what is happening in Eastern Europe right now?

What has been happening in Eastern Europe right now is a test of solidarity. The more solidarity we have, the easier it will be for us to solve this problem. Solidarity is nothing more than asking others to help you lift up a burden when you can't do it yourself. But we don't need the same kind of solidarity as we needed before, when we were working in the opposition. Back then, there was communism and the Soviet Union. These were the burdens we were trying to lift up. And we had to organise ourselves.

Today we need to organise ourselves in regards to Russia and Ukraine. That is why there needs to be a group which should come together and reflect on what proposals can be formulated in regards to what Russia is doing now. Such a group would, first and foremost, calculate how many resources are needed for such a task. But first, each potential member of the group should be asked the question: "Do you approve of what Putin is doing?"

Then the second question should be asked: "What can you do to call Putin to task?" Clearly, not everybody needs to do the same. Not everybody should stop trading with Russia or stop buying

Russian products. But everybody should work together to address these needs. There has to be mutual support.

All in all, we need to get organised to get the necessary resources and decide together how much we need in order to stop Russia and then suggest to every country how they can help. And it is this way, and solely in this way, that we can win in the 21st century.

From Ukraine's experience, however, we learned that Putin can also offer quite a bit…

This is just my proposal. Of course it should be perfected and then it could be implemented – be it either by NATO or the US. This is the only way we can win against Putin. Otherwise, we won't.

That's also a reason why I did not participate in the last protests at the Maidan in Kyiv. From the very beginning, I knew that these demonstrations would not end well. Of course, I was not very loud about it, but I did say that it wasn't the right course. At the end of the day, Viktor Yanukovych was a democratically-elected president. I also said that by supporting the protests, we would provoke Russia. That's why I did not go to Kyiv. I knew it was a lost cause. And I don't like to participate in lost causes.

Can we win with Putin?

Of course. But there needs to be solidarity. We have to make a decision, state by state, what we can do – both officially and unofficially – to stop him. But there has to be solidarity. There has to be a group that will calculate the costs and collect the resources.

Does this mean that the soft diplomacy, which both the EU and President Obama are currently carrying out, will not change the world?

No, the question here is different: how many bumps on the head will we still suffer from; how much blood will we lose; how many more changes do we need before this world is different? And here I am wondering whether the moment is right now or not yet.

When you are thinking about the region's future, are you more of an optimist or a pessimist?

I'm only thinking about the bumps that we may still get; and whether they will reach Poland. How much more blood will we lose unnecessarily before we take the right road? We have already taken the right direction. We are building this new state – Europe. We have abolished borders. But when it comes to certain needs, this is not enough. Today, we need solidarity. We need solidarity to stop Putin and to show the entire world that this is the way to solve problems in the 21st century. We can't do the same thing that Putin is doing. Under no circumstances.

To take up such a challenge, we often need an authority that would inspire us and lead us. Do young people today have such an authority figure?


Photo by: Grzegorz Mehring

Courtesy of European Solidarity Centre

There is no such thing as one authority. Different people become authorities for different people. And in different areas. There is an authority figure in chess, an authority figure in football, in religion…

I was thinking more about politics. I ask this question because you were once such an authority figure.

Again, we need to understand the times in which we live. Today, we live in between eras. One era has ended. Communism has fallen and, with it, the divisions it created. Now we are making this new state called Europe. There is globalisation. For all this, we need new programmes and new people. Different people then we have had so far.

Is there somebody who is an authority for you?

I am just like others. I am searching. I know that I am 70 years old, and that's why I am searching among those who are younger than me.

Pope Francis maybe?

Yes, but we are of different age groups…

What do you think about the new reform in the church that Pope Francis is now proposing?

I am not going to tackle the issue of reform in the Catholic Church. I am a faithful son of the church. A sinful one, but faithful; and it's not my plan to reform the church.

In one of your books you wrote that "in 1989 we believed that freedom is contagious". Would you repeat these words today looking, for example, at Eastern Europe?

I would repeat it. But now I would say it this way: freedom and democracy consist of three elements. And for this reason I have created my own formula that helps us determine where democracy and freedom are to be found and where they are not. The first 30 per cent are regulations and constitutions that allow each and every one of us, without limitations, to be elected. To be president. These are the regulations that allow people to be active or do not hinder them from being active.

The second element of the 30 per cent is how much do people use these rights: do they vote, organise themselves or become candidates? And the last 30 per cent is the size of the chequebook in the scale of the whole country.

Now, let's weigh this formula against the Polish example. The first 30 per cent we already have: even I was president. Hence, I can check it off the list: yes we have the first 30 per cent. With the second 30 per cent, here we have a problem: only half of Polish society votes in elections and two or three per cent is engaged in politics. When it comes to this second 30 per cent, we can score half or even less than half.

And now, let's add up: 30 per cent plus 15 per cent equals 45 per cent. Now the third category. In Poland, only five per cent of the population can afford democracy. They can oppose; they can fight. The rest cannot. So, adding this all, up we can say that at most we have 50 per cent of practical democracy in Poland. In the very same way, using this formula, you can calculate the level of democracy in any country.

And what can we do about it?

We can raise each of these thirds. The first one we've already reached, so only small changes may be needed. To increase the second, we should encourage people to be candidates in elections, organise themselves, as well as improve the election system because the current one hinders political activism in Poland.

What's wrong with Poland's election system?

First of all, we made a mistake by giving money to political parties. Second, the threshold is currently set up at five per cent. It is very difficult to pass this threshold when you are building an organisation. Parties that have money don't allow smaller parties to join the game. As a result, we now have two strong parties. That's why we need to improve the election system, take away the money and improve parliamentary regulations. Only then, will Polish democracy get stronger and no longer be disturbed by mafia-like arrangements.

On many occasions you have said that the time when you were president was very difficult for you…

It was the most difficult time in my life! And I did not want to be president.

People don't believe me that I did not want it, but I didn't. Only when I saw what had happened and what the situation was, I had no choice. I had to.

Do you still have this feeling that you are not well understood by others?

Yes and no. Children need to attend the first, second and third grade. But there are individuals who skip grades. But as a whole, we need to attend all grades. The same can be said about democracy. This is something that has to be experienced. We now live in a period after years of secret agents, wars and treason. Polish society is as it is. And it needs time: two, three or even five generations before everything evens out. This is how we should look at things. When I started being politically involved, I was politically ready. I was self-taught, for sure, but I had my ideas and I implemented them. Of course I had many different flaws. But I knew what I was doing and where I was heading. I only did not know what dangers were lurking around me and what price I would pay.

Was it a high price?

Again, yes and no. I made a very big career. That's what everyone thinks and it's true. But I also had to pay for it. I wasn't there when my children were growing up. I missed this period entirely. And all the many unpleasant things I still encounter. Think about these oafs who attack me. They have no clue about anything. But nothing in life is free. When there is a plus, there is also a minus.

If you were to do everything again, would you do exactly the same?

Yes. Everything the same. I have done everything I had planned. Everything was a success. I only planned too little. I planned to destroy communism. That was my success and masterpiece. But later, when the time came to start building, I did not have ideas. I am good at destroying, but I would also like to have been good at building.

Or maybe it was too much for one person?

That is true indeed. It was too much. On the other hand, once you have made that first step, you need to keep going.

As you mentioned, everything has a price. Along with the transformation, there was a lot of social disappointment and a very difficult road for many people. How did this affect you?

What choice did I have? Communism fell and the working class had to start building capitalism. I knew what capitalism would look like in the beginning. I knew that in the beginning, the capitalists would start murky businesses and cheat.

When I made a decision that we would build capitalism I could not pay attention to all the shortcomings of its early stage. Now, however, I am coming to the conclusion that capitalism developed so much that it needs to be tamed and disciplined. That's why I've decided to join the trade unionists again. I may not agree with them in all areas, but I am doing this to discipline capitalism.

How do you feel now when you go for a walk in Gdańsk – the city where it all started?

Gdańsk has changed so much that I no longer leave my house in the evenings, as I wouldn't find my way back. So much has changed in such a short time. The city has developed. Everything is becoming more and more beautiful. We would have never thought that there would be so much progress in such a short period of time. And not only in Gdańsk, but throughout Poland. From this perspective, we have come very far. This is something we could have never achieved if there was still communism.

Do you feel at home in today's Poland?

Of course, although I obviously resent those who play dishonest games. They know that something is not true, that something is a lie, and yet they believe it. They want to make careers this way. This is something I hate. All these disappointments and grudges, however, I understand very well. The workers at the shipyard did not fight to close down the shipyard. When we finished the strike, I told them: you brought me on your shoulders, but one day you may be throwing stones at me. I told them back then that the shipyard would be closed once our victory is complete. They fought and they had to lose their daily bread. I told them that very gently. I couldn't be more direct, otherwise nobody would want to fight.

I was very much aware of things when I became involved. I knew what the future would bring. I knew where these fights would lead us. The only thing I did not do was to prepare a plan for building. Here, I spent too little time. Had I spent more, I would have been able to do it; and better than they are doing now.

Translated by Iwona Reichardt

Lech Wałęsa is the former President of the Republic of Poland (1990-1995). Under communism, he was the leader of the independent trade union Solidarność and was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1983.

Łukasz Wojtusik is a Polish journalist and radio reporter. He is head of the Kraków office of the radio station *TOK FM*.

Iwona Reichardt is deputy editor-in-chief of *New Eastern Europe*.

Warsaw East European Conference

Eleventh annual session

Triumphs and Failures

Poland and the Region after 1989: 25 Years Later

Keynote Speaker:

prof. Leszek Balcerowicz
former Finance Minister of Poland
Institutional Changes after Socialism: Directions and Outcomes.

Special Guest speaker:

Andrii Deshchytsia, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine

Round Table – Belavezha Accords 1991:

Gennady Burbulis, former Deputy PM of Russian Federation
Leonid Kravchuk, First President of Ukraine
Stanislav Shushkevich, First President of Belarus

University of Warsaw
July 10-13, 2014
Warsaw, Poland

Contact information:
conf.studium@uw.edu.pl
Internet Registration: www.studium.uw.edu.pl/weec
Information: www.uw.edu.pl link: Conferences

Organized by:

STUDIUM EUROPY WSCHODNIEJ UNIWERSYTET WARSZAWSKI
Pałac Potockich, Krakowskie Przedmieście 26/28, 00-927 Warszawa
Tel. 22 55 22 555, fax 22 55 22 222, e-mail: studium@uw.edu.pl; www.studium.uw.edu.pl

The Prime Minister of Change

ALEKSANDER HALL

The major changes which took place in Poland in 1989 contributed to the awaking of the "fall of nations" in other Central and Eastern European countries. As prime minister, Tadeusz Mazowiecki began the mission of building democracy in a situation where practically the entire state apparatus was rooted in the previous totalitarian system.

For Poland, 1989 was a year of significant change. To understand the scale of this change, it is suffice to compare this year to another important year in Poland's history: 1918 – the year when our country regained independence after 123 years of enslavement. Most importantly, however, in 1989 the Round Table talks took place from February 6th to April 5th. The results of these talks included both the re-legalisation of the independent trade union Solidarność as well as prepared the ground for a referendum on the rule of the Polish United Workers' Party, which is how the elections that took place on June 4th 1989 should be regarded. The results of these elections proved that the old model of government was no longer acceptable.

Out of the Soviet sphere of influence

On September 12th 1989 a new government was created with Tadeusz Mazowiecki as its prime minister. The majority of this government's members were Solidarity activists and it was this government which led Poland on the road of democratic reforms and independence. Undoubtedly, the greatest changes which took place in Poland during these breakthrough moments contributed to an awaking of the "fall of nations" in other Central and Eastern European countries. This freedom movement, which spread throughout the region, further led to the elimination of the rule of Marxist parties in countries that had been subordinate to Moscow, as they had found themselves in the Soviet sphere of influence after the Second World War. In the last days of the breakthrough year of 1989, the Polish Parliament

(Sejm) passed legislation which allowed for an introduction of major economic reforms as well as changes in the constitution that freed Poland's fundamental law from the ideological communist provisions and brought back the pre-Second World War name of the Polish state as well as put the crown back on the eagle of the republic's emblem.

The scale of these changes was enormous. From the Solidarity camp two people played a particularly important role: Lech Wałęsa and Tadeusz Mazowiecki. The former was an unquestionable leader of the workers' trade union Solidarność, but also the person who made a key decision which eventually led to the establishment of Mazowiecki's government. It was also nobody else but Wałęsa who suggested Mazowiecki as a candidate for the first non-communist prime minister of Poland. In fact, Tadeusz Mazowiecki and Bronisław Geremek were the closest advisors to Wałęsa during the democratic opposition and became the co-architects of Solidarity's strategy. During the events of 1989, they both also played a key role during the Round Table talks. After the June elections, Mazowiecki took upon himself the great responsibility for leading Poland in its transformation from the system of dictatorship towards democracy and independence.

A realist faithful to values

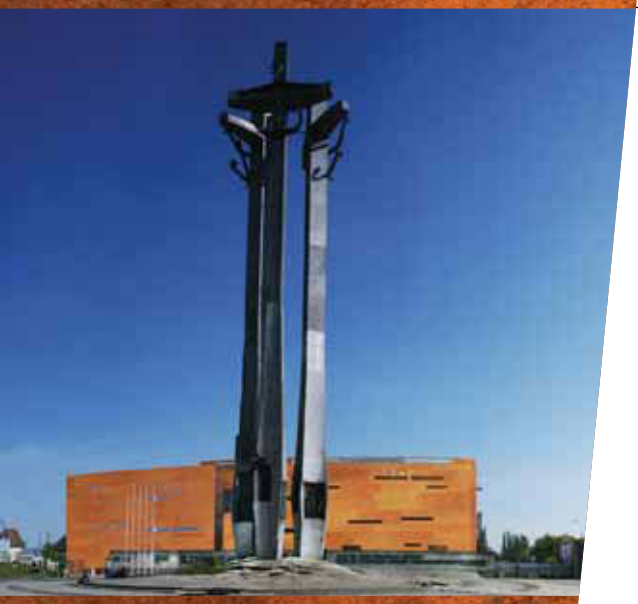
In 1989 I had the great privilege of working closely with Tadeusz Mazowiecki. Therefore, I dare think that I have become well-acquainted with his political philosophy and methods of implementing significant change. For this reason, allow me to describe the role of this politician in Poland's recent history.

During the Round Table talks, Mazowiecki was a bit in a shadow. He was not a candidate in the parliamentary elections; neither to the Sejm nor the Senate, which was then the centre of political life. His main occupation at that time was his work as editor of *Tygodnik Solidarność*, a weekly magazine which was banned in 1981 and became re-legalised as a result of the Round Table talks.

Yet, it was no coincidence that Lech Wałęsa suggested Mazowiecki as the Solidarity's candidate for the position of prime minister. Wałęsa chose Mazowiecki because the latter was in the first row of the opposition movement initiated in August 1980 at the Gdańsk shipyard.

When he took the prime minister's office, Mazowiecki was 62 years old and a fully shaped man. He had been down a long road – from a young man who had joined the pro-communist secular Catholic organisation, PAX, with hopes of humanising the post-war system and enriching it with Christian values to one of the main strategists of the anti-communist democratic Solidarity movement. I believe that the most important period that shaped Mazowiecki's value system

ECS | European Solidarity Centre



opening | 2014

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.

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

www.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.

www.ecs.gda.pl

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

ECS EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CENTRE OPENING 2014

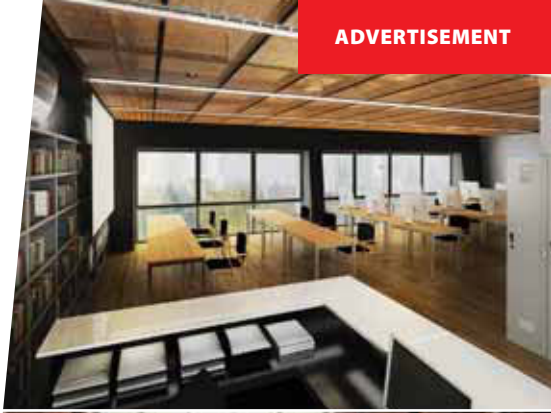
ECS is an institution of a new form: it is not only a museum, but also an education and scientific establishment aimed at providing a greater understanding od Solidarność and the anti-communist movements in Poland and Europe.

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

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

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

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



www.ecs.gda.pl

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

Tadeusz Mazowiecki (left) with Mieczysław Gil, Warsaw, April 5th 1989.

and political methods was the time when, after having left PAX in the mid-1950s together with other lay Catholics, he created a new magazine called *Więź* and co-created a group of intellectuals gathered around such publications as *Znak* and *Tygodnik Powszechny*.

The decades of the 1960s and '70s can be seen as a time when Mazowiecki was shaped as a politician and an intellectual who increasingly, with the passage of time, took up a more and more opposing position vis-à-vis the communist system. Mazowiecki became a politician who was, first and foremost, inspired by the Christian value system and was faithful to the spirit of the Second Vatican Council, but also a politician who wanted to cross ideological divisions that were to be found on the road of the pursuit of a common good. In politics, he respected people who were driven by values. He never looked at it solely as a game.

Since his arrival at the striking Gdańsk shipyard in August 1980, Mazowiecki began associating himself with the Solidarity movement. He remained its faithful supporter, even in such difficult times as December 1981 when, upon the introduction

of the martial law, many activists gave up hope. August 1980 was also the moment when a very strong bond developed between Lech Wałęsa and two Warsaw natives: Mazowiecki and Geremek. As I wrote before, it was also already back then when Mazowiecki became one of the main strategists for Solidarity and kept this position until the breakthrough in 1989. His programme emphasised strengthening Solidarity, avoiding confrontation with the authorities and, at the same time, ensuring Solidarity's independence from the authorities and not allowing it to be consumed by the system or become divided.

Wałęsa suggested Mazowiecki as a candidate for the first non-communist prime minister of Poland.

Mazowiecki was a Polish patriot. His patriotism, however, did not mean only idealising the Polish nation, but rather wanting it to be better. Mazowiecki had a very strong sense of national pride and a great instinct in the area of international relations, which later turned to be one of his greatest strengths when he was in charge of the first non-communist government. Faithful to his values, Mazowiecki tried to be a political realist. He knew his own value, even though he never demonstrated it. That's also why he was respected and trusted by many, including his political opponents. Above all, he proved to have a great sense of responsibility. We are correct in saying that in 1989 the steer of Poland's political life found itself in the right hands.

First and foremost, a democratic state

When looking at Tadeusz Mazowiecki as the first non-communist prime minister in post-war Poland, it needs to be said that in 1989, the prime minister enjoyed a very wide margin of social trust. It is important to also keep in mind that he started his mission to build democracy in a situation where practically the entire state apparatus was still rooted in the previous system. It was impossible to foresee the speed of the process that Poland would undertake and which was to lead it to complete independence. Mazowiecki, however, had very clear goals in mind. First and foremost, Poland had to become an independent and a democratic state. The degree to which these goals would be achieved, however, depended on many external and internal factors. Mazowiecki was persistent and stubborn and known not to change course once the decision was made.

However, his life experiences had also taught him to have some caution. Many years later he was asked by a journalist if he had not been too cautious. In his reply Mazowiecki said, "Maybe? But what was worse in this situation: too much cautiousness or too much lack of cautiousness? That is the question."

In a different interview, which took place in relation to the 20th anniversary of the democratic changes in Poland, he admitted that had these changes not been accompanied by the changes in other countries of the former Soviet bloc, the most Poland could have dreamt of would be the status of Finland. I am, however, convinced that the way the political and system transformation was implemented in Poland had a great influence on the course of events that took place in East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Bulgaria. Poland gave the example that the change of power could be bloodless and give an opportunity to people and political forces who had played a role in the previous system to participate in the new reality.

The core of Mazowiecki's government (as well as its closest advisers) consisted of former Solidarity oppositionists. However, this first non-communist government was a government of national unity. This was Mazowiecki's own decision which derived from the following tactical considerations: the power arrangement that characterised the Sejm at that time, the strong position of the president (at that time the President of Poland was the former communist leader Wojciech Jaruzelski) and the composition of the state apparatus. What's also equally important (maybe even more important) to point out here is that Mazowiecki was deeply convinced that the task of building a free Poland should involve the widest possible number of Poles, including people who had been engaged in the previous system.

Mazowiecki's instinct in the area of international relations turned to be one of his greatest strengths as prime minister.

From the very beginning of his mission, Mazowiecki aimed at turning the Council of Ministers into a real centre of decision-making. When compared to the practise in post-war Poland, where the most important decisions were made by the leadership of the communist party, this was a "Copernican revolution" and a fully successful one. Under Mazowiecki's leadership, the government's meetings, which were usually quite lengthy, turned into a place of a real debate. However, once a decision was made, Mazowiecki demanded complete loyalty from all cabinet members who were obliged to adhere to the agreements. On a daily basis, Mazowiecki seemed to prefer to work with a small group of people. Among them he felt comfortable and could share his thoughts and reveal his dilemmas.

A statesman

In the second half of 1989 it became clear that the new government was faced with two main tasks: first to bring Poland back to the international arena and second to prepare the foundation for new economic reforms. In terms of the first one, as

I have already mentioned earlier, Mazowiecki had a very deep understanding of international affairs. In September 1989 he outlined Poland's three main foreign policy goals. First, with regards to Polish-Soviet relations, the humiliating status of Poland as a satellite of the Soviet Union should be eliminated so they become normal and bilateral relations between a large power and a medium-size country. This in turn would allow Poland more freedom to manoeuvre on the international arena. The second goal was Poland's rapprochement with the West, especially with the European Community. The third goal was to lead towards a change in the relations between Poland and the Federal Republic of Germany in the spirit of reconciliation and a full acceptance of Poland's western borders by both the German society and the German state.

Mazowiecki sacrificed his personal preferences to what he thought was most needed for Poland.

Already in 1989 Poland made significant progress in regards to these three goals. However, their complete implementation took place in the years to come. The only exception was the first goal, the transformation of Polish-Soviet relations, which naturally lost its validity with the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and the breakdown of the Soviet Union in 1991, something which could not have been foreseen in the autumn of 1989.

Another important task of Mazowiecki's government was to prepare the ground for unprecedented economic reforms. The reform plan was prepared and implemented by Mazowiecki's vice prime minister, Leszek Balcerowicz. However, it was Mazowiecki who took the political responsibility for the overall implementation of the reforms. The new economic programme, popularly known as Balcerowicz's plan, consisted of three components: halting inflation in order to stabilise the Polish currency and ensure its convertibility, establishing free market mechanisms, which meant a departure from the non-market methods of steering the economy and, third, initiating the process of privatisation. The fact that Mazowiecki took responsibility for these socially difficult reforms, shows, more than anything else, what a statesman he really was.

A statesman is more than an extraordinary politician. A statesman is somebody who can determine what the priorities are and subordinate smaller issues to reach this target goal, even at the cost of sacrificing personal preferences. Mazowiecki knew that the radical economic reforms will be painful to large groups of the Polish society, including the blue-collar workers employed in the large state-owned enterprises which before had been the bastions of the Solidarity movement.

Even though his personal convictions adhered to the principles of social justice, in the autumn of 1989 Mazowiecki decided that the good of Poland required an

acceptance of a programme of radical and fast economic reforms. By making this decision, Mazowiecki sacrificed his personal preferences to what he thought was needed most for Poland in this particular historic moment. Poland owes a lot to Tadeusz Mazowiecki. We were very lucky that it was this great statesman who became the leader of our government in the year of that great change.

Translated by Iwona Reichardt

Aleksander Hall is a Polish political thinker, a scholar and a former politician. In 1989, he participated in the Round Table talks. He was a minister responsible for relations with political organisations and associations in Poland's first non-communist government led by Tadeusz Mazowiecki.

Culture and Solidarity

KRZYSZTOF CZYŻEWSKI

We are now at the beginning of a long process. We may still not know the masterpieces of a deep culture, but we can already feel that it is not the breaking of taboos that is limiting the freedom of an individual. It is, thus, culture that answers the challenge of solidarity and is becoming a sign of our times.

We return to solidarity like wanderers who are returning home from a long journey on the path to freedom. For freedom, we have created a Cartesian perspective with a human "me" in the centre, but also with two systems. The first is a state system in the service of national independence with a free political system – a representative power elected through the free will of the majority of citizens. The second is an economic system based on private property and the free market. Finally, we created a culture with an inhibited ego of the demiurge-artist in its centre.

We needed time to understand that without equality and fraternity, freedom brings enslavement. In our sovereign nation-states we started to feel threatened by internal and external violence on behalf of those who bitterly experienced the lack of solidarity and whom we ourselves had taught that the constant fight makes the world go around. In the world of civilisational progress and increasing prosperity, which we related to democracy and cultural and economic liberalism, we have experienced the ever growing social divisions, cultural conflicts and an erosion of interpersonal relations.

Our people

In the name of the freedom of nations and the emancipation of individuals, we have rebelled against collective forms of enslavement such as cultural imperialism, repressive states, social conventions and cultural-religious traditions. However, while constantly increasing the field of individual freedom, we have also started to

learn the bitter taste of alienation, egoism and loneliness, as well as depression – the most common illness of liberal societies. We needed to have these experiences of modernity to realise that human beings are born to be free, but they become truly free only when they are able to voluntarily give this freedom up.

That is why we are now returning to solidarity. In reaction to the ineffectiveness, not to say the helplessness, of the nation-states when facing the challenges of today's world such as climate change, security problems, poverty or exclusion, we now look for supranational forms of democracy and global methods of managing them. Consider initiatives such as the Interdependence Movement, which can be seen as a chance for the future in an increasing role of states as anonymous entities cooperating with each other; states for whom the reference domain is interdependence and not – like in the case of nation-states – independence. This issue is the topic of a 2013 book by Benjamin Barber with a telling title, *If Mayors Ruled the World.*

The idea of solidarism has started to find an audience among those who believe not only in "all people", but also those who prefer the phrase "our people".

However, the return to the 19th-century idea of solidarism (from the French *solidaire*), based on the belief in the community of interests of people which is above all divisions (earlier in history these were mainly class-based divisions), has started to find an audience not only among those who believe in "all people", but also those who prefer the phrase "our people". Yet, by doing so, they give the old ideals of solidarity a nationalistic and fascistic tone, something which in our increasingly multi-cultural world sounds inauspicious.

In 2011, when a wave of protests took place starting from the American Occupy Wall Street movement to the Spanish *Indignados*, their organisers approached Lech Wałęsa to ask for his support of this "movement of the discontented". This invitation to the former leader of Polish Solidarity to Zuccotti Park in Lower Manhattan (even though their invitation was accepted, the visit did not ultimately take place) evokes the memory of a different visit; Wałęsa's visit to Kyiv's Maidan Nezalezhnosti (Independence Square) during the Orange Revolution in 2004. There, Wałęsa was a symbol of an anti-system struggle for independence and democracy. In New York City, on the other hand, he was meant to symbolise social solidarity and the fight against neoliberal autocracy. Within the Polish Solidarity, both the national liberation and the social movements were once together. Today, however, while nobody sane questions the fact that it was the Solidarity movement that brought freedom and democracy back to Poland, many question its victory in the area of social solidarity.

Nonetheless, regardless of how we assess the legacy of Poland's Solidarity and other pro-freedom and social movements in the world in the last decades, the experiences of people and societies who were engaged in them teach us that the sovereignty of states and freedom of individuals do not automatically bring about interpersonal solidarity. In the early years of the 21st century, it is this interpersonal solidarity that creates the greatest challenge. Even more so, it is not just interpersonal solidarity, but also a solidarity with all beings and the entire earth which we subdue. They too need our empathy.

> The real revolution in culture is taking place by an increasing growing presence of the "other" in our lives.

We already know that freedom may enslave us, just as much as we know that equality and love for our neighbours can be a real foundation for our individual and our communities' freedom. These are the principal issues which we have to take into consideration today while reflecting about both culture and solidarity.

Spiritual anchor

Culture, which we have inherited from the last two centuries and are currently cultivating, finds itself well in the area of freedom and independence. At the moment, it has been joined also by the sphere of cultural diversity, understood as a unique diversity of languages and local identities which demand protection from the unifying globalisation. The culture which was created on the matrix of the industrial epoch, modernist individualism and Renaissance philosophy has played well with the freedom movement of the nations and the modern states which emerged among them. Culture has also played well with the project of the European Union, which was built under the slogan of unity in diversity. For the nations which, for centuries, had been deprived of their statehood, culture was the true and often only spiritual anchor and basis for survival.

Today, there are places in the world where this mission of culture has not yet been fulfilled. This does not change the fact that the freedom aspect alone, just as much as the sole focus on protecting diversity and respect for it, are not exhausting the mission of a culture which is engaged in the most important issues of our times. In a globalising and more co-dependent world, the greatest challenge is a solidarity that embraces our overall relations, both with other people and nature. But such deep solidarity requires a deep culture.

This proclaims a complete change of the cultural paradigm. For us, it is still difficult to fully realise the breakthrough on the verge of which we have currently found ourselves as well as to foresee its consequences for artistic work and culture

Photo: Wojciech Milewski / European Solidarity Centre

"Freedom to the People of Eastern Europe" – during a demonstration at the Embassy of the Soviet Union in Warsaw, August 23rd 1989.

practices. The changes that we have clearly been noticing today result from the opportunities that are offered to us by the new media and technologies, and how they influence the processes of culture creation and reception. However, the real revolution in culture is taking place by an increasing growing presence of the "other" in our lives; modern technology is solely a susceptible instrument. Hence, quite soon, it won't be the Cartesian "me" but rather the other person – the "you" – who will make up the centre of our picture of the world. The ego-centric culture is today the culture of distress.

To a large degree, we have become individuals and societies of dialogue or even polylogue. The conversations which take place at this common table are made up of many voices from all over. From culture, we expect interactivity, co-creation and interdisciplinarity on par with egalitarianism and innovation. What is much less satisfactory for us is the participation in culture as passive recipients; we now want to be both the authors and performers of our ideas and aspirations.

We are at the beginning of a long process. We may still not know the masterpieces of a deep culture, but we can already feel that it is not the breaking of the taboos that is limiting the freedom of an individual and not the manifestation of diversity

which makes up modern avant garde art. It is rather the search for new, authentic forms of expression, for a meeting with this "other".

The connective tissue

At the same time, we understand that xenophilia, which we are learning to cultivate in the modern garden of culture, is not only the work directed outside us, but also towards others. Leaning towards the other, possible only by passing through our own selves, creates "us". It leads us towards the fullness of our personal being and creates our identity in the very same way as nationality, class identification or tribal membership did in previous eras. That is why solidarity creates the greatest challenge to the culture of this breakthrough period, looking for the basis and legitimisation of freedom in co-creation, co-dependence, co-interdependence, cooperation and compassion.

Cultural cooperation has turned out to be the most dynamic area of partnership with Eastern European countries.

When we created, with a group of friends from the Pogranicze avant garde theatre, which established a foundation, a cultural centre in Sejny (Poland) and the International Dialogue Centre in Krasnogruda, I had to cope with incompatibilities in the thinking about culture, artistic workshops and the tools of practicing culture. Our job was not to continue the freedom culture, one that was rooted in the underground and came from the previous era of communist Poland. Neither did we plan to defend Polishness in the former Polish eastern territories (*Kresy*) or build any form of defence fortress. Instead, we worked together with different minorities and people who are different as a result of their language, religious denomination, nationality, age, social status or sexual orientation.

However, this was not the core of our work. We wanted to build an inter-personal and inter-cultural "connective tissue" at Pogranicze – a specific location of painful borderlands full of broken bridges, traumatic memories and inveterate conflicts, different national mythologies and myths of freedom that were painful to our neighbours. Obviously, on many occasions we had to break different taboos, deal with prejudices and different forms of ideological enslavement. We had to work in the field of spreading freedom and independence of culture. But we've never stopped. We have refrained from conducting performances or festivals that are repeated in one town after another. We have always stayed where we were and that is why the interpersonal relations were so important. What mattered was what stayed with people after an evening of poetry or music. It was meant to be a long-lasting and cultivated process.

This is how we understood the continuation of Solidarity's work after 1989. Our name for the solidarity ethos was "borderlands" (*pogranicze*). It is made up of a community with its internal borders and bridges that needs to live. However, we did not have the culture to practice the ethos of borderlands. We did not have the culture focused on big events and media exposure. Our culture was not dependent on the market, or short-term grants. It was not based on narcissistic stardom, glitzy individualism, or trespassing of different taboos – these cannot be part of our bridge-builder's workshop.

The work that is created by such a builder needs to be soaked in depth and continuity. It does not know the perfective aspect. Conversely, it has time for conversation and transformation. In the long term, it brings back dignity, memory and trust to the people. In the same way, it is difficult to attach to this craft the old matrix of culture, which is defensive for national identity and diversity but one which does not fit into its frame of the connective tissue, which is not – overall – the sum of different cells but an integral entirety, constituting a quality in itself. From the early days of our work in Pogranicze, we had to look for opportunities to build a new paradigm that, in the answer to the obligations of solidarity, would offer an opportunity to create a deep culture born from the transgressions from "me" into "you".

We lack a culture which brings different people together under the same roof of a common memory and mutual heritage.

Curiosity and controversy

In 2011, when we initiated the Cultural Workshops in Lublin during the first Culture Congress of the Eastern Partnership, we were convinced that in Eastern Europe, the European Union's Neighbourhood Policy was meant to complement the Mediterranean Union and also had to take the form of a cultural project. Anybody who has lived in this part of the world knows that projects that are solely political projects or hard projects focused on economy or security are incapable of building authentic partnerships on such a difficult, rich and complex ground as the historical and cultural heritage of these areas. Evidently, cultural cooperation has turned out to be the most dynamic area of this partnership, actively entering into alliances with business, local governments, education and tourism. The greatest resistance we can still see is in the area of political integration, which is connected with the still strongly present post-totalitarian heritage and the threat to democracy that is being posed by the authoritarian regimes.

It seemed that the partnership in the area of culture would focus mainly on culture engaged in anti-regime activities often linked with the defence of national identity, the solving of ethnic and religious conflicts, and different activities enlarging the areas of freedom of individual and community. However, what we saw was the creation of a sphere of reflection along with a visible need for discussion and new practices in the area of cultural socialisation. And while such questions as "why do we need culture?" have become quite clear, questions such as "what kind of culture?", "how is it made?", "in what form?", "for whom?", "with whose participation?", "with what long-term effects?" and "with what competence?" have generated greater curiosity and controversy. In the background of these questions we can find a certain, often subconscious, distress regarding solidarity, or more honestly, regarding the dispersion between culture and solidarity.

These questions, which have increasingly accompanied artists from the Eastern Partnership countries, unmask the exhaustion of a solely anti-regime or anti-establishment culture. That is a culture which is easily accepted and eagerly consumed in the West, but is less effective in Eastern Europe. Consequently, in our region a need can be seen to leave the underground, the elitist circles, the metropolitan centres and head towards the people, attempt social change, organic work, go to the provinces and approach the periphery.

During the celebrations commemorating the year of Czesław Miłosz in the hall of the Music Academy in Minsk the text of Miłosz's poem "You Who Wronged" ("Który skrzywdziłeś") was recited. The excerpt of this poem is engraved on the monument at the Solidarity Square before the Gdańsk Shipyard in Poland. However, when it was recited from the stage in three languages – in Polish by Ryszard Krynicki, in Russian by Natalya Gorbanevskaya and in Belarusian by Andrei Khadanovich – it generated strong emotions. But the words which stayed the longest in the memory of the audience, and which I heard repeated backstage, were Miłosz's words from his "Treatise on Morality" ("Traktat Moralny"): "Together with many other pebbles / You can change the course of an avalanche" (*Lawina bieg od tego zmienia, / Po jakich toczy się kamieniach*).

In search of a critical culture

The European Solidarity Centre in Gdańsk, whose opening is planned for August 2014, faces a serious dilemma: should it commemorate Solidarity or create a culture of solidarity? Obviously, I present this challenge with much simplification, even more as these two issues do not need to contradict each other. And yet there is a real tension between the strategy of building a museum dedicated to the history of the Solidarity movement and the phenomena which have some resemblance to

it and which have been observed both in the region of Central and Eastern Europe and worldwide and a strategy of creating a centre of culture dedicated to Solidarity and the ethos of solidarity. In the case of the latter, it is quite natural and almost necessary. A deep understanding of solidarity includes respect and dialogue with those who have lived and worked before us. Such a connection with the past requires an elaborate construction, which is even more difficult when there are many versions of this past and especially when they exist and are closed in the cultural matrixes, usually apologetic, defensive and ideological.

What we lack is a critical culture which would allow us to establish our relationship with the past and build on the ground of solidarity. In other words, we lack a culture which would bring different people together under the same roof of common memory and mutual heritage. The critical nature of culture has nothing to do with denial, a lack of pride or the inability to find joy in success. The issue in question here is finding a way to distance ourselves and being able to make an objective assessment. That is why it should be the critical culture on which one should place the construction of the bridge leading to the past and tradition. The real challenge, however, is introducing this tradition into the contemporary context, into the stream of activities that are important for the world today and tomorrow.

On July 25th 2013, while vising the Varginha favela in Rio de Janeiro, Pope Francis said: "The culture of selfishness and individualism that often prevails in our society is not what builds up and leads to a more habitable world: it is the culture of solidarity that does so, seeing others not as rivals or statistics, but brothers and sisters … only when we are able to share do we become truly rich; everything that is shared is multiplied! The measure of the greatness of a society is found in the way it treats those most in need."

It is, thus, culture that answers the challenge of solidarity which is becoming the sign of our times. This change is then not yet another superficial change, another cultural trend, a new aesthetic or social issue. What we are experiencing today is a deep revolution of language which has shaped the matrix of our culture and the undergoing change does not only mean a change of vocabulary but also a change of grammar.

Culture must become a part of solidarity not only in what it stands for, but also in the way it is created. Zygmunt Bauman while reflecting on the nature of the "explosion of solidarity", which was the discontent movement and which actually turned out to be a short-term carnival exposing the fact that our cultural reality is indeed "unfriendly towards solidarity", wrote: "Do you want solidarity? If so, face and come to grips with the routine of the mundane; with its logic or its inanity; with the powers of its demands, commands and prohibitions. And measure your

strength against the patterns of daily pursuits of those people who shaped history while being shaped by it."

Now we are returning to solidarity, understanding that it is an authentic link for the world of increasingly deeper social and cultural divisions which, at the same time, have also become more and more interdependent. Solidarity appears to us as a new challenge after the lesson of freedom, which found its fulfilment in individualism, independence and diversity but not equality and empathy. All this contributes to the fact that we live in a time in which solidarity has been changing the paradigm of culture, placing it eye to eye with the routine of everyday life and the depth of the "other". NEE

Translated by Iwona Reichardt

Krzysztof Czyżewski is a Polish intellectual and essayist.
He is the founder and director of the "Borderland of Arts, Cultures, Nations" Centre in Sejny Poland.

Uncontainable Aspirations of Equality

SHANA PENN

In post-1989 Poland, women's interests and the issue of equality were quickly suppressed. It has taken another 25 years in democratic Poland to develop a grassroots women's movement, which has emerged through an organisation called Kongres Kobiet. In a mere six years' time, the Kongres has become one of Poland's largest civic initiatives.

When I first came to Poland 25 years ago to study women's activism in Solidarity, there were no gender studies, no grassroots women's movement, no Manifa (annual women's rights demonstrations in Poland) nor was there a Kongres Kobiet (the Congress of Women). In Poland, women's rights were not to be discussed in polite company. There had been one ambitious attempt to mobilise women into a broad and inclusive network, led by Małgorzata Tarasiewicz, a 30-year-old Freedom and Peace (WiP) activist who had been hired by the Solidarity Union in her hometown of Gdańsk to head its first-ever Women's Commission. In a short period of time, Tarasiewicz, an excellent organiser and feminist, rallied women of diverse ages and backgrounds to join the commission. Soon after, when the parliament introduced the draft anti-abortion law, Tarasiewicz collected pro-choice signatures from commission members for a protest petition, to the horror of the union's board.

The union forced her to resign and shut down the commission. However, it couldn't silence Tarasiewicz, who reported the experience to Human Rights Watch. That published record, widely disseminated, was the first signal of gender trouble in a post-communist democracy.

Uphill battle

In the absence of a public consciousness about gender equality in post-1989 Poland, women's interests were quickly suppressed and whoever questioned the violation of equal rights was ridiculed. Where did the notion that men and women cannot talk about equality come from? Whom did it protect? In those early years of political transition, I wondered: Would the society overcome its patriarchal attitudes as Poland developed into a democracy? Would women's interests be recognised and respected? Would a women's rights movement grow in the country that showed itself to be the most skilled, among all the former Soviet bloc countries, in developing a robust civil society?

Over the next ten years, I observed an uphill battle as women's rights NGOs and gender studies courses and publications gradually took root. Wanda Nowicka, deputy speaker of the lower house of parliament, shared her memories of the early transition years during this year's Kongres Kobiet, recalling how in the 1980s, she was an ordinary Solidarity member, devoted but not active, while raising three young sons. But after 1989, Nowicka witnessed the dismantling of the communist-era's social welfare infrastructure such as state-run childcare and social-care facilities, which had freed women's time to pursue educational and economic opportunities. She foresaw that women were going to bear the burden of privatisation of state institutions, fuelled by a "Women, back to the home!" campaign that added insult to injury. In 1990, Nowicka co-founded Neutrum, the first Polish NGO to advocate for the separation of church and state, and then took the reins of the newly established Federation for Women and Family Planning, through which she doggedly led the embattled campaign for reproductive rights for over 20 years. "If politics doesn't work for us, we'll do it ourselves," she has said at every turn in her activist career.

The 1990s were extremely difficult years for women's NGOs in Poland.

Still, the 1990s were extremely difficult years because women's NGOs and their feminist objectives were scorned by lawmakers, opinion-makers and the general public. Beneath the gender equity policies of communist Poland, Nowicka realised, was a deeply embedded patriarchal structure, which had not loosened its stronghold during Poland's transition to a democratic rule of law. It would take another decade before Polish citizens gained ample experience to more clearly understand and assess both the enormous advantages and disillusioning inequities in a democratic culture.

It was during the tenth anniversary year of the 1989 victory over communism when the feminist discourse finally gained mainstream traction. Feminists, led by Agnieszka Graff, challenged the Solidarity myth of a male-dominated revolution, making a strong, effective argument that the male myth had justified a male-

dominated democracy. A lengthy media debate ensued, abetted by the fortuitously coincidental release of reports by both the United Nations and the European Union citing Poland's violations of women's human rights. Taken together, these various public charges forced the Polish media to treat women's rights as a serious subject. Finally, gender had hit a cultural nerve. An entrenched social taboo regarding women's right to be political actors, was confronted. When the taboo began to break down, women's issues finally became a legitimate part of mainstream public debate.

Alternative policy

It took another ten years for gender equality to become part of a grassroots, nationwide discussion on women, by women. In the mainstream sphere, however, even though women's issues had entered the dialogue, the concept of equality was not understood and the equal representation of women was not respected in government policies, not even those concerning official celebrations of Poland's democratic achievements.

Flash forward to 2009, when Poland hosted commemorations of the 20th anniversary of Solidarity's democratic victory over communism. The official programme was disconcertingly devoid of any formal participation by Polish women, even though the "free world" was watching and participating. The organisers had failed to invite women to share their recollections and their forecasts for Poland's future. This oversight was never acknowledged nor an apology issued by the official government host of the events.

How did women respond to the egregious oversight? In Warsaw, several women, each prominent in their respective field and clearly fed up, initiated a call to action and mobilised their fellow female citizens to establish a new grassroots association, Kongres Kobiet. They envisioned a broad and inclusive civic initiative that would welcome women from all backgrounds to build ties and solidarity based on awareness of their economic, cultural and educational accomplishments, on the memory of their historical achievements and on the hope for gender equality in the not-far-off future.

Very quickly the organisers gathered 4,000 women from around the country to attend the first congress, held on June 20th and 21st 2009 in the wake of the official Solidarity commemoration on June 4th. It was not too late for attendees to discuss the impact of women's experiences and achievements in Poland since 1989, and to set a platform of demands that the Kongres Kobiet determinedly continues to push forward today. One of its founders, Magdalena Środa, underscored, "If I had to describe the Kongres in terms of policy, it is rather an alternative policy which is just being born."

Magdalena Środa, a prolific feminist scholar and activist, and businesswoman Henryka Bochniarz are two of the powerhouses responsible for the strategic success of Kongres Kobiet. Given the high calibre of their combined expertise, it's hard to believe they have not, by now, been elected to govern the country. In fact, in 2005 Bochniarz was the Polish Democratic Party's candidate for President of Poland. No doubt, another opportunity will arise.

An economist and former Minister of Industry and Trade in 1991, Bochniarz is a driving force in Poland's business community and an influential voice in the European dialogue on diversity. It is remarkable that a corporate leader remains progressive and socially responsible. In addition, her philanthropy is pioneering in a country that lacked a philanthropic tradition for decades and is still embryonic. When I learned that she co-authored a book titled *Bądź sobą i wygraj - 10 podpowiedzi dla aktywnej kobiety* (*Be Yourself and Win – 10 Hints for an Active Woman*), I thought Facebook's Sheryl Sandberg should take cues from Henryka Bochniarz.

The indomitable Magdalena Środa is a Polish philosopher at the University of Warsaw whose own short-lived experience in government continues to profoundly benefit women. Although active in Solidarity in the 1980s, Środa shied away from politics in the 1990s. Instead she focused her academic research on questions of individualism and its post-modern and feminist critiques, as well as on the ethics and politics of gender relations. However, when Prime Minister Marek Belka, in 2004, looked to her to be the government's Plenipotentiary for the Equal Status of Women and Men, she accepted the challenge earning both popularity and notoriety for her advocacy of state and church separation, LGBT rights and liberalising the restrictive abortion law.

Democracy in action

Among the many other distinguished women who lend their names to Kongres Kobiet, none are nominal figureheads; former First Ladies Danuta Wałęsa and Jolanta Kwaśniewska, Warsaw Mayor Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz, Deputy Speaker of the Sejm Wanda Nowicka, EU Commissioner Danuta Hübner, eminent scholar Maria Janion, literary critic Kazimiera Szczuka – each and every one has been actively involved in making the Kongres a powerful force.

In May 2014, I participated in the sixth annual Kongres Kobiet, held in Warsaw's colossal Palace of Culture and Science, still the tallest building in Poland. The irony of a fiercely independent grassroots feminist assembly taking place in a former Stalinist citadel was not lost on me as I observed more than 9,000 participants pour through the massive doors of the edifice that represented Stalin's "gift" of Soviet domination to a war-torn Poland. The convergence of women and men from Poland and around the world supplanted the building's iron-curtain legacy

with the present-day reality of permeable transnational borders, made all the more meaningful in this 25th anniversary year of Poland's 1989 democratic victory and 10th anniversary of its 2004 entry into the European Union.

The level of conversation was highly sophisticated, the atmosphere was electric and even the complex logistics were managed like a well-oiled machine. "[There was] a special note of determination and maturity," commented Agnieszka Graff, who serves on the Kongres programme board. "Women, whom one never would suspect of radicalism, spoke sharply, clearly, specifically."

In a mere six years' time, Kongres Kobiet has become one of Poland's largest civic initiatives – a social phenomenon able to coalesce individuals, non-governmental organisations, representatives of business, politics, trade unions, employer organisations, academics, artists, journalists, homemakers and others. It is not and does not strive to become or represent a political party. The grassroots movement, with growing potential to lobby for pro-gender equity legislation and leaders, rallies women from all over Poland, from all viewpoints, backgrounds, classes, professions and affiliations. Its sheer diversity alone is testament to democracy in action.

Kongres Kobiet is Poland's 21st century "talking revolution", the heir (or heiress) to the Solidarity legacy of grassroots mobilisation.

Through the Kongres's advocacy for parity in the electoral process, a legal act guaranteeing a 35 per cent share of women on electoral lists was signed by President Bronisław Komorowski in January 2011. But perhaps Kongres Kobiet's crowning achievement, to which Graff alluded, is its capacity to embolden women to speak out and organise. The Kongres mobilises women to discuss their social and political concerns, learn together, evaluate, dream, articulate and demand. Kongres Kobiet is Poland's 21st century "talking revolution", the heir (or heiress) to the Solidarity legacy of grassroots civic education and social mobilisation.

As Graff describes it: "The Kongres has never been a political party and I hope it never will. It is undertaking a mass movement, the great melting pot where different views clash, while creating a new language of women's resistance against the sexist culture. This shall be a breakthrough in the collective consciousness." Just as Solidarity's victory took engagement over many years, the women's movement is taking a comparable path.

Drop in the bucket

Kongres Kobiet tackles tough issues: the introduction of a zipper bill (to ensure that male and female candidates would appear alternately on the ballots); the

ratification and implementation of the convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence; monitoring and elimination of gender pay gap; equal pay for equal work; and protection of rights concerning reproduction, LGBTQ, the disabled, healthcare and the environment.

"In one way, the 9,000 women who came to Warsaw are a drop in the bucket of all the activity happening throughout the country," remarked Magdalena Środa. "Kongres Kobiet is not solely women's applause for the prime minister, but all the year-round, systematic, on-the-ground work, the dozens of regional and municipal congresses of women, trainings, summer academies and self-study. We have carried out a lot of work and affected quite a lot of change. While the Kongres was buzzing, women did not want to split up, they started to discuss new topics, worked until late into the night, exchanging addresses and preparing activities for the entire next year. But we have no ally in the media and one cannot treat political parties as predictable partners to support the aspirations of equality."

The bottom-line goal for Kongres Kobiet is its singular guiding principle: equality.

The bottom-line goal for the Kongres is its singular guiding principle: *equality*. As Środa insightfully stated: "In 1980 Lech Wałęsa and the shipyard workers put forth dozens of demands, but they knew that in order to win something, they had to focus on a single issue: trade unions. So it is with us. We women have over 200 claims, but we focus on one: parity. Everything else depends on it."

Perhaps the hardest lesson learned is that Solidarity fought for freedom, but not for equality. This distinction is especially pertinent during this year's commemorations, filled with reflections and aspirations: at its best, Solidarity led and won the struggle to regain freedom from one-party rule over Poland. Solidarity defended the rights of workers, called for independent trade unions and a free press. But the grassroots civic movement did not fight for equality. In fact, it maintained its loosely knit coalition of workers, urban intellectuals and church parishioners by asking its members to back-burner fundamental democratic values like diversity and equal rights for all regardless of class, ethnicity, religion and gender.

But the forestalled equal rights issues never got their fair due in the wake of Solidarity's victory. Consequently, it has taken a generation of democratic experience, profoundly abetted by Poland's entry into the European Union and adoption of EU laws and norms, to educate its lawmakers and citizens in democratic principles such as gender equality.

Today, Kongres Kobiet's activism stands at a threshold, and I was honoured to be present at this pivotal moment. Not only was it one of the most impressive nationwide grassroots conclaves that I've ever observed, but in light of the progress made by

Polish women over the last 25 years to organise themselves into an advocacy force to be reckoned with, it marked an absolute "phase change" – the process described in physics, whereby heightened energy causes a situation to fundamentally alter to a higher energised state. Phase change describes ice turning into water, and water turning into steam.

Just as it is impossible to contain water when it becomes steam, this process aptly describes the changing state of politics in Poland: the icy suppression of all talk about equality has melted and the social energy around women's rights, as Poland heads into an election year, is generating uncontainable steam.

Shana Penn is the author of *Sekret Solidarnosci* (*Solidarity's Secret*) published by W.A.B., 2014, a visiting scholar at the Graduate Theological Union's Centre for Jewish Studies and executive director of the Taube Foundation for Jewish Life & Culture.

Generation Freedom

IOANA BURTEA

A lack of trust and silent contempt is a lasting trend in Romanian society. People in my country tend to be very critical about one another and to blame each other for the negative aspects of being Romanian. As part of the first generation after communism, I choose to be more optimistic and remember how far the country has come from those difficult times before 1989.

In December 1989, when the communist regime in Romania fell, I was one and a half years old. I keep thinking that I'm probably not the most representative young Romanian to write about my generation and how we were the first to grow up in a democracy, with no memory of communism. But as I started making lists about post-communist Romania and my childhood in the 1990s I discovered, as is the case with many Eastern Europeans, that the ghosts of the past are still very much present, even though many of us might think we've been spared.

I, for one, never saw myself as a child of decaying communism and an emerging democracy. I doubt my peers grew up associating themselves with these concepts either. We had no memory of revolution or dictatorship, but that doesn't mean we didn't realise later in life how impacted we were by them.

"I don't think that our generation has no memory of communism just because we've heard so many stories, it's like we have implanted memories," said one of my 25-year-old friends recently.

A lack of trust

I still remember very well some of the stories I had heard as a young girl from members of my family, my friends' parents and my teachers throughout the years. I was never allowed to forget that my great-uncle was nearly killed during the revolution in 1989, when a bullet coming from who-knows-where flew by his ear in Bucharest. On late evenings of recounting historical events, my father would

always remind me that on those cold December days, he distributed the first issue of the *Freedom* newspaper, which became a symbol of the revolution (and much later, a borderline-pornographic tabloid).

In school, we learned about great medieval princes and the refinement of interwar Romania, after which the history books soared with pages dedicated to the communist past. Our teachers spoke with sadness and sometimes frustration about the communists' crimes: people imprisoned for criticising the regime, people forced to work in dangerous places like the Danube-Black Sea canal and the coal mines in the Carpathian Mountains and those who collaborated with the state's secret police, the *Securitate*. The latter were the saddest stories. We learned that our parents' and grandparents' generation spied on their colleagues and even loved ones – parents and sons, husbands and wives, brothers and friends, students and teachers. On a much deeper level, this destroyed the notions of family, community and trust, and it would be naïve to believe that things are much better just 25 years after the fall of communism.

Romania is still a country where people distrust and suspect rather than take a leap of faith.

We didn't just inherit stories and other people's memories, but also their principles, morals and a very specific type of education. It's undeniable that many families, like my own, held on tight to their own beliefs during communism by lying and pretending to support the regime. However, keeping up this act for so many years left deep marks on their social values. Children in Romanian in the 1990s will surely remember the saying "never spill family secrets to outsiders". I was taught not to talk to anyone about any problems going on in my family, about my parents' careers except their job titles, or about anything else having to do with my real opinions and thoughts.

"Fake it till you make it," was another saying of which we were very fond. But since the communists and the *Securitate* were gone, who were my father and mother afraid of? What was it that made my grandparents and other adults around me so suspicious? "People are mean," my mother would say when I was little. Everyone around us was a potential "mean" person who could take advantage of my honesty and damage us somehow, even my primary school friends and my teachers, whom I was never to openly contradict.

The lack of trust and silent contempt is a lasting trend in Romanian society. Sociologist Dorin Bodea wrote in his 2011 book titled *Romanians, a Predictable Future?* that people in my country tend to be very critical about one another and blame each other for the negative aspects of being Romanian. Moreover, young Romanians are under the impression that their most important values are not shared by most of their compatriots. They think they're honest and fair, but others are not.

"We can actually say that the most persecuted minority in Romania is nowadays honest, fair, credible people. We like to state we are better than others, we seek validation that we are honest, that we are not the type of people to pursue material gain for personal use. We like to collect fortunes even if this means cheating just a little, lying just a little and hiding a little 'truth' if that's what it takes," Bodea wrote. This is not to say that Romania is a country of liars, cheats and sell-outs. But it is a country in which the middle-aged and younger generations have obvious issues in evaluating themselves objectively, in staring into the proverbial mirror. It is also a country where people continue to distrust, to suspect rather than take a leap of faith, to demonise rather than accept flaws. It doesn't take a team of Harvard therapists to understand that these things have a rather obvious explanation: communism and the destruction of the concepts of family and community that penetrated my generation's mentality through our parents and teachers, post-communist political corruption and theft, poverty, a recession just after finally joining the EU, etc.

I know very few young people who will openly say they love their country or that they are patriots.

Laundry basket

Proof of the communist past goes beyond the point of education and mentality, though. Growing up, it was difficult to ignore that most of my friends and I were living in tall, grey blocks of flats which took over urban architecture during the 1960s, '70s and '80s. Children used to (and still do in many cases) play outside on the streets or in building halls. Bucharest is among the cities with the fewest green spaces and parks in Europe. We shared our "playgrounds" with speeding cars, stray dogs, smoking teenagers and workers drilling sidewalks during Bucharest's never ending process of street repair. Our favourite spots were a filthy, abandoned car which was parked outside my building and a narrow spot to the side of our tiny, weedy shared garden where people had installed a tall metal bar to dust the carpets. My mother then forbade me to ever go near the discretely-placed metal bar after she found drug syringes there one day.

If this seems heartbreaking to you, I assure you it wasn't that bad. I didn't grow up collecting syringes or becoming nostalgic around rats and abandoned cars. My friends and I were just taught to be more careful, especially about cars and strangers, to stick together and not go into any previously unknown building halls. We learned to share our food with stray dogs because they might stick up for us in front of the older kids, play football and volleyball really dexterously despite cars passing by or other people trying to walk without getting hurt and be accepting of

those who were different than us either in skin colour or background – after all, we were living in the same grey cubes. Lessons in tolerance and inclusion could have, of course, gone much deeper in many families and areas of the country, while bullying based on ethnicity remains a problem.

As far as popular culture goes, post-communist Romania was like an unsorted laundry basket. I still think a lot can be explained about the country by the first western visual art that penetrated this space in the early 1990s: David Lynch's cult series *Twin Peaks*, Daryl Duke's sexy-priest-time *The Thorn Birds* and Latin American soap operas. These were quickly followed by an invasion of decent to F-level movies like *Rambo*, the *Karate Kid*, anything with Jean Claude van Damme and Steven Segal, *Fatal Attraction*, Lassie movies, the Olsen twins, *Home Alone* and much more. We watched ALL of them, religiously. Before you say another word, I'll have you know this is how most kids my age learned flawless English, Spanish and some even Portuguese. This and, of course, Cartoon Network, back when it wasn't dubbed or subtitled in Romanian – I'll classify the changing of that system as one of the worst things to happen to pre-schoolers these days.

Things changed in the 2000s, after the country joined the EU, which exposed Romania to new markets. It was also a time when a new generation of filmmakers emerged to create what some call the Romanian Nouvelle Vague – an era full of international accolades and artistic accomplishments. Young writers and directors like Cristi Puiu, Corneliu Porumboiu, Cristian Mungiu, Catalin Mitulescu and others like them attracted Romanian audiences by giving them movies about their own society, minus the stereotypes and simplifications of western interpretations. *The Death of Mr. Lazarescu* (2005), *The Way I Spent the End of the World* (2006), *12:08 East of Bucharest* (2006), *The Paper Will Be Blue* (2006) and numerous others showed Romanians their past and their present. Coincidentally or not, many of these were about communism or its consequences, an opportunity for younger audiences to "see" the past, to put all those stories in visual form and to add lines and characters to their history books.

It's complicated

Europe brought us farther from the US, but also from our homes. According to the National Statistics Institute, around 2.5 million Romanians had emigrated by 2012, while the resident population in our country hit a significant low of just under 20 million, reaching the level of 1969. Most émigrés were young people with an average age of 33, living predominantly in Italy, Spain and Germany. My generation began leaving the country in mass numbers. This included many of my former high school classmates – myself included.

My generation's feelings towards their country can be summed up in one well-known expression: it's complicated. I know very few young people who will openly say they love their country or that they are patriots. It's hard to feel affection towards a place filled with people you distrust, right? Our level of commitment to the motherland is definitely lower than that of previous generations, but I think the same can be said about many other places in the world, especially former communist countries where patriotism used to be forced upon everyone. A freer, more transparent world, where people can see proof of the politicians' corruption, financial incompetence and media tabloidisation led to younger generations becoming disappointed to the point of indifference about the path of Romania. Those with resources and academic aspirations, as well as many skilled workers, left and settled elsewhere in Europe, while the youngsters who stayed created their own sealed mini-universes in which things made more sense.

The way forward should be an understanding of what went wrong in the past.

Everything changed around 2012, after years and years of disappointing political leaders, unfinished reforms and a recession that threw the country back many years. In January 2012, during a crushing political crisis, and September 2013, when a controversial gold-mining project at Roșia Montană seemed inevitable, young people my age took the streets of Bucharest and other large cities for the first time in their lives. Everyone was shocked, including the mainstream media which was intensely criticised for its failure to cover the protests objectively.

Very few people believed that our "passive", "shallow", poorly informed and massively divisive generation would finally take action and rally around a common goal. It was the first time I had arguments with my friends about political issues and draft laws, not where we were going on vacation next summer. The change was more than welcome and, in my opinion, natural. To expect more of the younger generation in earlier years was premature and yet more proof of the Romanian instinct to criticise each other. People spoke up when they were mature enough to understand the issues at stake, after doing their research and coming up with an informed opinion. That is more than anyone could hope for when it comes to the first generation this country has raised in a democracy.

The road to freedom was never easy for Eastern Europe. The road to healing the wounds of communism is that much longer and harder. Some people say that one generation raised in a democracy isn't nearly enough for change to happen – it allegedly takes everyone who lived in communism to stop being a part of the political process and stop being stakeholders. While that is partly true, I choose to be more optimistic about the times we're living in. In an ideal situation, we would

learn from one another, we would share experiences and the younger generations would be made to remember how far the country has come from those difficult times before 1989.

The way forward should be an understanding of what went wrong in the past so that we never make those same mistakes again. In this scenario, our generation is crucial – it is the first to have the freedom to look back with a critical eye and analyse what went wrong, while also having the advantage of being surrounded by primary sources from the past regime: our parents, our teachers and our elders. It's too soon for us to completely change the course of the country, but we can pave the way and help future generations reach that goal.

Ioana Burtea is a Romanian writer and journalist.

Full Speed Westward?

KETEVAN KANTARIA

The collapse of the Soviet Union brought a new reality, especially to the children born in the early 1990s. While the focus now is on the new generation of the young and ambitious, the generation gap deepens. If younger peers take up opportunities to study abroad or master new skills, the older one is still trying to catch its breath.

After clicking all the possible buttons, my father raised the TV remote to the window, maybe hoping that it would become transparent. It didn't work. As there were no signs of outside intervention, the moment of blissful ignorance occupied the square metres defined as three rooms. This was back in the 1990s, when the only traffic jams I saw were the ranks of neighbours thirsty for taking a glance at colourful Brazilian television series. They were only available to watch at a few families' homes across the district – the ones who had a generator. Those were romantic evenings, spent over new episodes on the screen as the generator rocked on the balcony, like a soundtrack.

It took several hours until the big mystery about the remote control was revealed. The remote had become a target for my brother's curious mind. As a result, he had taken it apart, but never again were all of its parts found. Having no idea how to put it back together, that curious and, one should say, creative mind used modelling clay as the cure for the mess. Eventually, the remote control, totally broken inside, but still looking brand-new outside, was placed on the sofa, which became its graveyard.

Eager to forget

The story of the problematic inside and (more or less) fancy looking outside is more common than occasional flashbacks to the 1990s. It seems especially relevant to Georgia –though to be fair, the modelling clay theory is applicable to more than

just our troubled past. Now focused on rebuilding a sovereign state, Georgians have what they remember, but also what they are eager to forget. As it turns out, the modelling clay can stick things together, though rarely can it also make them work without repair.

The collapse of the Soviet Union brought a new reality that became the first thing we, the children of the 1990s, observed. It wasn't a spectacular sight: limited menu options from day-to-day, a frequent lack of water or electricity and, what was heart-breaking for the children of my district, the skeleton of a rusty attraction. Back then, I mostly had fragmented information of our reality, which added to the mosaic. In history class at school, we jumped from one epoch to another, noting how every now and then Georgia was at a crossroads. How we longed for independence and manoeuvred through the available options to survive. The "red" Georgia definitely was not something to be proud of and the fact that Joseph Stalin once enjoyed his childhood on Georgian soil didn't make it any easier; quite the contrary. Nevertheless, my generation had been granted an opportunity to openly state that the country went through a Soviet "occupation" and that in 1991 we regained our independence.

Soviet Georgia wasn't a thing you could be proud of, and the fact that Stalin once enjoyed his childhood on Georgian soil didn't make it any easier.

As the well-known *Homo Soveticus* assured the sustainable development of the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic, his mind-set struck at our roots. Every child now born in independent Georgia had his or her own counterpart – a grandparent who survived (or did not) the war, or a parent who had a different type of history class. Some of these children were born to die in the Abkhazian war; others were displaced, losing family members. The inter-generational (mis)understandings cannot just come and go since there is a vast experience which, in addition, can be multi- or misinterpreted.

A better life?

As I watched the documentary *Full Speed Westward,* recently aired in Tbilisi, directed by Stefan Tolz, a German director who now lives in Georgia, I took notes in a semi-dark cinema hall. It starts with Davit, 58, who claims to be the man of "that time". His facial expression and a pause leave no space for hesitation about which time he is referring to. During a family gathering, he tells his story of being born in Russia and speaking no Georgian until the age of six. What he is looking forward to is seeing his children having a better life than his.

Stating the European course and "returning to Europe, back to our home", as the now-speaker of the Georgian Parliament, Davit Usupashvili, said in a recent speech, is what we follow. That was after the 2003 Rose Revolution, when many considered democracy already achieved; and not only my generation was hopeful, observing the fall of the government and the appearance of a new charismatic president with a Western education. The pace of reforms grew faster than we did and, although my generation already could benefit from some of them, it still corresponds to the fact that we had to continue taking painful reforms in the short term.

The new government claims that it heals the wounds and will help go westward with less harm and more joy.

The focus was placed on the new generation of the young and ambitious, of those having some entrepreneurial zeal and the ability to adapt to new conditions. On the other hand, there were those like Davit from the film, with their skills "needing modernisation". The generation gap deepened and if younger peers would take up the opportunities to study abroad or master new skills, the older was trying to catch its breathe. High rates of unemployment and despair prevailed. As Mikheil Saakashvili says in the movie: "They [the older generation] are missing their youth, not necessarily meaning that they miss their Soviet youth…" They might have been right in the middle "seeing no future" and "derived from the past" as the Soviet mentality was scheduled for deconstruction.

Because the Saakashvili government was largely associated with the European choice for Georgia, many considered supporting the subsequent government (or criticising the previous) as a step backwards – to the Soviet past or to Russian-oriented politics. But it hardly can be the point – the authoritarian aspirations of the Saakashvili government are what brought about delusion in the society. Tea Tsulukiani, now Georgia's minister of justice, sitting in a brand-new office, makes an appearance in *Full Speed Westward* and says that the previous government "was too superficial" caring only about the façade and forgetting the interior. This is where the modelling clay was used vastly. The new government claims first that it cures the wounds and that will help to go full speed westward, with less harm and more joy. It's still a question whether this method will work.

Two choices

Davit Gegechkori, professor of history at Akaki Tsereteli State University and the chief of the Department of International Affairs and Strategic Development, tells Natia Bilikhodze in an interview: "We, as a small country, stand in front of two choices – Russia or Europe. I myself, as a historian, choose Europe. The

western orientation has already brought a new generation with unlimited, wide-open thinking. European integration, first of all, means the guaranty of safety and is a good example of knowing the good feeling of freedom."

The young generation, if asked now, will hardly answer with any special sentiment for Russia. The connection to the Soviet past is only found in the architecture touched by time and the retro stories of once-upon-a-time origin. Although slang in the city and regions may introduce you to Russian words ("dazhe" = даже, "paxodu" = походу or "karoche" = короче), they are pronounced in a Georgian way, hardly associated by the new generation to Sovietism or the times when the country was within the Russian Empire.

Georgians of my generation and younger can now only wonder how it was when the state sent you to work after graduation. The approach has now changed. Despite all the insecurities, we tend to be more mobile and we think we are open to opportunities. Travelling or studying abroad is becoming more popular. Another question is whether those who fled will come back? As Darejan Markozashvili and Laura Linderman wrote in a recent article on the migration of Georgians, "The Untapped Potential of Georgians Abroad", emigration has dramatically reshaped the country. "More than one million people have left the country due to the civil wars, unrest, unemployment and overall chaos in the country following the breakup of the Soviet Union. This has resulted in a demographic crunch, an aging population and low birth rates. But Georgians abroad are also the bedrock of the country's financial well-being: some 1.3 billion US dollars in remittances were sent to Georgia in 2012, according to government figures, constituting roughly 8.4 per cent of Georgia's gross domestic product (GDP)."

According to Bidzina Ivanishvili, Georgians already know which direction to go, but unaware of how to get there.

Shaping an understanding

I myself must be quite a contrast. I am the type of person who has a Europass CV and a birth certificate from the Soviet Union. I have spent five years in Ukraine, which has a similar Soviet past to Georgia, but rarely would we start conversations by describing life in the 1990s with my accidental peers, except that my professional instincts would prevail or curiosity would win over and that could engage us into co-thinking.

I am still not sure if I chose my profession or if journalism chose me; but thanks to it I have also visited a few events that brought together people with amazingly different backgrounds. As I take my Soviet, or rather post-Soviet, images and

reflections as an experience, we can discuss how it has shaped my understanding. Although that rusty, never-working attraction broke our hearts, I would never say my childhood memories are only black – quite the contrary. Our district, packed with people of similar social status in the same conditions facing the same need to survive in the brand new reality of a post-Soviet world, is for me the absolute example of what sharing, caring and helping means.

I owe the understanding of humaneness to those of my neighbours who took every child around as their own and provided an attitude which made the lack of electricity or other amenities we now enjoy drown out in the bright memories of human interaction.

According to Georgia's former prime minister, Bidzina Ivanishvili, also interviewed in *Full Speed Westward*, Georgians already know which direction to go – to Europe. The problem is, however, we still haven't figured out how to get there.

Ketevan Kantaria is a Georgian journalist and editor at the Russian-language version of *Eastbook*.

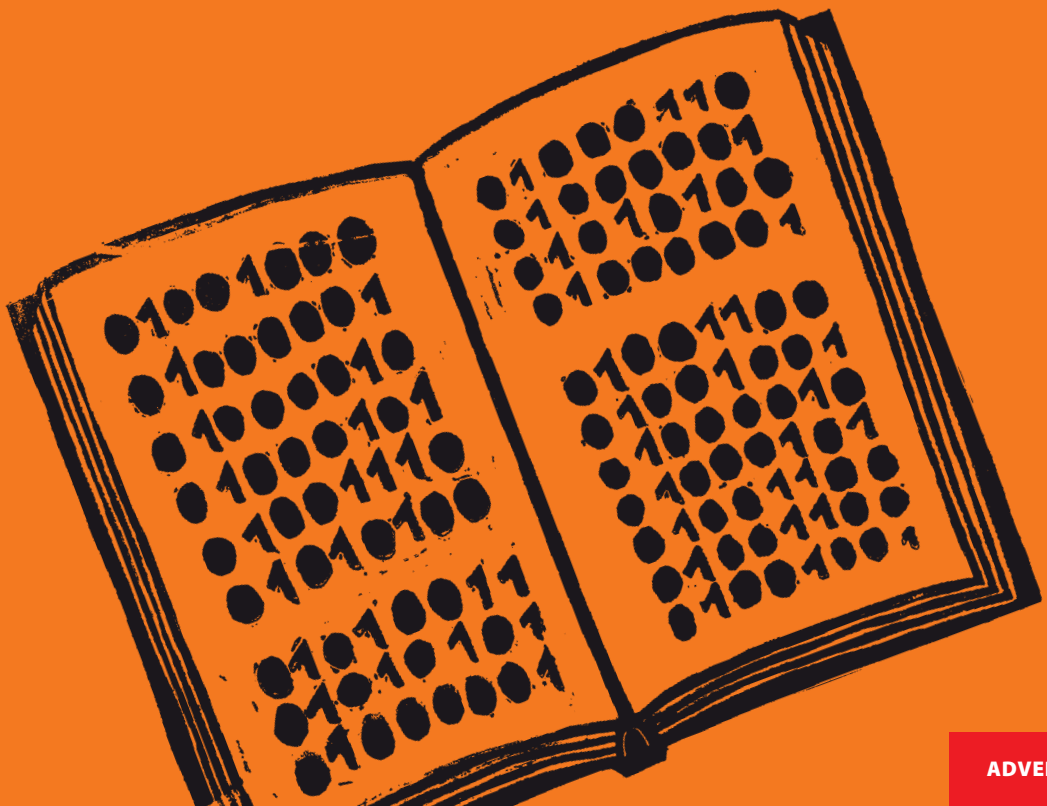
Wschód w Twoim domu bez większego zachodu

Roczna prenumerata TYLKO 70 zł.

Teraz przy zakupie prenumeraty papierowej prenumerata elektroniczna na dowolny czytnik: ipad, tablet, kindle - GRATIS!

Nowa Europa Wschodnia →

Szczegóły na:
www.new.org.pl



Bianca Tschaikner, Micro Publishing House (Lentos Kunstmuseum)

Yes, We Can

ANNA KOTALEICHUK

Within 23 years of independence, a new generation was born in Ukraine that is free from Soviet myth and ideology. However, this generation has to live in a society where the Soviet legacy remains and "the shadows of the past" impede a successful European-style development for the country.

I belong to the generation of the 20-25 year-old Ukrainians who grew up in independent Ukraine. In school we studied the history of Ukraine instead of the politicised history of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. We sang the Ukrainian anthem and flew the blue and yellow flag. Portraits of Ukrainian writers hang on the walls in every classroom instead of portraits of Lenin, Stalin, Marx or Engels. We spent our childhood through the tumultuous 1990s, when the state of Ukraine was only rising to its feet, introducing its currency and trying to develop an economy that had been practically destroyed after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. A civil society was rising before our eyes.

Now grown up without the Soviet Union or nostalgia for Soviet times, today we strive to build a new state on the ruins of a large empire. However, this empire still lives in the minds and thoughts of a large part of the Ukrainian society, primarily the older generation. We still walk on streets named after the Soviet leaders and henchmen of the bloody regime. Lenin statues decorate city and village squares, and the Soviet system of management is alive and well in the state institutions.

Sovok

It is right now, after the experience of the EuroMaidan and "the revolution of dignity" that we feel that we finally have a chance to change the situation for the better. Young Ukrainians strive for a change, a European quality of life and European values in general. These young, modern and progressive Ukrainians are not very different from their peers in Poland, Germany or Lithuania. We use social

networks, speak English, want to travel and see the world. We are interested in politics and fighting for a clean environment. However, upon returning to Ukraine from our foreign trips, we realise how many problems our young state still faces and how many reforms still need to be implemented in order to overcome this burdensome Soviet legacy.

"*Sovok* is still alive," my friends and peers say. In Ukrainian and Russian, the word *sovok* means the rule of a communist ideology and the Soviet Union. But it also means a special way of thinking and perceiving yourself and the world. Practically speaking, a *sovok* is a person with a Soviet mentality. This person looks at other people, events and the surrounding world through a prism of an unaltered system of myths, which can be dated back to the Soviet Union. These are the lenses that are used for looking at history or politics, social attitudes, rules of conduct and life in the society. Although the Soviet Union disintegrated over two decades ago, people with a *sovok* way of thinking have remained.

Many young Ukrainians strive for change and a European quality of life.

As the Soviet system sought to eliminate any manifestation of individuality, today's *Homo Sovieticus* does not accept any nonconformity, nor tolerates freedom of thought. Nor does it show any respect to himself or herself, or others. Today's s*ovok* is characterised by an adherence to a bureaucratic culture, routine rudeness, a fear of everything new and a fear to show individuality.

"In my opinion, in Ukraine, many people still lack a freedom of thinking," says Mila Arsenyuk, a professional working in the media sphere. Arsenyuk had an opportunity to learn and live abroad – she stayed in Berlin for six months. "Ukrainians are still afraid to push the envelope which was imposed by the society, family or community. Some people are still afraid to make their own choices, to do what they really want. I think this has already been achieved in Europe. There people are, for example, not afraid to come on stage in female clothing and with a beard." Her comment obviously refers to Conchita Wurst, the winner of the Eurovision 2014 Contest who generated much more controversy in countries of Central and Eastern Europe than in the West.

From the moment Ukraine gained its independence in 1991, the country's government and social system have indeed somewhat changed, but the *sovok* remains. "Sovok is present everywhere, it literally metastasises throughout all spheres of the society," says Natalia Shevchenko, a journalist with the Ukrainian version of *National Geographic*. "Its main characteristics are a lack of respect to the human being, indifference and fear. This, in turn, leads to rudeness, beastliness and a hostile attitude to change. Unfortunately in Ukraine you have to face this kind of behaviour almost every day."

Shevchenko is right. It is enough to visit any public institution to encounter the Soviet past thriving in the present. Examples include hospitals, post offices, libraries or while preparing any form of official documents. Employees working at these institutions are often rude. People have to stand in long lines and each time it feels humiliating and uncomfortable. The Soviet mentality is also demonstrated in passiveness, unwillingness or an inability to change one's life for the better.

In contrast, young Ukrainians who travel and meet other cultures have a possibility to see how public systems function in other countries in Europe and around the world. They see how courteous and open people, who have never lived in a totalitarian state, can be. For progressive Ukrainians, any manifest of *sovok* is a disease on Ukraine's body. It is something which should be fought against. The EuroMaidan played an important role in this process of de-communisation of the social relationships.

The EuroMaidan as an anti-Soviet uprising

From today's perspective it may be hard to even remember, but the truth is that what we call the EuroMaidan revolution started with a student protest in the late days of November 2013. More precisely, students of the two most influential universities in Kyiv – the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy and the Taras Shevchenko University – announced a student strike and gathered at the Maidan daily; they later were joined by students from other universities.

"Our dream was stolen," the students then repeated. On one of the posters they wrote "EuroMaidan or a suitcase." It simply meant: either we strike and make this revolution, or we leave the country. The young people were very frustrated then and did not see a successful future in this country. Nor did they see many possibilities for development.

Russia's annexation of Crimea and the events in the east of Ukraine have caused a sudden outbreak of patriotism.

"I was tired of the ruin in which I had been living all 26 years of my life, I was tired of the litter in the streets and our heads as well as of the uncertainty and impossibility of a better future," says Natalia Shevchenko.

Several months before the outbreak of the EuroMaidan revolution, many of my friends and acquaintances were seriously discussing and planning to leave Ukraine forever. It took the December 2013 protests and then the bloody shooting on the streets of Kyiv on February 20th 2014 to change their opinions.

"So many young, educated and successful people died. They died to make life better for us. How can we just leave this country after that?" many of my friends say now.

Photo: Wojciech Koźmic

Now grown up without the Soviet Union or Soviet nostalgia, today's young Ukrainians strive to build a new state on the ruins of a large empire. However, this empire still lives in the minds and thoughts of a large part of the Ukrainian society.

In addition to the turbulent events of the EuroMaidan, Russia's subsequent annexation of Crimea and the events in the east of Ukraine have caused a sudden outbreak of patriotism. It is also probably justified to say that for the first time in the last two decades, the older generation of Ukrainians now begun to realise that Ukraine is not Russia and that it is a high time we broke ties with our pseudo-fraternal northern neighbour.

The EuroMaidan can be also viewed as an anti-Soviet uprising as it has clearly demonstrated the civilisational division between those who have already overcome the *sovok* in themselves (supporters of the EuroMaidan) and those who still have the Soviet mentality (opponents of the EuroMaidan). "Squeeze the slave out of yourself!" was the motto written on a T-shirt that hung near the Maidan stage.

All in all, the EuroMaidan caused many important changes in the minds of Ukrainians, especially among young people. One of them is the fact that young Ukrainians do not want to be passive any more. They want change and are ready to take the responsibility for themselves and their country. They also understand

that there is a difficult work ahead. Most importantly, they want to control the government and be able to influence politicians by being able to criticise their work. That is how the new political culture is emerging. We hope that in several years, we will be able to overcome "the shadows of the past" and the heavy burden of the Soviet legacy.

Sovok vs European values

For young Ukrainians, the value of human life is among the most important democratic values. We want Ukraine to value humanity, respect for others, civil liberties, equality before the law, impartial courts, intolerance to corruption and "transparent rules of the game". These values are undoubtedly in clear opposition to the values of a Soviet person and perception of society. We want to live in a country where the state exists for people, not people for the state. Among countries that serve as an inspiration for Ukraine, my peers name Poland and Georgia, but also the Baltic states. They point out that these five countries have managed to overcome their Soviet pasts and are continuing to introduce reforms and implement European standards of living.

Under the term "European values", Ukrainians also understand such concepts as stability or, as they like to say, a "normal, quiet life".

"The country that develops lives quietly. Every link in the system of governance is thought over. Every link works honestly. And everything is set for development. I wish that it would be this way in our country as well," says Ilona Bogoliubova an employee with a large auditing company in Ukraine. This stability could also be called "confidence about the future", when people's quality of life cannot significantly worsen as a result of a change in government or presidents, and thus the everyday life of Europeans is little dependent on politics.

Even though 23 years have already passed, we have not yet succeeded at creating our own truly independent country.

A shocking infographic was published in 2012 that analysed the names of the streets in twenty thousand places in Ukraine. It turned out that there are 20 times more main streets with old Soviet names than there are with names connected to independence. The most stunning is that the central streets in 4,500 towns are still named after Lenin. Other popular names include Soviet street, October street, First of May street, Komsomolskaya street, as well as names of public figures from the Soviet era – Kirov, Kalinin, Shchors, Chapayev.

The example of the street names demonstrates that even though 23 years have already passed, we have not succeeded at abandoning the Soviet identity and creating

our own truly independent country. At the same time, the Central European countries and the Baltic states have long ago travelled down this path. Only now, after the EuroMaidan, are Ukrainians beginning their own de-communisation.

During the massive protests in Kyiv in December 2013, the radical protesters toppled a statue of Lenin. After that, the "leninopad" began throughout Ukraine. In all, around 30 statues of the Soviet leader were damaged or ruined. Yet this caused a negative reaction in some as the statues were dismantled forcefully and not in a civilised manner as they should have been at the request of the local council. However, the majority of the people supported the idea that these statues had to be removed, along with other signs from the Soviet times.

"In the first place it should be explained what were the victims of the communist regime and its dictators. In addition to a simple toppling of the statues, the high walls of ignorance of our own history should be broken in the minds of as many people as possible," says Tetyana Klimuk, a lawyer and alumna of the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy. "However, if we act radically without explanations, then instead of increasing the number of our supporters we only help Russia with its primary aim – to generate hatred and intolerance in our country."

Young, pro-European Ukrainians understand that there is a direct link between the remains of the totalitarian past which have not been overcome and the quality of life in modern Ukraine. Hence, a total de-communisation needs to be conducted in all spheres so that Ukraine can become a successful European state as soon as possible. The first steps have been already made.

Translated by Olena Shynkarenko

Anna Kotaleichuk is a Ukrainian journalist and a contributor to *New Eastern Europe*.

A Blessing in Disguise

MYKOLA RIABCHUK

Ukraine rid itself of the Viktor Yanukovych regime at a very high cost. The human price is well-known and carefully counted: a hundred people killed, many more wounded, dozens abducted by the regime's security services or paramilitaries and some still missing. The remaining damages – moral, political and institutional – are yet to be fully measured and recognised.

The state coffers are empty – Yanukovych's kleptocratic regime, the so-called "Family", managed to steal more than a hundred billion dollars, nearly half of the annual state budget. Some of this money is reportedly used today to finance terrorist groups in the south-east of Ukraine, primarily in Donbas – Yanukovych's stronghold, the most Sovietised, lumpish and criminalised part of the country.

The army is in ruin, dilapidated by twenty years of underfunding, corruption and completely destroyed by the last two ministers of defence. Both were Russian citizens who acquired (if at all) their Ukrainian citizenship under very murky circumstances. Another Russian ex-citizen, and former KGB officer, was promoted by Yanukovych to head the Security Services of Ukraine, apparently resulting in its complete subordination to the Russian FSB.

The Yanukovych ruin

Ukrainian police had degraded to the point where most citizens in opinion polls declared it a threat to their security rather than a protection. Never marked by professionalism or civic ethos, it became an instrument of repression, intimidation, extortion and racketeering. Now, as the tensions and civic unrest have erupted in the south-east, the local police appear not only unable, but even unwilling to protect public order and defend peaceful citizens from pro-Russian gangs. In many cases, the local police have even sided with bandits, providing them with covert support, information and occasionally weaponry.

All other institutions are in a similar mess. To reconstruct them, as the Rutgers University professor Alexander Motyl predicted a year ago, "mere reform will no longer be enough. Even 'radical reform' may not quite accurately capture the magnitude of change that Ukraine will have to endure to emerge from the 'Yanukovych ruin' politically energised and rejuvenated, rather than enervated and ossified." He could hardly predict, however, that this Herculean job would have to be done in the context of a foreign military invasion and persistent political, economic and propagandistic pressure tantamount to an undeclared war.

Despite its ugly aspects, the crisis has created a window for the Ukrainian government to carry out much needed reforms.

The interim Ukrainian government led by a 40-year-old technocratic prime minister, Arseniy Yatsenyuk, is hastily implementing the austerity measures needed to rescue the country from bankruptcy, to ensure international credit and push ahead a comprehensive programme of economic, military, legal, administrative and other reforms. The efforts have some pay-off. Trust in the government is unusually high – 60 per cent of respondents declare their support for the prime minster, 55 per cent for his cabinet and 54 per cent for the previous (interim) president, Oleksandr Turchynov. The parliament that has never been popular in Ukraine (despised as useless and corrupt) today enjoys the support of 55 per cent of respondents and the Ukrainian army enjoys a record high support of nearly 70 per cent.

Despite the fact that only 10 per cent of Ukrainians expect some economic improvement in the next 12 months (70 per cent expect the opposite), as many as 34 per cent of respondents contend that things in Ukraine are going in the right direction – up from 15 per cent in September 2013 (the opposite view declined from 67 per cent in September to 48 per cent in April). This is a clear sign of political mobilisation, primarily under the external threat posed by Russia, but also because of the strong post-revolutionary desire for radical changes and housecleaning. This civic energy, if properly used, may indeed help rid some remnants of Sovietism and finally complete the unfinished business of the 1989 East European revolutions. All of them were about a radical change of the obsolete social and economic system, freedom and justice and a thorough de-communisation and decolonisation.

For the first time in Ukrainian history, a clear majority of respondents (about 60 per cent) support European integration as opposed to any tentative "Eurasian" union led and promoted by Russia. This is a crucial point because within the past two decades, Ukrainians demonstrated a peculiar ambivalence, if not schizophrenia, supporting both unions (despite their obvious incompatibility) by a solid two-thirds of votes. When pressed hard, however, with the either/or question, they always

gave a preference towards the Russian-led union over the EU; first by a majority, then by a plurality. Only last year did a new pluralistic support for the EU emerge in Ukraine, which has now solidified into an unambiguous majority.

Polarising or consolidating?

The same dynamics can be observed in Ukrainians' attitude towards NATO. Within the past 15 years (since the NATO bombardment of Yugoslavia) popular support for Ukraine's NATO membership stood well below 20 per cent. Now, it has almost doubled to 37 per cent and is likely to grow. Opposition to NATO declined in the meantime from a solid majority of 60 per cent to a mere plurality of 42 per cent. Russian aggression is undoubtedly the main reason of such a change. On the one hand, it notably polarised Ukrainian society, placing at least two regions – Donbas and Crimea – far away from the rest of the country in terms of values, orientations and attitudes. On the other hand, it consolidated the Ukrainian civic identity, placing most of the younger and educated people (including ethnic Russians and Jews) on the Ukrainian side and pulling at least four central southern Ukrainian oblasts (Kherson, Mykolaiv, Zaporizhia and Dnipropetrovsk) off the proverbial and allegedly pro-Russian south-east. Only Donbas demonstrates a relatively high support (about 20 per cent) for the possible invasion of Russian troops in Ukraine (but even there about 60 per cent of respondents oppose it). In other regions, the pro-Russian fever is close to nil. In the west, a probable Russian invasion is condemned by 97 per cent of respondents; in the centre it is opposed by 94 per cent; in the south (without Crimea) it is opposed by 75 per cent; and in the east (including Donbas) by 69 per cent.

Following elections, negotiating the division of power and responsibility between the centre and the regions should be the next step.

Donbas, again, remains the only region where majority of respondents (60 per cent) regret the fact that the Soviet Union no longer exists. A similar majority (66 per cent) retains a positive attitude towards Vladimir Putin. In all other regions, Putin is perceived quite negatively – from 70 per cent that disapprove of him in the south and east to more than 90 per cent in the west and centre. This is really a radical change. Not so long ago, in October 2013, 47 per cent of Ukrainians had a rather positive attitude towards the Russian president, with only 40 per cent declaring negative attitude.

The crisis, indeed despite all its ugly or even deadly aspects, has created a window of opportunity for the Ukrainian government and society in general not only to carry out much needed and badly delayed reforms. It has also provided an

answer to the underlying question that all the previous Ukrainian leaders have tried opportunistically to avoid: who are we, what kind of a nation do we want to build, and in which civilisation do we want to belong?

So far, Kyiv may offer a comprehensive package of decentralisation reforms and enhanced self-rule to win some support of the local elites and diffuse tensions. The hyper-centralised Soviet system really does need substantial devolution and the EU-sponsored principle of subsidiarity might be a model remedy here. There is no other legitimate way to implement it than to hold presidential and, eventually, parliamentary and local elections. Negotiating the division of power and responsibility between the centre and the regions should be the next step. If the Ukrainian government manages to not only contain the paramilitaries in the east (as it does today) but also successfully eliminate them, it could then focus on the needed reforms for its obsolete post-Soviet army, police and security services. It is very unlikely that Kyiv would ever accept the Kremlin-sponsored idea of "federalisation", which it reasonably perceives as a tricky way to dismember the country or transform it into a dysfunctional state like Bosnia. The Kremlin is well aware that any normal electoral process in Ukraine would result in the defeat of the radical pro-Russian forces and therefore will do its best to sabotage and derail any normalisation.

> Putin's main problem is not an independent Ukraine, but a successfully modernised, democratic and European Ukraine.

Still, even in the best-case scenario, the reconciliation between the "two Ukraines" – the pro-western and anti-western; the Sovietophile and anti-Soviet; paternalistic and civic; and those concerned primarily with survival and those concerned with self-realisation – will not be easy. Vitaly Nakhmanovych, a Ukrainian historian and Jewish-Ukrainian activist, argues that reconciliation is rather impossible because the underlying values for both groups are incompatible and cannot be quickly altered, if at all. Instead, he contends, Ukrainian politicians should think about accommodation. It might be possible if one group manages to guarantee some autonomy for the other group, respecting its values. It is very unlikely that authoritarian Ukraine can provide such autonomy for democratically minded, Europe-oriented citizens. But it is quite possible that democratic Ukraine could find a way to accommodate its paternalistic, Sovietophile and Russia-oriented fellow countrymen. This is actually what both Latvia and Estonia have rather successfully done for their Sovietophile/Pan-Slavonic co-citizens.

In any case, it is not very probable that the Kremlin would ever stop its subversive activities. With a huge network of agents in all Ukrainian institutions and significant support of the Russophile/Sovietophile part of the population, Moscow can derail

Ukrainian reforms and Europeanisation even without any direct military invasion. Even though invasion cannot be excluded, it is rather unlikely at the moment due to its very high internal and international costs as well as the questionable benefits for Russia. Russia can easily take Donbas, but it has little symbolic value and, with its outdated 19th-century industry, makes even less practical sense. Putin's main problem is actually not an independent Ukraine per se, but a successfully modernised, democratic and European Ukraine where millions of Russians and Russian-speaking Ukrainians ("almost Russians" in Putin's parlance) enjoy much more freedom and civic liberties than their brethren in Russia. This might be a deadly blow for Putinism as a system built upon the megalomaniac claim of a pan-Slavonic uniqueness and paranoid anti-westernism.

The Kremlin is likely to continue all sorts of pressure and provocations in order to keep Ukraine in the purgatory of neither peace nor war, prevent any serious international investments in the country and prove it is a failed state. This is a powerful challenge for both Ukraine's elite and its population at large. It is also a great stimulus and perhaps the last opportunity to finally come to terms with civic maturity, national consolidation and much-needed institutional reforms. That which doesn't kill us will only make us stronger. NEE

Mykola Riabchuk is a Ukrainian writer, intellectual and a senior research fellow with the Institute of Political and Nationalities' Studies at the Academy of Sciences in Kyiv.

Shevchenko Rediscovered

ROMAN KABACHIY

This year, Ukrainians celebrated the 200th anniversary of the birth of their prophet, Taras Shevchenko, who proclaimed: "rise up and break your chains". Those who cared about celebrating this anniversary could not turn their back on him; they involved him in the Maidan protests.

Taras Shevchenko, or Kobzar as he was often called in reference to the title of his book of poetry, was born on March 9th 1814. He was born in the territory of the Russian Empire in the very heart of Ukraine – on the bountiful land of Cherkashchyna (today Cherkasy), not far from the Dnieper River. Shevchenko was born a serf, although his grandfather remembered the times of Cossack freedom and the Haidamak uprising of 1768. These memories of a better time for Ukraine shaped the future poet's identity. His understanding of Ukraine was also formed under the influence of the wandering *kobzars*, bards who performed historic songs and ballads. The *kobzars* were the carriers of the historical memory of the Ukrainian people – hence the title of Shevchenko's collection of poetry, which is now a must-have in every Ukrainian family home.

Artistic and poetic genius

Shevchenko became free thanks to his talent for painting. As a young artist, he was freed by the sale of a Karl Bryullov painting to the tsar's family. His artistic talent for painting entwined with his poetic genius. In fact, Shevchenko illustrated many of his poems himself. The painting talent Shevchenko was forced to develop in exile where he spent ten years out of his 47 years of life for having participated in the underground Brotherhood of Saints Cyril and Methodius and for his poem "Dream" in which he had mocked Tsar Nicholas I and his wife. In exile on the steppes of Orenburg and Kazakhstan, Shevchenko became closer to the Poles – who

were actually the first nation of "political exiles" – as well as to the local Kazakh population. He eagerly painted them during an expedition to the Aral Sea.

Shevchenko never had a wife or children, but both his poetry and prose (he wrote the latter, like his diary, only in Russian) are imbued with deep lyricism. The literary research of the 20th century by scholars like Mykola Khvylovy condemned Shevchenko for "teaching Ukrainians to cry". This is not true; Ukrainians are a singing people who do not shy away from tears, but this does not mean a lack of a fighting spirit. Shevchenko only wrote down this code in his poetry. From the moment of writing the book *Kobzar* until his death we can speak about two Shevchenkos. One is "the father" of the people who speaks in a clear, highly woeful language with appeals to revive the Cossack memory and not to give in to the neighbouring peoples; to "rule in your own house". This Shevchenko is familiar to us from his portraits in sheepskin coats and Astrakhan hats. This is the gloomy Shevchenko, looking at us with his heavy moustache, emphasising his character as "the father" (bear in mind his real age).

The other Shevchenko is a frequenter of St Petersburg salons. He was a joker and a hit with the ladies, consuming plenty of alcohol. There is no question of the confrontation between these two Shevchenkos – his poems are in fact him, his thoughts. The external metropolitan image did not have to demonstrate or transmit to everyone the pain that he committed to paper.

Shevchenko died on March 10th 1861 in St Petersburg. On May 22nd of the same year, he was reburied in Ukraine, on Chernecha Hill in Kaniv. According to his poetic testament, he requested that he be near "the Dnieper's plunging shore; so my eyes could see and my ears could hear the mighty river roar". After this, the national canonisation began – his verses were handed down, several dozens of his poems became folk songs (often people were unaware that these were Shevchenko's words, as they so deeply blended in with the folk character), and his friend Panteleimon Kulish wrote a poem about his funeral that also became a widely known song. In the song, Shevchenko is again named the father: "Sleep Taras, our father, till God wakes you."

Not the whole Shevchenko

The halo of "the father" which Shevchenko had created in his lifetime, on the one hand saved him from disappearing after the Russian Empire collapsed and the Soviet Union emerged. The communists could only "adapt" him to their ideology, to call him a "revolutionary", a fighter against the Tsarist autocracy. They did not discard him, nor topple him from pedestals. They could throw some words out of his texts, but they had to print his books. He did not have monuments in all of

Ukraine's major cities, but did in Moscow and Kyiv. There was an annual Shevchenko State Prize for writers and artists.

Yet this was not the whole Shevchenko. Instead, the communists promoted a kitsch image of a rural scribbler who "herded lambs beyond the village" when he was thirteen. Days commemorating Shevchenko that were held in schools and other institutions in March and May were intentionally turned into festivals of bad taste and excessive pathos. The actress Neonila Kriukova recounts that in 1989, during the 175th anniversary of Shevchenko's birth, she was supposed to recite "Kateryna", a sorrowful verse about the fate of a girl dishonoured by a soldier. Instead she recited the poem "To the Dead, the Living and to Those Yet Unborn", in which Shevchenko called his compatriots who were not worthy of their motherland "Warsaw's refuse" and "the mud of Muscovy".

The Soviets promoted a kitsch image of Shevchenko, as a rural scribbler that "herded lambs beyond the village".

Kriukova reported that when she recited the poem, there was a complete and unreal silence in the stadium: "Only when I finished, people stood up from their seats, started chanting and crying: 'Glory to Ukraine!'" Indeed, that "genuine" Shevchenko had been sleeping in the souls of Ukrainians. It was Shevchenko's genuineness that the communists feared. None of the Soviet newspapers covered the story of Oleksa Hirnyk who, in 1978, set herself on fire at Shevchenko's tomb in protest against the impairment of the Ukrainian language. Those who brought flowers to Shevchenko, alone and not on holidays, were noted by the KGB.

However, the years of cultivating disgust towards everything Ukrainian did not pass in vain. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, one of the current apologists for the Party of Regions, who calls himself a historian, built his career with a single book: *The Ghoul Taras Shevchenko*. In the book, Oles Buzyna presented Shevchenko as an alcoholic and a libertine – and many people who were not deeply familiar with the personality of Shevchenko took this theory at face value. Nevertheless, it should not go unsaid that Buzyna contributed to ripping away the communist gilding from Shevchenko's character, bringing a certain "normality" back to him. A greater "normality" was attained due to the film *My Shevchenko* (2001) by Yuriy Makarov, in which the author tried to see Kobzar as a person, a charismatic leader of his circle.

Our strange Shevchenko

Following the communists, the government of independent Ukraine could not understand Shevchenko – they brought him heavy bouquets of flowers,

inappropriately cited his poems and forgot about him until the next Shevchenko Day (which is now also Independence Day). He was "inconvenient" for them and way too popular. But Shevchenko haunted them. That is why Viktor Yushchenko's pet project was, for instance, to erect as many Shevchenko monuments as possible in capital cities around the world. In exchange for the monument in Budapest, he allowed Hungarians to erect a monument in the Ukrainian Carpathians to commemorate the millennium of the Ugric people's crossing the Pannonian Basin.

The keystone of Yanukovych's "Shevchenkiana" was to award the Shevchenko Prize to the major hymnographers of his authority as well as to re-develop a museum complex in Kaniv, including the construction of a helicopter pad: "Presidents of other states will be coming," Yanukovych said. The museum was reconstructed by the odious architect Larysa Skoryk, who was already known for her controversial reconstruction of the memorial to the victims of repressions in the Bykivnia forest near Kyiv (according to eyewitness statements, the drillers ground up the bones of the mass graves in order to fix the pediment of the future burial mound). Only one word was said about the Skoryk's reconstruction of the Shevchenko museum in Kaniv: kitsch.

Commemorating the 200th anniversary of Shevchenko's birth on the same level that Poland had afforded to the anniversary of Frederic Chopin in 2010, or at least Hungary with respect to Franz Liszt in 2011, was out of the question. In addition to a complete failure of the post-Soviet officials to understand Shevchenko's personality, an adequate and decent celebration of his 200th birth on an international scale was not possible either. There were no conditions to even attempt to reach this scale. Ukraine lacked a normal economic structure, which led to the poor financing of culture. There are no institutes promoting Ukrainian culture abroad, like the Goethe-Institut, the British Council or the Polish Institute.

In the meantime, the Maidan protests emerged and pushed all cultural matters to the back burner. The only thing that the government – the past and the present – managed to do was a traditional laying of flowers (also on the Day of Unity of Ukraine on January 22nd 2014, when snipers killed the first Maidan protesters), placing cheap advertisements of "Shevchenko – 200" and several posters with quotes from his most well-known poems at the Taras Shevchenko metro station in Kyiv decorated with simple national ornaments.

With the people again

After 200 years, Father Taras found himself alone with his rebellious people. Shevchenko joined those who fought for unity with the rest of Europe and for overthrowing the government of Viktor Yanukovych, who was more and more

resembling Tsar Nicholas I – a despot mocked by Shevchenko. The Maidan protest, based on the idea of the will of the people and the freedom of the individual, needed its prophet. Quotes from Shevchenko were hence seen on the Maidan posters. Shevchenko's portrait replaced Stepan Bandera's (the latter was hanging for only half of a day) at the front of the occupied Kyiv city administration building and music with Shevchenko's lyrics was heard from the stage. One band called Yanka Kozyr's Orchestra often performed songs to the lyrics of Shevchenko from the Maidan stage ("Past a Maple to a Dell", "Ribbon to Ribbon"). This made an impression of cognitive dissonance on the audience – many modern Ukrainians were not yet ready to accept Shevchenko beyond "I herded lambs from the village".

Those who cared about the 200th anniversary of Shevchenko's birth could not turn their back on him. That's why they involved their poet in the Maidan process, in the process of liberation of the new Ukrainian nation and the birth of the political nation of Ukrainians – remember that it was not only Ukrainians by birth who participated and died at the Maidan, but also Belarusians, Armenians, Poles, Russians and Jews. *Our Shevchenko* – as were called videos with recitals of his works (not only poetry) which were presented daily and which were the idea of the director Serhiy Proskurnia – may be called the most thought-out civil project devoted to Shevchenko. Every day for a year, a video of someone (either famous or totally unknown in Ukraine) reciting Shevchenko's poems was posted online.

During the times of the Soviet Union, the genuine Shevchenko slept in the souls of Ukrainians.

In fact, Proskurnia recorded Serhiy Nigoyan, the Armenian from Dnipropetrovsk region who was killed on January 22nd 2014, as he was reciting Shevchenko's poem "Caucasus" for the camera. The editor of the Ukrainian version of *Esquire* magazine, Kateryna Babkina, recited the poem "To Osnovyanenko" while driving her glamorous red car around the snowy protesting Kyiv. Writer Irena Karpa read "In Judaea in the Days of..." (the story about King Herod) at the barricades on Hrushevskoho street. The journalist, poet and scriptwriter Miriam (Maria) Dragina recited "Although the Man Down Should not be Kicked" ("... people will quietly take the Tsar to the executioner") on the ice of the frozen Dnieper River.

Beyond Proskurnia, the organisers of the Coronation of the Word literary competition were among the first to remember the anniversary of the Ukrainian prophet – the entire awards ceremony of the 2013 finalists was based on Shevchenko: his words were recited, sung, quoted, and sorrowful people with big dewy eyes from his graphic works were glancing at spectators from the video slides. Performances by the band Komu Vnyz of the song "Subotiv" (one of Shevchenko's most dramatic

poems, in which he, on behalf of Ukraine, accuses Bogdan Khmelnytskyi of treason for signing the agreement with Muscovy) graced the reception.

Shevchenko also fits in the popular mainstream Ukrainian culture: his lyrics and music have been used as a soundtrack to old Ukrainian silent films. For example, the film *Earth,* by Alexander Dovzhenko, has been reimagined with the singing and music of a well-known ethno-folk band DakhaBrakha. Another Dovzhenko film, *The Diplomatic Pouch,* was illustrated by the electro-acoustic music of the band Zapaska from Kamianets-Podilskyi. The folk band Gulyaygorod illuminated the first Soviet film about Taras Shevchenko (directed by Pyotr Chardynin in 1926) with singing in an authentic "white voice" manner during viewings at the Taras Shevchenko University of Kyiv. The new documentary drama *Expedition* about Taras Shevchenko's trip to the Aral Sea (based on the novel *Painter* by Kostiantyn Tur-Konovalov) was unofficially previewed at the Maidan and officially screened at the Shevchenko Museum in Kyiv during the Shevchenko Days in May of this year.

A neo-punk of his time

The new understanding of Shevchenko's personality was proposed by Andriy Yermenko, a well-known Kyiv painter and art-director of the *Ukrainian Week* magazine. His series of portraits of Shevchenko was demonstrated within the framework of the Artistic Barbakan at the Maidan. This creative community stood near the exit from the Khreshchatyk metro station throughout the Maidan. Yermenko showed Shevchenko as different characters: Superman, Elvis Presley, a villager, a tractor driver and a road guard.

When describing Shevchenko Yermolenko says: "This was the fiercest dude, a neo-punk of his time. He was the only person who was not afraid to call the Tsar names. Although Nicholas I redeemed him from serfdom, Shevchenko called him and his wife names for which he had to go in exile. For me, he is an example of a man of action. You have to act! And all the rest is rubbish. He also had a normal sense of humour, from his attitude to religion to his own self-criticism. He also demonstrated a truly honest Christ – not a hippy 'in white aureole of roses', but a really strong person that led twelve people with him and did not lose any of them, except for one traitor. And how strong you have to be so that those people do not run away, but start prophesising!"

Shevchenko became involved in the Maidan protests and the liberation of the new Ukrainian nation.

Yermolenko says that he hums poems from *Kobzar* while painting. In his opinion, the poems are universal from the melodic standpoint. His portraits are illustrated with quotations from Shevchenko, in his typical handwriting.

While anniversaries and celebrations might be a nominal thing invented by the human imagination, Shevchenko's anniversary brought liberation to Ukraine through a bitter realisation – you have to call a spade a spade, otherwise terror, anger and chaos are possible. Only confidence in your own actions, your own identity and the triumph of the good may help you survive and win. Taras Shevchenko splendidly celebrated his 200th birthday in a punk-like manner. Maybe the 300th birth anniversary will be celebrated in a civilised way.

Translated by Olena Shynkarenko

Roman Kabachiy is a Ukrainian historian and journalist.

Victims of Russian Propaganda

MILAN LELICH

The Russian propaganda machine went into motion almost immediately with the start of the EuroMaidan revolution. With the new government in power in Kyiv, the focus is now discrediting the new authorities while simultaneously fanning the flames of separatism in the east of Ukraine.

Ukraine and everything related to it has been at the top of Russian propaganda since very beginning of the EuroMaidan protests in the end of 2013. This is not surprising. Back then, the authorities of the Russian Federation already felt the threat of a possible change of government in Kyiv which would result in Ukraine leaving Russia's sphere of influence. However, in spite of all the efforts of Russian propaganda, the democratic and pro-European Maidan triumphed. Nevertheless, the Russian media immediately found a new task (here I deliberately equate the official Russian disinformation and the Russian media because there is only about a dozen media organisations in the Russian Federation that are free from the Kremlin's influence and those are not very popular).

Only a few days after former President Viktor Yanukovych fled Ukraine, Russia began its annexation of Crimea and later fanned the flames of pro-Russian separatism in the east of the country, which the new Ukrainian authorities have been unable to put out. Every day, the Russian media added full tanks of gasoline to the fire and the deaths of many Ukrainians (both military and civilians) killed by the separatists – the victims of Russian propaganda – are in a large part on their conscience.

Peaceful protest vs. heavily armed separatism

Russian disinformation is simultaneously targeting three audiences: Russians, Ukrainian citizens and the West. In Russia, it is a part of a large-scale campaign

aimed at consolidating President Vladimir Putin's authoritarian power. So far, this campaign is quite successful. According to public opinion polls by the Russian Public Opinion Research Center, in May 2014 Putin's favourability rating reached almost 86 per cent (for reference, in January 2014 it was at the level of 65.6 per cent). In Ukraine, Russian propaganda aims to arouse hatred of ordinary Ukrainians towards the new authorities. It has achieved considerable success here. In the West, it aims to compromise the post-Maidan authorities of Ukraine to the greatest possible extent. So far, it has been less successful in this regard.

Russian disinformation simultaneously targets Russians, Ukrainian and those living in the West.

Nevertheless, the propaganda primarily focuses on the events in the east of Ukraine and is based on the following message (in a simplified form, their concrete presentation varies depending on the media and the audience): "In Donbas, ordinary local citizens peacefully protest against the violation of their right to speak Russian and demand more autonomy in their region." In reality, the new authorities did not discredit the linguistic rights of eastern Ukrainians; decentralisation of the country is listed among the top priorities of the new government; and the often well-equipped gunmen and a great number of foreign mercenaries are fighting against Ukrainian troops.

"Why were protests on the Maidan allowed, but not in Donbas?" this question is repeated regularly. The propagandists seem to forget that the protests in Kyiv stopped being peaceful only after the former authorities launched massive repressions against the demonstrators. The Molotov cocktails, the main "combat weapon" of the Maidan protesters, are by no means comparable to the portable air defence systems and sniper rifles which are actively used by the Donbas separatists. Russian media get carried away with stories about "peaceful protesters in the east" so much that they broadcast a separatist missile bringing down a helicopter of the Ukrainian armed forces without any reservation.

Another thesis that is promoted by Russian propaganda is that "the Ukrainian army and volunteers act outrageously and hide behind the peaceful population". In reality, during the on-going anti-terrorist operations (ATO), the Ukrainian troops and the National Guard try their utmost to avoid civilian casualties. Every day the Russian media features new scenes of "atrocities" purportedly carried out by the Ukrainian military. Many of them prove to be ordinary fakes though. For example, Russian social networks bustle with numerous photos of civilians and children purportedly killed during the ATO. A simple search online proves that those photos were in fact taken during wars in Syria, Yugoslavia or the Caucasus.

Apparently this leads to the conclusion that the production of such disinformation is at a very low level, which is not surprising considering that the propagandists enlist

the services of non-professionals and ordinary students. Sometimes the cynicism of the propagandists goes over the top. All Russian channels broadcasted a video that showed purportedly Ukrainian military mocking the dead bodies of separatists. In fact these shots were made in Dagestan in Russia, where it was actually the Russian military that had mocked the bodies of North Caucasian gunmen.

Profound and dangerous myth

Another message promoted in Russian media is that Ukrainian troops extensively employ foreign mercenaries and the whole anti-terrorism operation is directed by the United States or other NATO states. In reality, the pro-Ukrainian forces are comprised of solely Ukrainian citizens, military personnel and volunteers. Not a single day passes without the Russian media mentioning the "black mercenaries" caught by the "forces of the Donbas militia". The mercenaries, however, are never shown on camera. Instead, they show stories of separatists and ordinary residents of Donbas saying that they or their friends "heard English". In some cases, the "mercenaries" come from the Baltic states or Poland. Russian media report on those Eastern Europeans who had purposely received Ukrainian citizenship in order to take part in the ATO. An average consumer of the Russian disinformation was persuaded long ago that the current Ukrainian authorities, both civil and military, are "the puppets of the US State Department".

Russia media often describe the anti-terror operations as being led by Ukrainian neo-Nazis from the Right Sector (RS) who aim to annihilate the Russian speaking population of Donbas. The ATO, however, is carried out by the forces of the Ukrainian army, the National Guard and volunteer formations. There are people of very different political views among the soldiers, including nationalists. Purely nationalist formations, however, are very few in numbers. The myth of Maidan as "a neo-Nazi take-over" was amplified during the current conflict in Donbas. In fact, this is a profound and dangerous myth, which, after being repeated so frequently by the Russian media, has sparked collective hysteria among thousands of residents of the east of Ukraine. They believe that any stranger could be a member of the Right Sector, especially if he or she speaks Ukrainian. Most of all, they fear that the "pravoseki" (pejorative name of the members of the RS) will come to their streets and organise a bloody terror campaign. In reality, the terror, kidnapping, thefts and looting are now being performed by the separatists-gunmen in Donbas. Despite all its efforts, the

The average consumer of Russian media is convinced that the Ukrainian authorities are puppets of the US State Department.

Russian television has failed to produce a single gunmen of the Right Sector caught in the east. Overall, the Right Sector is a marginal right-wing Ukrainian party which speaks out against any manifestations of Nazism, fascism, chauvinism or antisemitism. Its leader, Dmytro Yarosh, won only 0.7 per cent of the votes in the recent presidential elections.

Ukraine's presidential elections in the context of Russian propaganda shall be mentioned separately. Although the presidential campaign had no direct connection to the separatist rebellion in the Donbas region, Russia paid full attention to it. The purpose was the same: to set the residents of the east of Ukraine against the future central authority in Kyiv. Petro Poroshenko and Yulia Tymoshenko, the two front runners of the elections, were chosen as targets (as a result they won 54.7 per cent and 12.8 per cent respectively, thus Poroshenko won in the first round).

Films and features devoted to them, which were broadcasted by Russian TV, turned out to be the worst examples of disinformation in all sense of the word. They included primitive bad-mouthing and appeals to basic human instincts. "Accusations" against Tymoshenko and Poroshenko were identical: fraudulently gained capital, criminal and corruption schemes, attempts to force one's way to politics through connections with people in power (in the case of Tymoshenko "through the bed") and the dependency on the mythical "State Department" and close connections with "neo-Nazis from the Right Sector". Despite being broadcast as true, there is no real proof of any of it. The purported Jewish origins of the heroes should be noted separately. The Russian propagandists made a specific, clearly negative emphasis on this, appealing to the antisemitic attitudes of the audience – the same audience that is brainwashed every day with the stories of rampant neo-Nazism in Ukraine.

> The new authorities in Kyiv have failed to set anything against the robust Kremlin propaganda.

When the results of elections became clear, the symbol of the whole Russian propaganda, TV presenter Dmitry Kiselyov in his popular weekly programme, exhaustively commented on all the drawbacks of Poroshenko: weak, dependent on the West, unable to implement reforms etc. Hence, Kiselyov set the tone in which Putin-TV would undoubtedly cover the activities of the fifth President of Ukraine irrespective of the steps that Poroshenko will take in reality.

Trolls shall not pass

In the West, Russian propaganda occasionally prefers more sophisticated methods. Sometimes its activities turn out to be successful. A number of leading German media, for example, have helped spread many of the Kremlin myths in one form

or another. The case is either that Germans are oversensitive to anything related to nationalism (the post-war syndrome of the Second World War) or a result of the "close connections" between the German media and the Russian authorities. The fact remains that a number of German (though not only) media on their own incentive, under the influence of Russian propaganda, retranslate messages that fully reflect the Russian policy on Ukraine.

However, on the whole, Russian propaganda is not extremely successful in the West. Governments of the EU and NATO states have their own analytical centres that make telling the truth possible, precluding the Kremlin propaganda from influencing foreign policy.

In some cases, Russian propagandists act very openly. For example, Chris Elliot, the editor of the *Guardian,* has recently noted that the number of comments on the website of his newspaper defending the Russian point of view in relation to Ukraine amounts to 40,000 comments a day. Elliot speculated that this could be a result of funded Internet trolling. An even more illustrative situation occurred when the *The Independent* held an online opinion poll – around 93 per cent of the visitors to the website named Putin their "favourite world leader". It was very soon established that such amazing results had been achieved due to "bots" from Russia and the results of the poll were deleted from the website. But this number still circulates in Russian social networks as proof of Putin's support in the world.

While the actions of Russian propaganda have not delivered any significant results in the West so far, the situation is unfortunately different in Ukraine. For a long time, the majority of Ukrainians treated Kiselyov (and others) as rather comical characters, the heroes of numerous parodies of internet and comedy shows. Nevertheless, many took the propaganda voiced by such "Kiselyovs" very seriously. Many dormant pro-Russian inhabitants of eastern Ukraine, bombarded by anti-Maidan (de-facto anti-European) propaganda during the revolutionary events of November 2013–February 2014, have become intolerant of any other point of view. After the triumph of the Maidan, most of the Ukrainian media have changed their focus to favour the new authorities, undermining their credibility in the eyes of Donbas residents.

Therefore, during the separatist meetings, assurance of uninterrupted broadcasting of Russian TV was always named among the top demands of the protesters (up to now TV remains the main source of information for many of the protesters). Russian TV channels, almost non-stop, report on the horrors that the post-Maidan authorities would bring to Donbas: forcible Ukrainianisation, shutting down mines (a large employment sector), forced gay marriages and neo-Nazis that would butcher all Russian speakers. As a result, ordinary peaceful residents of Donbas, whose right to speak their mother tongue, preserve their culture and honour their heroes

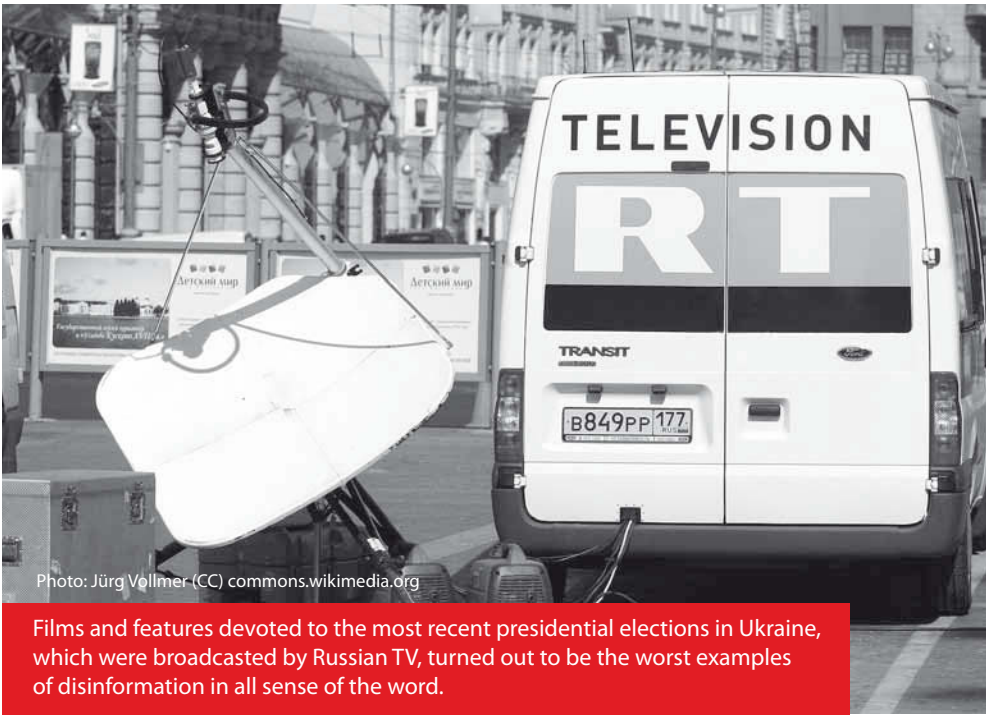


Photo: Jürg Vollmer (CC) commons.wikimedia.org

Films and features devoted to the most recent presidential elections in Ukraine, which were broadcasted by Russian TV, turned out to be the worst examples of disinformation in all sense of the word.

have taken up arms to the barricades to "defend against the invasion of the Right Sector". As a consequence of this, Ukraine has lost hundreds of fellow citizens on both sides of the conflict.

The new authorities have failed to set anything against the Kremlin propaganda. Even the broadcasting of the Russian channels was only stopped at the end of March – one month after the annexation of Crimea had started and when the separatist rebellion in Donbas was in progress. An elaborate system of state propaganda does not exist. This task lies with the community of volunteers that create projects like www.StopFake.org, where they systematically refute numerous Russian reports (this website is also available in English). Of course such initiatives are helpless in the fight with the immense pro-Russian machine.

What is most unfortunate is that even if the anti-terrorist operation succeeds and the armed separatists are defeated, the minds of hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of residents of the east of Ukraine will remain injured by the Russian propaganda. The Ukrainian state will have to sort out this consequence over the next several years.

Translated by Olena Shynkarenko

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

Poroshenko's Historic Opportunity

JAKUB PARUSINSKI

After declaring victory with 54 per cent of the vote, Petro Poroshenko now faces the challenge of boldly reforming Ukraine, rooting out corruption while at the same time calming a separatist rebellion in the east. All of this will be done under the distrustful watch of Ukraine's post-Maidan public.

The 25th anniversary of the Eastern Europe's first semi-free elections, celebrated with great pomp and circumstance in Warsaw on June 4th 2014 was heavily immersed in the new history of the Cold War. World leaders like Barack Obama and Soviet-era dissidents, including Crimean Tatar leader Mustafa Dzhemilev or Poland's first President Lech Wałęsa, spoke to the values and struggles that pushed the Iron Curtain back thousands of kilometres. Next to them was the man who perhaps more than anyone else will shape the future of that struggle, Ukraine's new president, Petro Poroshenko.

It is hard to overstate just how critical the past months in Ukraine have been, both for the future of the country and the global fight against authoritarianism. If the Maidan Revolution, Ukraine's second in a decade, fails to break apart the oligarchic kleptocracy it rose up against, freedom movements throughout the region will suffer a severe blow and the Kremlin's warnings of the dangers and futility of "Coloured Revolutions" will be justified. If it succeeds, even Moscow might feel the winds of hope.

A man of his time

The set of tasks ahead of Ukraine is nothing if not daunting. Poroshenko must take on Moscow and bring the east under control, reform the economy in the midst of a financial crisis and build modern public institutions whilst weeding

out corruption. Ukraine is the largest of the former communist countries barring Russia, and in many ways the most unruly. Unlike other countries in the region, it has to transform at a time when the Kremlin is strong and the West is weak, not the opposite. On Poroshenko's side is a wealth of business and political experience, a number of templates to go on and a nation determined to keep its politicians honest.

It seems unlikely that Poroshenko, whose fortune is valued at around 1.3 billion US dollars, would be the man picked to free the nation of corruption so closely tied to oligarchic rule. Yet, already at the end of February, opinion polls on the Maidan put him first. People wanted somebody competent with the set of skills necessary to reform the country rather than an ineffective idealist or someone like the leader of the Orange Revolution, Viktor Yushchenko – a former ally of Poroshenko who is now widely discredited.

Poroshenko is seen as someone with the skills necessary to reform the country and not an ineffective idealist.

The May 25th presidential vote gave Poroshenko a clear mandate: with victories in practically every single electoral district where voting could take place. The 54 per cent that voted for him wanted a clear decision to avoid the mess of a second round, especially while a part of the country is at war. The hope now is that Poroshenko, who already enjoys both money and power, will be ambitious enough to also go after the glory of being a nation-builder. It is clear that Poroshenko is not your typical oligarch. His business background reveals a man who has actually built and managed companies, not by simply taking over access to resources or steel plants. Perhaps reassuringly, the electoral campaign did not uncover any particular dirty deeds. The most damaging were a series of articles criticising Poroshenko for his ties to previous governments, the lack of his own party (from which to pick officials) and his ability to strike deals with shady characters. All this should no doubt be taken into account, but by Ukrainian standards, such criticism is fairly tame.

Poroshenko has certainly been a political pragmatist and will have to be watched closely so that the instinct to cut deals does not undermine the need for reform. Many in the West, eager to see Ukraine stabilised and return to some form of normality in relations with Russia, are willing to write him a blank cheque of confidence, if not financial support. But even assuming good intentions does not mean he will face an easy task. Presidential powers are more limited under the 2004 constitution, and the unity that appeared in parliament after the flight of Viktor Yanukovych will not last. Most MPs do not have an interest in new parliamentary elections as many are likely to lose their jobs.

Former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko's party is reeling after a disastrous run for the presidency. A divisive politician, Tymoshenko's absence from the political

Photo: Pete Souza (CC) www.whitehouse.gov

It is hard to overstate just how critical the past months in Ukraine are, both for the future of the country and the global fight against authoritarianism. Ukraine's President Petro Poroshenko will perhaps shape the future of that fight more than anyone else.

scene can only help Ukraine, but it is unclear if the current interim prime minister, Arseniy Yatsenyuk, can replace her natural leadership skills. Meanwhile, a new party will no doubt grow around the 25 per cent of Ukrainians that still favour closer ties to Russia and such players as the so-called RosUkrEnergo group, a gas lobby built around the former presidential cabinet head Serhiy Lyovochkin and gas tycoon Dmytro Firtash (awaiting extradition to be tried in the United States) are being revived. It is also worth noting that while the activities of Igor Kolomoisky, the oligarch governor of Dnipropetrovsk who stood up for independent Ukraine and Rinat Akhmetov, Ukraine's richest man and Yanukovych-backer who has waffled in the face of separatism, have been largely publicised, most Ukrainian oligarchs have remained silent. Dozens of power players, including the billionaire founder of the Yalta European Strategy conference Viktor Pinchuk, have been biding their time and Poroshenko will need to juggle their interests with those of reforming the country.

The need for bold measures

Looking throughout the region, Poroshenko will find a wide range of templates and experiences in post-communist transitions. While every country, including Ukraine, has its own idiosyncrasies, two general models apply: fast-and-hard versus incremental (and ineffective). Most in the West, including many in the EU and the

international financial institutions, will advise against radical moves. Heeding this advice would be a mistake. Experience shows that the countries that embarked on gradual reforms, like Hungary or Armenia, ultimately failed to avoid the social pain that motivated their choice, later backsliding both politically and economically. Conversely, the "big bang" reformers, such as Poland, Estonia and later Georgia, eventually overcame the frontloaded costs and continued to benefit in the years to follow from the initial impetus. According to Mikheil Saakashvili, the former Georgian President credited with shifting the course of his country, Poroshenko frequently visited him in the wake of Georgia's 2003 Rose Revolution to learn from the experience, suggesting he may steer in that direction.

There are several reasons why bold measures work better. Bureaucracy intrinsically resists any change, making incremental reforms unworkable. Foreign investors need to see a strong signal while favourable media coverage requires clarity. Finally, even the most determined nation, like Ukraine today, will grow weary of endlessly rising social costs and balk at new initiatives. As Saakashvili put it: "By the time you lose your popularity, you should be in a position to show you achieved something."

The biggest threat to a bold reform programme comes from the conflict in the east of Ukraine.

It is hard to understate just how bad the situation in Ukraine really is. The economy is uncompetitive despite the recent devaluation: hiring a private sector professional is often more expensive and time-consuming in Kyiv than in Warsaw, not least because of the growing migration of talented Ukrainians to Poland. The financial system is full to the brim with toxic assets. Corruption is omnipresent and red tape stifles nearly everything. As Kakha Bendukidze, a former Georgian Economy Minister, said recently in Kyiv: "the system is so bad that no part is worth keeping."

What will be needed is a strong team to help work out the sequence and technical aspects of reforms. Poland is working closely with Ukraine on preparing and pushing through reforms on regional governance, a key issue for Ukraine's heavily centralised and inefficient system. The current self-described "kamikaze government" of Arseniy Yatsenyuk – who himself has metamorphosed from a bland figure trying to lead the Maidan into arguably Ukraine's most competent and professional prime minister – has laid down some of the critical groundwork, particularly in terms of monetary and financial policy. Despite revolution and insurgency, deficits are down and tax collection is up – a testament to how bad the previous regime was for Ukraine.

The biggest threat to a bold reform programme comes from the conflict in the Donbas region. In addition to putting pressure on Kyiv, the fighting provides the most convenient of excuses, namely "we are at war", to avoid tough decisions. It also

protects dodgy characters who should likely be prosecuted because of fears that a "witch hunt" would strengthen the pro-Russian movement in Kharkiv or Odesa.

The new, unwritten constitution of Ukraine

In the end, the greatest source of hope for Ukraine has not changed since the early Maidan protests: the Ukrainian people themselves. Just like Russian troops, Ukrainian political leaders will continue to advance their interests until they meet resistance. But the past months of protest amid hope and despair have shown the Ukrainian people are up to the challenge.

The Maidan, the intelligentsia's movement for change, has not disappeared, though it is no longer on the central square whose occupants drift on without aim or purpose. People remain mobilised and determined not to see another opportunity wasted. Many apolitical individuals are out on the streets, particularly in parts of the southeast that now stand proud to be part of Ukraine. It has also kept pressure up on politicians not to return to old ways; which explains the photos of Yatseniuk politely waiting to fly economy class or eating street food in Germany. The behaviour may be driven by savvy PR, but it started after activists, especially from the Automaidan movement, announced they were in opposition to the new government after Yanukovych's flight to Russia and they started controlling the politicians' actions.

Images matter, but social norms matter even more. In many ways Yanukovych's downfall was triggered not because of his stealing or his ties with Russia. He fell because he violated Ukraine's unwritten constitution. For centuries, Ukraine has been ruled by oligarchy, be it Russian, Polish or local. There was a tolerance of corruption and excess, but certain boundaries could not be exceeded. More importantly, a balance between various sources of power had to be respected – a clause Yanukovych broke by trying to build a Russian-style power vertical.

Ukrainians may not be on the Maidan anymore, but they remain mobilised and determined not to see another opportunity wasted.

The discussions on the Maidan, the inclusion of various participants in the debates and the roundtables all had the trappings of a "Cossack democracy" where leaders gather, debate and sometimes fight until they have a plan on how to move forward. The role of the middle class was reasserted during the Maidan, ensuring that political leaders will need to abide by some rules going forward. Unfortunately, this is more likely to be effective against clear issues like signing the EU agreement than creeping corruption, but the playing field has nonetheless changed.

Poroshenko may try to wait until the post-revolutionary fervour dies downs and force unpopular decisions through later. By manoeuvring smartly and using salami tactics, he may be able to stall reforms to best serve his particular interests. In the end, however, he can no longer hope to fully restore the old system of corrupt politicians cutting deals to bleed the country dry with oligarchs over the heads of largely passive *Homo Sovieticus*. *Homo Maidanus* will not allow it and the millions who hope Ukraine will become a symbol of change would never forgive him. NEE

Jakub Parusinski is the CEO of the *Kyiv Post*, Ukraine's largest English-language publication.

The Contemporaries of Independence

IGOR LYUBASHENKO

The youth were one of the main driving forces of the EuroMaidan, first as its initiator and later as the victims of the violent response by the authorities. Being also a digital generation, their use of digital channels created the basic information infrastructure of the EuroMaidan.

"Dissent and dissidence are overwhelmingly the work of the young. It is not by chance that the men and women who initiated the French Revolution, like the reformers and planners of the New Deal and post-war Europe, were distinctly younger than those who had gone before. Rather than resign themselves, young people are more likely to look at a problem and demand that it be solved."

Tony Judt

On May 21st 2014, Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk admitted that he had been three steps behind the people during the EuroMaidan protests. These words reflect the essence of a significant qualitative change that happened in Ukrainian politics over the last half a year. One might say that Ukrainians have directly implemented one of the principles defined by the country's constitution. According to Article 5, the people are the bearer of sovereignty and the only source of power in Ukraine.

To what extent can the phenomenon of the EuroMaidan be regarded as a spontaneous incident? What is the potential of sustainable change in the direction of better governance in one of the most important neighbouring countries on the European Union's eastern border? Where should we look for this source of change?

Forcing responsiveness

One of the crucial features of a genuinely democratic political system is the responsiveness of the government to the people. On the one hand, it seems to be a simple concept – responsiveness assumes that the authorities pay attention to the needs of the citizens and not exclusively during election campaigns. On the other hand, in practice, responsiveness is much more complicated. It needs well-functioning institutions and procedures ensuring constant channels of communication between citizens and the government. But most of all, it needs something that cannot be introduced by any law or regulation – a certain level of trust by the society to its political representatives. Well-functioning responsiveness is thus a combination of institutional mechanics and people's perceptions of them.

After the Orange Revolution in 2004, the predominant thinking was that there would be no chance to repeat a revolution in Ukraine.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that in the case of countries going through the process of post-socialist transformation, the role of responsiveness is even greater. It is difficult to imagine the process of building sustainable confidence in democracy if the authorities, even if elected in accordance with democratic procedures, completely ignore public opinion. The lack of a government's responsiveness is something that may be regarded as an ultimate trigger for a mass protest movement, like the one that recently has taken place in Ukraine.

Research shows that after the Orange Revolution of 2004, Ukrainians remained generally pessimistic about developments in the country. This pessimism was additionally reinforced by the general conviction that an ordinary person had no influence on what was happening in the country. In addition to this pessimism, there was a growing mistrust in the political elite. The situation was often described as an example of a growing political apathy and alienation of political elite from society. As a result, the dominant belief was that there was no chance to repeat a revolutionary impulse that took place at the end of 2004. This belief appeared to be wrong. Monitoring of protest activities in Ukraine in 2009-2013 conducted by the Kyiv-based Society Research Centre had already shown a constant increase in the number of protests taking place throughout the country. This seemingly unnoticed increase of protests and their intensity illustrates the society's attempts to force responsiveness from the authorities (both local and central).

The initial phase of the EuroMaidan movement at the end of 2013 had a clear pro-European character. It also meant that its political reach was limited to the part of the Ukrainian society who were supporters of European integration. Various studies in Ukraine show that over the last decade the number of supporters of the idea of

closer ties with the EU oscillated around 50 per cent, with a clear predominance among young people and the inhabitants of the western regions. A significant qualitative change in the movement's nature occurred after the violent dispersal of the protesters on Independence Square in Kyiv on the night of November 29th to 30th 2013. This became a pretext for demonstrations of discontent with the state by various social circles. Pro-European goals had been pushed aside with the demand to hold early parliamentary and presidential elections (in essence – a demand to change the regime). Research conducted by the Kyiv-based Democratic Initiatives Foundation confirmed this. Their studies showed that the EuroMaidan protest was predominantly motivated by disapproval of different elements of the existing political situation.

Generational change

Nevertheless, the youth were the main driving forces of the EuroMaidan, first as its initiator, and later as a subject of the authorities' violent response, thus provoking the qualitative change in the movement. Although there is no exact data on the percentage of young people who took part in the initial phase of the protest, the crucial role of the youth in initiating the EuroMaidan is emphasised by the vast majority of analysts and commentators of this process. Together with the change in the movement after November 30th 2013, the demographics of the protesters began to diversify. Data provided by the Democratic Initiatives Foundation show that 16–29 year olds made up around one-third of all protesters in the main site of the movement – Kyiv's Independence Square. Therefore, the young did not constitute an absolute majority of the direct participants. However, research by Olga Onuch suggests that the concern about the fate and quality of life of the younger generation should be considered as one of the primary motivations of active participation in the protests. What's more, the events will probably be one of the most significant experiences for this generation, referred to as the "contemporaries of independence", shaping its political consciousness. The fact that a significant share of Ukrainian youth took part in the EuroMaidan protests should be regarded as a key factor of change of the political process.

The concern about the fate of the younger generation was a primary motivator for many participants in the protests.

The generation referred to as the contemporaries of independence, those born in the late 1980s and early 1990s, is also a generation of Ukrainians that does not remember "life in the Soviet Union". This point is often repeated by western analysts and commentators as evidence that the contemporaries of independence are the

ones driving this new quality into Ukrainian politics. While this may be true, we must remember that this generation's system of values may not necessarily coincide with the ones that are dominant in the EU.

In fact, this generation grew up in realities that did not generate a common belief in the values of a democratic political system based on liberal economic relations. Even if the education system was changed to offer basic knowledge about these values, the surrounding reality represented a specific "oligarchic democracy" (a term proposed by Sławomir Matuszak). When asked the question "Do you feel that you belong to the culture and history of the European community?" only 15 per cent of young Ukrainians answered affirmatively (according to a 2012 Razumkov Center survey).

Three main distinguishing features of this part of Ukrainian society are important from the point of view of its impact on the political process in the country. Firstly, in terms of quantity, Ukrainian youth is relatively well-educated. Although the quality of the higher education system is not always "high", higher education generally promotes critical thinking about the surrounding reality. Secondly, the Ukrainian youth, like their counterparts in western countries, does not trust the political elite and is much less interested in politics in general. Thirdly, a feeling of frustration caused by a sense of economic hopelessness is common among the contemporaries of independence. This was illustrated by the intense emigration, largely consisting of the younger generation.

A new model of communication

A key factor to understanding the political influence among the younger generation in Ukraine lies in how it communicates. This is a precursor for what Manuel Castells describes as "mass self-communication": a model of communication where individuals make decisions on content that has the potential to reach a vast audience, enabled primarily by digital tools.

Even before the EuroMaidan protests, the internet was a primary source of information for 21 per cent of the population. The protest movement accelerated this process. Research by Olga Onuch confirms that information about the protests was primarily from online news portals (51 per cent of the protesters) and social media (Facebook, 49 per cent; and VKontakte 35 per cent of protesters). Moreover, these sources were considered by the protesters to be more reliable than television. Studies also indicate that direct communication played a signification role. Around 47 per cent of the protesters declared that they received information from friends, 18 per cent from colleagues and 15 per cent from family members. The most recent data suggest that this shift from traditional to new media was not accidental.

According to Maksym Savanevskyi, editor-in-chief of *Watcher* – an online platform that analyses digital communications in Ukraine – in March 2014 the audience of Ukrainian news portals increased to around seven million people a day. This compares to around two million in September 2013.

Direct communication between people through digital channels became the basic information infrastructure of the EuroMaidan. As a key mode of information flow already among the youth, this type of communication (SMS or social networking messaging) eventually spread to other age groups in the protest movement. Its political significance is manifested in the possibility of an almost immediate spread of information beyond official control. In other words, it became the main tool to organise mass dissatisfaction.

Direct communication between people through digital channels became the basic information infrastructure of the EuroMaidan.

Until recently, it seemed that two "parallel realities" were being shaped in Ukraine. They were defined by different habits of communication. There was a growing alienation between the political elites and the society in general, and the generation of the contemporaries of independence in particular. The EuroMaidan brought these separate realities closer thanks to the active engagement of the youth in the current political process and the creation of a common communication infrastructure for the entire protest movement based on the habits of the youngest generation of Ukrainians.

Dividing line

On the other hand, the political activation of the new generation brings a new division in society. The traditional division in Ukraine was rather geographical or demographic. The new one may be generational and cultural. This division will be between citizens who obtain knowledge about the socio-political reality primarily from new and online media and those citizens for whom the main source of this knowledge are traditional media, especially television. The former are still in the minority, though their influence is growing.

The emergence of this new dividing line by no means defines the political preferences of the "networked minorities". Furthermore, it does not exclude more political divisions within this group. What it does mean, however, is that there is a need to formulate a new type of information policy by the political elite. The political forces will also need to effectively communication with the public in this changing media system, in particular with a part of society that is not accustomed to the passive reception of information from one source, like television.

It is also worth noting that this model of communication is not synonymous with democratisation. As Ivan Krastev points out, the digital revolution has transformed public expectations towards democracy, bringing the rule of the majority to non-political spheres of life and at the same time undermining the legitimacy of the institutions of representative democracy. Last but not least, mass self-communication opens up opportunities for new techniques of manipulation that are more subtle and less noticeable. Regardless of the ultimate solution of the current Ukrainian crisis, one should expect increased scrutiny of decision-makers by citizens, much of which will take place in the digital realm. The experience of the recent presidential elections confirms that although the majority of Ukrainians believe that elections themselves help improve the situation in the country, the genuine increase of trust will be possible only on the basis of specific decisions taken by the new authorities.

This is not going to be an easy task, taking into account the country's economic hardships. Ukraine needs reforms and they are expected by the West. But it's worth looking at the example of Greece, where seemingly good reforms were not accepted by the society (and often even perceived as manifestation of neo-colonialism). Putting macroeconomics over citizens' individual preferences may paradoxically be once again accepted by the society as a lack of responsiveness. Finding a proper strategy of implementing economic reforms that would ensure a sufficient level of trust between the citizens and their elected representatives will become the most significant test not only from the perspective of Ukrainian political elite, but also from the perspective of society.

This article presents a summary of ideas discussed during the expert seminar "Is There Something Strange in the European Neighbourhood? Ukrainian civil society as a game changer in the post-soviet political space". The event took place on June 2nd 2014 in Warsaw and was co-organised by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation and New Eastern Europe. The author expresses gratitude to Ukrainian experts for sharing their insight: Iryna Bekeshkina (Democratic Initiatives Foundation), Oksana Romanyuk (Institute of Mass Information) and Maksym Savanevskyi (Watcher.com.ua). An extended version of this discussion will be available online.

Igor Lyubashenko is a contributing editor to *New Eastern Europe*. He has a PhD in political science from the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin. He is an assistant professor at the University of Social Sciences and Humanities (SWPS) in Warsaw.

What Have the Separatists Achieved?

PAWEŁ PIENIĄŻEK

The ongoing separatist movement in Donetsk and Luhansk claims to be fighting against a fascist regime in Kyiv with their very livelihoods at stake. But south-east Ukraine is much more diverse than depicted in the media. The supporters of the Donetsk People's Republic or Novorossiya are in the minority, but they are armed with Russian weapons and propaganda.

"I am no separatist," a man in front of the occupied District State Administration in Donetsk says in dismay. Soon after he admits, however, that he supports the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic, or the newly declared Novorossiya (combining Donetsk and Luhansk), and wishes for the eastern regions of Ukraine to become independent. "No, I am not a separatist," he repeats, believing it equates to an insult.

He will not be convinced by any political science professor that what he demands is indeed separatism. It is just one word in the dictionary that has begun taking on a life of its own. However, it is not the question of definition that is the gravest problem tormenting eastern Ukraine. The social and political crisis and a feeling of hopelessness, combined with an enormous amount of Russian propaganda, are an explosive combination for people willing to support anyone who will provide them with better living conditions in the here and now. They claim that it can only be guaranteed by the governor of the Kremlin, Vladimir Putin, their future president. According to "outraged" eastern Ukrainians with Putin comes stability, money and peace.

Of little green men

With the separatist movement becoming more active in south-eastern Ukraine, Sloviansk has become the main headquarters for the "little green men", i.e. armed individuals who introduce themselves as the local self-defence groups. They first

appeared in Crimea and they were Russian soldiers in disguise, without visible markings and a caricature version of the Maidan self-defence groups. In Kyiv, there were individuals who, from the bottom up, became involved in protecting the demonstrators on the Maidan and fighting the police forces. The Crimean "activists", in contrast to the Maidan forces, were not equipped with sticks, Molotov cocktails or shields. Instead they had modern firearms, uniforms and trucks (often with Russian license plates). Crimea was taken with their help.

The political crisis and a feeling of hopelessness, combined with an enormous amount of Russian propaganda, is an explosive combination.

In south-eastern Ukraine, the separatists have a more "grassroots" character. Instead of soldiers, it was Russian "tourists" who arrived – Russian citizens inspiring both the riots and the occupation of local government buildings. After the whole world poked fun of Putin for claiming that army uniforms used in Crimea could have been purchased in any shop, "the tourists", often wearing tracksuits, were supposed to give credence to the movement. Soon enough, however, armed militants showed up as well. Referred to as "the little green men", they assembled in Sloviansk, a city to the north of Donetsk with a population of over 100,000 people. It became the central scene of clashes between the separatists and Ukrainian forces. The local government and the local unit of the Security Services of Ukraine were taken over by armed separatists, while Nela Shtepa, the city's mayor, was arrested and detained.

The "people's guard" was appointed and Viacheslav Ponomariov, a man with a suspicious past, took control of the movement. "Local inhabitants brought us the firearms," says one of the little green men. At the same time, armoured personnel carriers were delivered in the evening. Sloviansk is one of the few cities where the majority of the local population supports the actions of the armed groups. Inhabitants bring food and other essential things to the barricades.

"They protect us from the Banderites," says one of the supporters of the little green men. Banderites are individuals who sympathise with the nationalist movement, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army from the Second World War and their leader, Stepan Bandera. Among pro-Russian enthusiasts, almost everyone is a Banderite. Their greatest concern though is the group called the Right Sector, a popular group at the Maidan which has become an urban legend in eastern Ukraine. Everyone is talking about them, yet no one has seen them. It is successfully used by Russian propaganda as a nationalist scarecrow whose main wish is to murder Donbas inhabitants and Russian-speaking people.

If in Crimea there was an attempt to present "the little green men" as local activists, in Sloviansk the strategy has been adjusted. One of the "little green men"

Photo: Wojciech Koźmic

speaking to the media, Yevgeni Gorbik, admits to the journalist that there are "single units" from different countries and regions of Ukraine including Russia, the North Caucasus, Moldova, Belarus, Crimea and Kyiv. There are officers of the outlawed police unit Berkut, notorious for its cruelty towards the protesters at the Maidan. The majority however, says Gorbik, is recruited from among local inhabitants.

The most enthusiastic inhabitants of Sloviansk decided to enlist voluntarily. A large number of them stand on the barricades around the city. They are unarmed or poorly equipped and their battle capabilities are highly dubious. The volunteers are simply cannon fodder for the bullets fired by Ukrainian forces.

"They are murdering us while all we want is peace," says a weeping woman by the Lenin monument in Sloviansk.

Intimidated resistance

A man in his thirties joins our table. When he learns he is dealing with Polish journalists he reacts with joy, but also surprise. "I don't think staying in Sloviansk is safe for you," he says worriedly. We are no less surprised than he is. After meeting "the little green men" we do not expect civilities, for them Poland is an enemy and Polish journalists are liars.

"During the Maidan, I would drive around this city with a Ukrainian flag. Now I have taken my family out of town," says the man. "All my neighbours from the

block of flats are at the barricades [supporting the separatists]. I'm not sure if they remember me." Fearful for his future, he does not give his name. He does not want to talk too much and when he does, he lowers his voice.

"I would like you to know that the self-proclaimed authorities do not have absolute support here. Those who do not support them are afraid to speak openly about it," he says as he leaves, wishing us luck.

In mid-April, pro-Ukrainian demonstrations took place in Donetsk. The number of participants who demonstrated in favour of Kyiv was no lower than the ones organised by the separatists. Even though there were incidents of assault and brutal fighting, the pro-Ukrainian activists were the prevailing force. It was easy to hear critical voices concerning the separatists. However, in May, the city was taken over by the minority – the supporters of the Donetsk People's Republic.

The Right Sector has become an urban legend in eastern Ukraine. Everyone talks about them, yet no one has seen them.

"Kyiv did nothing to help us," says Volodymyr who, during the presidential elections, was active in the electoral commission in Donetsk, despite the danger to his life. However, few are as determined as Volodymyr and his colleagues from the electoral commission. A large number of journalists and activists fled Donetsk and Luhansk and the separatists are free to do as they wish.

South-east is a myth

This is, however, only one of the most radical faces of the rebellion. South-east Ukraine is much more diversified than depicted in the media. It was forecasted that the separatists would take control over six regions of eastern and southern Ukraine, apart from Crimea and the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts. In the majority of the rest of south-eastern Ukraine, there was a failure to build a social support to make the riots turn into something more concrete than just a few rallies and some tents. The mostly pro-Russian activists were not radical or motivated enough. In Kharkiv and Odesa, major riots took place, even with numerous casualties, but failed to cause social outrage.

"I wish for Russian-speaking Ukrainians not to be discriminated against," says Larisa during the Victory Day celebrations on May 9th in Kharkiv. Even though she herself is walking among the people chanting "Russia, Russia, Russia", she does not want the south-east to separate from Ukraine. Sharing this opinion with many others declaring their support for federalisation, she will be satisfied with the decentralisation of power; for instance independent governor elections in oblasts and a lower tax input dedicated to the central budget.

At the beginning of the unrest in Ukraine, it was said that one of the regions where riots might take place would be the Dnipropetrovsk oblast. This idea was soon rejected though, as this oblast very quickly became a pro-Ukrainian refuge in eastern Ukraine. Donetsk and Dnipropetrovsk are only 200 kilometres apart from each other, but one gets the impression that they are totally different countries. Ukrainian flags fly throughout the city. Ukraine's national anthem can often be heard even in some unexpected places. The atmosphere resembles the one in Kyiv during the most tremendous moments of the Maidan.

It is Governor Ihor Kolomoysky, appointed soon after Viktor Yanukovych was ousted, who deserves the credit for this. He and his team have so far been successful in the safe funnelling of pro-Russian feelings.

Dnipropetrovsk quickly became a pro-Ukrainian refuge in eastern Ukraine.

"Without Dnipropetrovsk, ripping other regions off makes no sense since our city contributes to the [central] budget," states Zoya, a pro-Ukrainian activist. The city is perceived as the capital of bankers since approximately half of the banks are located there. In comparison to the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, the Dnipropetrovsk oblast does not generate economic losses.

"I don't want to know them; I have shut them out of my life," says Valentina, a pensioner who lives in Donetsk but has some relatives in Kyiv. They no longer exist for her since they support "fascism" and she truly believes in the Russian future of the Donetsk People's Republic.

"I don't know how to talk to my cousin. I have failed to get through to him. He's riddled with Russian propaganda," says Inna, a journalist from Kyiv. Her cousin lives in Moscow. Such stories pile up without an end.

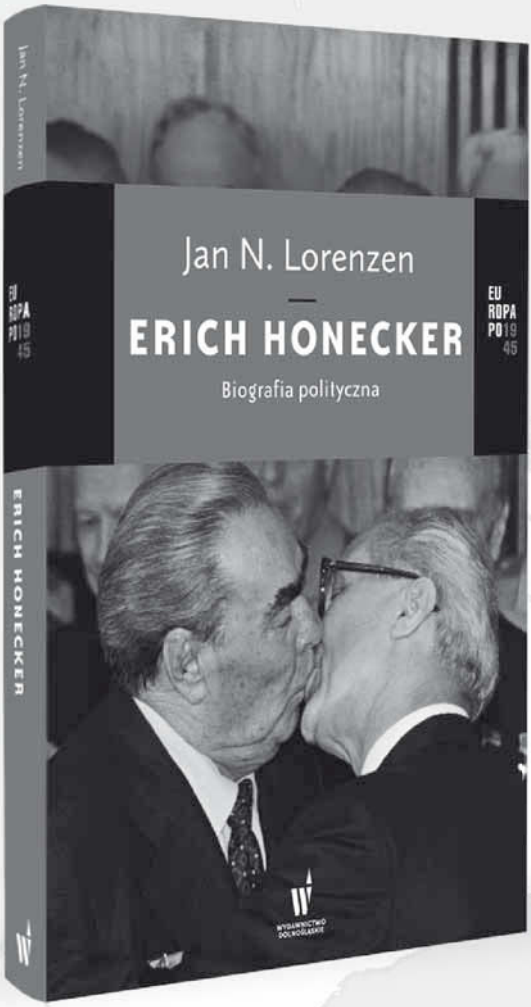
Even if the separatist project eventually fails, going back to the state before-the-Russian-spring is not going to be an easy task. Still, establishing order and returning to normal life in cities such as Sloviansk will not be the most difficult. That will be easier, beyond comparison, than dealing with a dramatic increase in the polarisation of society fuelled by Russian propaganda.

Translated by Justyna Chada

Paweł Pieniążek is a Polish journalist specialising in Eastern Europe who writes for the Polish daily *Dziennik Opinii* and the Polish magazine *W Punkt*. He is also a regular contributor to *New Eastern Europe* online.

EUROPA PO1945

Jedyna w Polsce
BIOGRAFIA ERICHA HONECKERA



PRZYWÓDCA NRD
na tle historii Europy

KARIERA polityczna
i **ŻYCIE** prywatne
Honeckera

PRZEŁOMOWE WYDARZENIA
w Europie
Środkowo-Wschodniej

patronat

New Eastern Europe

WYDAWNICTWO DOLNOŚLĄSKIE

Cautious Engagement

LIU ZUOKUI

In China's view, Ukraine has a huge market potential. But it also has a long way ahead before receiving full access to the EU. This plus the volatility which characterises the new Eastern European states explains why Beijing looks at Ukraine with some caution.

As of the end of April 2014, China has established strategic partnerships with 44 countries around the world. Among these countries, 19 are from Asia, 14 from Europe, seven from the Americas and four from Africa. In examining the choices of Beijing's strategic partners, some common categories emerge. First there are the countries around China. Naturally, they are the main focus of Beijing's foreign policy. Not only are they engaged in close economic and trade co-operation with China, but also have an impact on the overall peace and stability in the region. The second category includes large countries. China and these countries need each other for trade and developing common strategies. They are crucial for China to achieve its goals in the areas of economic development, security co-operation and global governance. These states (or organisations of states) are usually either China's neighbours or are in close co-operation with Beijing, especially in the areas of bilateral trade and creating a common strategy. Among them are Russia, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the European Union.

The third category is a more diverse group of countries that nonetheless share some common characteristics. They either have relatively close economic and trade relations with China or show a potential for development of co-operation. Most of them are regional powers or have a geopolitical importance. Clearly and for many different reasons, there are still countries which have not concluded a strategic partnership with China. The United States and Japan are the best examples. These two countries obviously have some of the features described above and therefore are also on the list of China's important strategic collaborators.

Ukraine – a potential market?

Ukraine belongs to the third category of countries. It is neither China's close neighbour, nor is it a large country. China chooses to engage in a strategic partnership with these types of countries based on four criteria. First and foremost is the economy and whether the country shows a high potential for economic development. In China's foreign policy, economic and trade co-operation are the foundation of all relationships which leads to more pragmatic and extensive co-operation in other areas. The second criterion is a history of friendly relations between both countries which could continue to influence both sides towards reaching a comprehensive and broad consensus regarding each other's core interests. The third criterion is whether the country is an influential regional power or has geopolitical importance. This could set the stage for the active promotion of Chinese regional co-operation. The fourth and final criterion relates to whether there are prominent and important areas of co-operation that could enhance both countries' strategic positions.

Ukraine is not a major European trading partner for China.

China concluded a strategic partnership with Ukraine in 2011. Since that moment, however, a serious crisis has unfolded in Ukraine which, naturally, has brought serious questions that Beijing's policymakers now need to answer. What effect will the instability in Ukraine have on China's foreign policy? To answer this question let us use the four above-mentioned criteria.

In China's view, Ukraine has a huge market potential. Its main industrial sectors include metallurgy, machinery manufacturing, petroleum refining, shipbuilding, aerospace, aviation and others. In addition, Ukraine has a highly developed agricultural sector and is rich in fertile land. These competitive advantages indicate a great potential for developing economic and trade relations between Ukraine and China.

Available data on bilateral trade relations between both countries also demonstrates a steady, although relatively slow, increase over the last decade. Having said that, it is important, however, to stress that Ukraine cannot be regarded as China's major trading partner in Europe. Chinese-Russian trade, for example, is already eight times higher than Chinese-Ukrainian trade, while the size of trade between China and EU countries is even larger. In 2013, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom ranked as the three main trading partners of China in Europe. Trade with Germany was recorded to be more than ten times greater than with Ukraine. Statistical data from Ukraine, however, shows that China enjoys a certain status in its import and export markets; China is ranked ninth in the export markets of Ukraine and second in its import markets.

Stuck in the middle

Looking into the future, it is justified to say that Ukraine will continue to demand Chinese goods. We may even hazard a guess that Ukraine may become a target market for China to implement its diversified trade and investment strategy, although the course of these relations still obviously depends on Ukraine's economic situation after the current political crisis. However, even a glimpse at the structure of the bilateral economic and trade relations between China and Ukraine can raise some concerns. First of all there is a problem of the oversimplification of trade. For many years, Chinese exports to Ukraine were limited to textile products or consumer goods. Ukraine's exports to China, on the other hand, have primarily focused on steel. In 2000, steel exports accounted for more than 90 per cent in Ukraine-China trade. Such a simplification of the commodity structure is easily affected by market changes and industrial policy adjustments by both countries. Indeed, with the growth of China's own steel industry, the demand for foreign steel has declined over the years. Since 2005, China has transformed from being a steel importer to a net exporter. Consequently and unavoidably, Ukraine's exports to China have fallen sharply and the trade deficit has increased.

In addition, the political volatility that has started to characterise Ukraine's market in recent months has also had negative effects on the bilateral trade between the two states, especially in the light of the separatist activities taking place in eastern Ukraine. This suggests that Ukraine's political problems may not only hinder the country's path towards sustained and stable development, but may also affect the country's relations with China. On top of this, there are tensions between the EU and Russia over Ukraine, which also have an effect on their overall trade relations with China as a third-party market.

Chinese investments in Ukraine increased rapidly between 2005 and 2012. This data are, however, less rosy when we make a comparison with Ukraine's neighbours. In 2012, China investments in Belarus were more than two times greater than those in Ukraine. Based on data from Ukraine's National Bureau of Statistics, China accounts for only a small share of Ukraine's foreign direct investment which reached 54.462 billion US dollars in 2012. Cyprus, Germany, the Netherlands and Russia, on the other hand, were ranked as the top four foreign investors in Ukraine whose investments accounted for 60 per cent of the country's total foreign investment.

In 2012, Chinese investments in Ukraine were less than half of what it invested in Belarus.

Overall, while Ukraine does offer an attractive ground for certain kinds of investment, the risks related to making business with this country are also very high especially considering its poor investment environment, inadequate legal

protections, corruption, political instability and complicated social situation. All major Chinese investment projects in Ukraine have faced challenges. Many key investment activities have been even dropped such as the deep-water port project in Crimea. Even though Ukraine's authorities have been providing Chinese investors with their sovereign guarantee on safe investments in their country, the serious problems that affect their country's economy, debt crises and recent regime change have all made it increasingly more difficult to maintain confidence on behalf of Chinese investors.

Stuck in the middle between Russia and the EU, Ukraine may now seem even more eager to seek a new path of independent development. This could mean closer co-operation with China. China, however, continues to depend on the solid economic and trade co-operation with European countries as well as the Russian markets. Thus, China will not easily change directions to explore risky markets.

New Silk Road

Since the 1990s, the decade when bilateral relations between China and Ukraine began, both countries declared respect for each other's core interests: national sovereignty and territorial integrity. In June 1994, Leonid Kuchma took office as Ukraine's president and helped further establish bilateral relations between the two countries. Kuchma paid two visits to China; he arrived in Beijing first in December 1995 and later in November 2002.

The travel of Ukraine's president to China led to more high level interactions between both sides that became more frequent. On April 3rd 2003, there was a meeting in Beijing between President Hu Jintao and Kuchma during which China's head of state officially declared Ukraine to be a key partner in Eastern Europe. Jintao then also emphasised that the leadership of his country was committed to a further consolidation and development of bilateral relations and co-operation. Following the Orange Revolution in 2004, which ultimately led to the election of Viktor Yushchenko as Ukraine's next president, the new authorities in Kyiv insisted on Ukraine expanding co-operation with China. This seemingly qualitative leap forward, however, was never materialised in bilateral trade.

It wasn't until 2010, after Viktor Yanukovych was elected president, that Chinese-Ukrainian relations reached a new level. On several occasions, Yanukovych pointed to the many political, economic, moral and geopolitical factors that, in his view, would lead towards an enhanced co-operation with China. Yanukovych's main goal was for Ukraine to become more independent from the EU and Russia. Driven by this objective, Yanukovych wanted to become a dialogue partner in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation.

In early September 2010, Yanukovych visited China and the two countries signed 12 co-operation agreements, including provisions on aviation, infrastructure, finance, customs, commerce, transport and electricity. As a result, Ukraine's ministry of energy and the coal industry opened up seven projects worth one billion US dollars to Chinese investors. In addition, the construction of a logistics centre at Boryspol airport in Kyiv was set to begin. The completion of this project would allow for the transport time of goods from Eurasia to the other end of the continent to be reduced from 45 days to 12-14 days. After signing the agreements, Valery Konovaluk, Yanukovych's representative at the time, named it the establishment of a "New Silk Road".

The choice made by Yanukovych not to sign the Association Agreement with the EU in 2013, which triggered civil unrest in the streets of Kyiv, also brought the Chinese-Ukrainian relationship to the forefront. Yanukovych hoped to count on China's help during the EuroMaidan protests and met with Zhang Dejiang, Vice-Chairman of the National People's Congress Standing Committee, Li Keqiang, the vice prime minister and President Xi Jinping on December 6th 2013. The two sides reached a consensus on further deepening the bilateral partnership, approving the China-Ukraine Strategic Partnership Development Plan (2014-2018).

China has to inevitably put Russia and EU relations as its priority over Ukraine.

In February 2014, following the bloody fights in Kyiv, the Ukrainian government once again changed. Yanukovych's camp fell and the pro-western opposition parties came to power, which also had an effect on China-Ukraine relations. Yet, at the Third Nuclear Security Summit which was held on March 24th 2014, the representatives of the new Ukrainian government expressed their commitment to honour all agreements that the country's previous authorities had concluded with China. In the same manner, the Chinese government expressed its commitment to continue to develop the bilateral strategic partnership and expressed its hope that Ukraine would maintain continuity in its policies towards China. Clearly, the further development of Chinese-Ukrainian relations still heavily depends on the further course of the political situation in Ukraine as well as which choice Kyiv will make – whether it wants to be pro-EU, pro-Russian or maybe look for a potential third way.

With its location in the heart of Eurasia, Ukraine acts as a buffer zone between Russia and the West. As a major transit point for oil and gas resources from Russia to European countries, its strategic position is hence very important. That's why in September 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping announced an idea of strategy called the "Silk Road Economic Belt". The ultimate objective of this strategy is to link the Asian and European markets together. In its implementation, Ukraine could

play an important role and such a wish was expressed by the country's previous authorities, especially during Yanukovych's visit to Beijing in late 2013.

However, as mentioned earlier, China has already a strong commitment to develop further economic and trade relations with the EU states, which suggests that Ukraine's value still needs to be proved. Ukraine has a long way ahead before it receives full access to the EU, which significantly reduces the country's strategic weight in China-EU relations. As of today, Ukraine can only be seen as an element in the construction of China's Silk Road Economic Belt. Its real involvement, however, still remains uncertain. What's more, taking into account Ukraine's instability, it is justified to say that it might not perform well at all. The volatility that characterises the new Eastern European states also has an effect on China's engagement with the region and explains why Beijing looks at Ukraine with some caution.

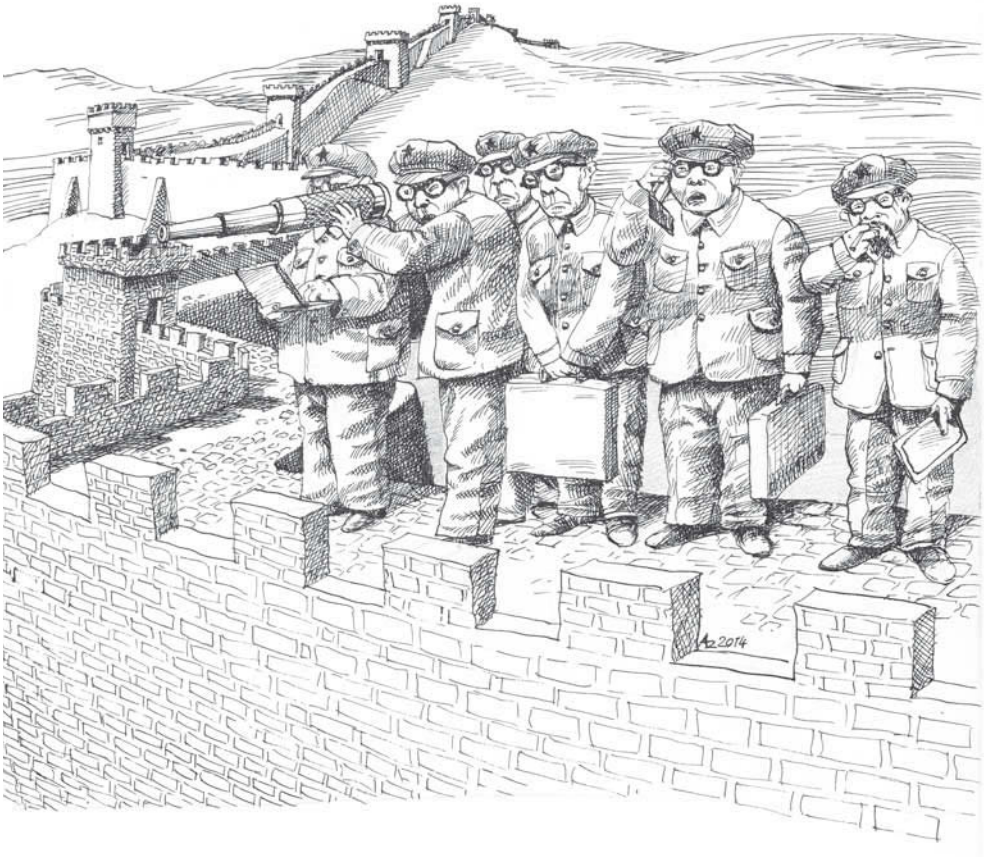
Military market

Military co-operation is one area in China and Ukraine relations that could remain an important element in bilateral relations. Ukraine inherited approximately 35 per cent of the Soviet-era military capacity and is currently the world's sixth-largest arms exporter. China has purchased from Ukraine various military equipment including ships, tanks, aircraft and the transfer of the aircraft carrier formerly called Varyag (now known as Liaoning – used as a training vessel for the Chinese navy).

Ukraine has also been exporting different types (so far around 30) of military technology to China, including power systems for aircraft carriers and large ships, supersonic advanced training aircraft, key equipment for tank engines and air-to-air missiles as well as engines for high altitude helicopters. The "Snow Dragon" was also purchased from Ukraine in the mid-1990s and rebuilt according to China's needs. For the Chinese government, purchasing arms from Ukraine is relatively cheap and allows it to avoid some burdensome intellectual property protection issues.

Statistical data suggests that between 1992 and 2013, Ukraine's military exports exceeded seven billion US dollars with its major sales targets being Pakistan, China and other countries. While there is no direct data about the amount exported to China, it appears that the overall volume, relatively speaking, was quite small. However, there are also some prospects of military co-operation between the two sides.

With Ukraine's political instability and obsolete military technology, however, bilateral military co-operation will most likely face more problems in the future. Already in recent years, China has not purchased much new equipment from Ukraine. In contrast, Russia is producing newer technologies that are sought by China and which include, for example, next-generation stealth fighter radars,



engines, etc. This suggests, that from the Chinese perspective, the value of co-operation with Ukraine in the area of military has been greatly reduced. With the EU arms embargo to China and the US policy of not selling any high-end weapons to China, Russia's importance as a provider of military innovations is significant. Ukraine, on the other hand, cannot be a sustainable option that will help China upgrade its military technology, since the technology is dated.

Fatal blow

Despite all these weaknesses, China recognises Ukraine's economic potential and sees the country as an important trade and investment partner. However, Beijing must also take a realistic view of Ukraine. That is why, from the very outset of relations, China and Ukraine have focused on respecting each other's core interests (i.e. sovereignty and territorial integrity) while areas of political and strategic co-operation have remained quite limited in scope.

What's more, the political crisis in Ukraine has also effected EU-Russia relations. It is clear that the lack of stability in the region needs to be taken into account when thinking about the future of Chinese-Ukrainian relations. China does not want to play the role of diplomatic intermediary in Ukraine. On the contrary, Beijing is ready to accommodate both the interests of Russia and the EU. In other words, China believes that a peaceful resolution to Ukraine's crisis depends on a consensus between both parties (the EU and Russia). Without this consensus, China cannot guarantee Ukraine a peaceful future or maximise benefits from its partnership. Thus, China supports resolving Ukraine's quagmire through negotiations between the EU and Russia and has no wish to play a final weight to tilt the balance in one direction or another.

On many occasions Chinese policymakers stressed the need for ethics and responsibility in diplomacy in the Ukraine crisis, believing that sticking to particular interests will not bring a solution to the table. With all this in mind, it is also justified to say that out of all the major stakeholders involved in the current Eastern European crisis, China is the least connected. However, it is also quite clear that Beijing recognises that in the context of an international crisis it also needs to bear some moral responsibility and obligation for resolving crises peacefully.

Finally, and most importantly, in the context of increasing global interdependence, China is against a full-scale conflict between the EU and Russia that could evolve over Ukraine. Such a course of events would bring unfavourable results, also for China. For this reason, anyone who still believes that an EU-Russia conflict would actually benefit China is quite short-sighted. The truth is that a continued confrontation between these two important strategic partners of China would not only bring serious consequences to the EU and Russia, but it could also be a fatal blow to China.

Translated by Radosław Pyffel
and the team of the Poland Asia Research Centre

Liu Zuokui is the deputy head of the Department of Central and Eastern European Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing.

A 180-Degree Shift

MARCIN KACZMARSKI

In December 2013, improvements in Polish-Russian relations seemed to be undeniable, culminating in the signing of a "2020" cooperation programme by both ministers of foreign affairs. After only half a year, bilateral relations made a 180-degree shift. Russia was unanimously judged by the Polish elite as the number one threat to Poland's security.

The Polish reaction to the annexation of Crimea and the crawling civil war in the eastern regions of Ukraine was unequivocal. Both the Polish authorities and the opposition condemned the annexation of Crimea, the pseudo-referendum and openly accused Russia of aggression in south-east Ukraine. A symbolic confirmation of this position was seen with the awarding of the Solidarity Award, established on the 25th anniversary of Poland regaining its sovereignty, to Mustafa Dzhemilev, the leader of the Crimean Tatars. Russia has been refusing to allow Dzhemilev entry into the territory of Crimea.

While for now it seems that relations between Russia and Poland (and other western countries) have been all but suspended, no one should expect that this sharp phase, observed since February and March 2014, will turn into a permanent state. The worsening of relations between the United States and Russia may last several years. There are, however, indicators that the greatest tensions between the European Union and Russia will not endure long.

Return of the cold war warrior?

Europe, despite bombastic declarations, is not ready for a perennial confrontation with Russia. Moscow, in turn, has already demonstrated how determined it is to gain full control over Ukraine and to prevent close ties with the EU. It has also shown tactical flexibility in this regard, which, as a rule, calms Europe down. The political confrontation against Ukraine will end sooner rather than later, even if this

time the return to "business as usual", as took place after the war between Russia and Georgia in 2008, has been ruled out. Practically, it means that questions will shortly arise concerning the shape of future Polish and Russian relations.

After the Georgian conflict, Warsaw was the first EU capital city to be visited by Sergey Lavrov, the minister of foreign affairs of Russia. We should not count on this happening again and Polish-Russian relations will be very difficult to put back on track. Overall, three factors will shape these relations in the upcoming years: Poland returning to the front line of EU-Russia relations, a limited space for political manoeuvring inside Poland, as well as a shift in the importance of Poland from the Kremlin's point of view.

Since Tusk came to power, the unspoken goal of Polish policy towards Russia has been to withdraw Poland from the front lines of EU-Russia relations.

Since Donald Tusk became Poland's prime minister, an unspoken goal of Polish policy towards Russia has been to withdraw Poland from the front lines of EU-Russia relations. No matter how the particular aspects of this policy are perceived, it must be admitted that the government succeeded in achieving this essential objective. After the Ukrainian conflict, a similar strategy will no longer be possible. This time, Warsaw will have no choice, no matter what party takes over governance after the parliamentary and presidential elections in 2015. This time it will be geography rather than politics that will decide and it shall limit the Polish space to a much greater extent than previously.

Poland, years ago described as "the cold war warrior", will once again be forced to take this role in relations between the West and Moscow. Poland, with the other Baltic states, will conduct policy towards Russia in the shadow of a constant potential threat. Promptness, determination, and the level of organising activities undertaken by the Kremlin both in Crimea and in eastern Ukraine have made Russia an unpredictable country. Even in the case of normalisation of relations with the West and Russia, fears of another Russian aggression will remain a permanent element of policy by Russia's neighbours. For the same reason, Poland will not be able to follow the path chosen by the Hungarian prime minister, Viktor Orbán, who is focusing on increasing economic ties with Russia.

How much influence these concerns will have on practical policy will be to a great extent derived from NATO's reaction and the strengthening of the allies' credibility. A permanent presence of American troops in Poland would undoubtedly allow Polish politicians to go beyond the platform of "hard" security in relations with Russia. However, if the alliance's mobilisation around Article 5, where an attack on one country is an attack on all, turns out to be short-lived, Polish and Russian

relations will be shaped exclusively on the issue of security and potential threats from the East. What is more, Poland's inevitable comeback to the role of "the cold war warrior" would result in deteriorating relations with Russia regardless of both parties' intentions. Poland will once again be perceived as a country blocking pragmatic relations between the European Union and Russia, especially if a high number of EU states supports normalisation. The promotion of Ukraine by Poland, putting forward the notion of an energy union and decreasing energy dependence on Russia, as well as attempts to increase American military presence in Central Europe will drive the conflict in interactions with Russia. The mentality of the "front line" state would once again influence Polish policy, whose results will be difficult to reverse both in relations with Russia and internally.

Internal changes

Polish-Russian relations have practically formed one of the basic division lines in Polish policy since the moment of regaining sovereignty. The dispute over Warsaw's approach towards Moscow became extremely sharp after 2007 with the coalition of Civic Platform and the Polish People's Party. The governing coalition presented itself as a force able to undertake pragmatic conversations with Russia and, at the same time, not give up on defending Polish national interests. The opposition (especially its right-wing part) consistently accused the government of weakness towards the Kremlin. The war in Georgia in 2008 and the presidential plane crash in 2010 only deepened these divisions. Steps taken by Russia, such as the failure to return the plane wreckage from the 2010 crash, exacerbated these accusations.

With the gradual fading of the conflict in Ukraine, policy towards Russia will again be a source of political division in Poland.

The Ukrainian crisis has led to a rather unexpected turn. Politicians of the ruling coalition, when describing Russian actions, began using language that was used, until then, only by the opposition. The opposition in turn began, although for a short period of time, supporting the government's approach towards Russia. The consensus that has emerged seems to be rather superficial in nature and is first of all connected with uncertainty about the future behaviour of the Kremlin. Together with the gradual fading of the conflict in Ukraine, policy towards Russia will once again become a source of division on the Polish political scene.

A common language that is being applied to illustrate Russian actions both by the governing party, Civic Platform (PO), and the opposition party Law and Justice (PiS), is not enough for achieving a permanent agreement when it comes

to policy towards Russia. On the one hand, neither party shares a common vision concerning this policy structure. PO is in favour of restraint and co-ordination of its activities with the EU while PiS prefers unilateral steps and reliance on the United States. On the other hand, a consensus is inconvenient for both parties since the issue of policy towards Moscow cannot be played politically in the same way it has been so far. Paradoxically, even this limited agreement concerning the nature of current Russian policy may obstruct improvement in Polish and Russian relations since neither party will wish to be regarded as the one ignoring the fundamental interests of Polish security.

It might be expected that in time, the left-wing parties (the Democratic Left Alliance, Your Movement – *Twój Ruch*) will formulate an alternative approach towards the Russian question. Both in politicians' and left-wing commentators' statements, there have already appeared suggestions of a need to recognise "legitimate" interests of Russia in Ukraine and an actual Polish resignation of supporting Kyiv in return for "normalisation" of relations with Moscow, particularly in the economic sphere. Playing on the Polish reluctance to be the "front-line" state in relations between the West and Russia, these political forces may opt for a new agreement with Moscow. Even though Polish society does not seem to perceive Russia as a direct threat, the parliamentary and presidential election campaigns for 2015 are bound to favour fuelling the political conflict over policy towards Russia.

Seen from the Kremlin

The third factor that is going to complicate Polish-Russian relations is a change of importance of Poland in the eyes of the Russian elite. Recently, a source of improvement in bilateral relations has been the Kremlin's belief that Poland is effective in creating EU policy towards Russia. This was especially the case during the period of modernisation promoted by Dmitry Medvedev. Taming Poland's anti-Russian approach mattered to Moscow. Dialogue with Poland was considered essential for promoting Russian interests in Europe. In the new situation that is emerging in relations between Russian and the West, the position of Poland in the eyes of the Russian elite will certainly diminish.

After the Ukrainian crisis, there is no doubt about the nature of Russian foreign policy in Europe. At the same time, the EU cannot agree on how to prepare a response. The outcome of European sanctions will demonstrate to what extent Moscow will have to reckon with Poland. The level of solidarity which can be achieved within the EU will be a key for the image of Poland in the eyes of the Russian elite. The more the member states are (cynically and deliberately) promoting parochial interests, economic and political ties with Russia, the less significant Poland can

become from the Kremlin's point of view. Therefore, the existing imbalance between Moscow and Warsaw that has decreased in recent years will once again become a key feature of bilateral relations.

A return to the past

Since the start of the new Russia, as the Russian Federation, Poland has been testing several options in its eastern policy. It first started with an enthusiastic approach towards Russia as a similar state to Poland, undergoing a transformation on the way towards a free market and liberal democracy. As a response to the issue of NATO enlargement, which dominated bilateral relations in the 1990s, there was an attempt to put emphasis on building lasting economic ties to guarantee good relations, regardless of the political climate. The attempts to normalise the situation undertaken in the 2000s (which paralleled a period of good relations between Russia and the West) collapsed after Poland participated in the Orange Revolution. Under both the Democratic Left Alliance and the PiS governments, Poland faced consistent Russian pressure. The last phase, the Polish-Russian "reset", began with the current coalition. It survived the war between Russia and Georgia and the presidential plane crash in Smolensk. But it did not survive the Crimean annexation and the moment Russia initiated civil unrest in Ukraine.

> The "new" Eastern Europe is only new from the Polish perspective; for Russia, it remains a traditional part of its sphere of influence.

The choice of a "reset" was a strategic decision driven by the logic of EU internal policy. Poland managed to play a key role in developing European policy towards its eastern neighbours. Putting forward the Eastern Partnership programme and its development became possible only after Poland tamed its own Russophobia. The positive results of this "reset" were seen in the opening local border traffic with the Kaliningrad oblast; a proposal to organise a "Year of Poland" in Russia and a "Year of Russia" in Poland in 2015; and finally the above-mentioned co-operation programme until 2020. It should be remembered that even during the period of the Polish-Russian "reset", policy was not explicit. In the economic sphere, Poland consistently shielded itself against Russian influence and in fact blocked Russian investments.

Nevertheless, a high number of disputes in Polish-Russian relations were kept under control. Conflicts of interests with respect to the interpretation of history, European security, or energy relations were expertly "managed" by both parties. The bilateral relations collapsed when a lack of agreement concerning the fate of

a "common neighbourhood" became a priority. The "new" Eastern Europe is only new from the Polish point of view; for the Russian elite, it remains a traditional part of its sphere of influence and privileged interests.

At first, the government of Donald Tusk attempted to keep Polish policy towards Moscow separate from its policy towards Kyiv. The Polish refusal, however, to accept Ukraine subordination towards Russia and the fact that Poland has been supporting the new Ukrainian authorities in Kyiv against the Russian narrative has now created a barrier which will be very difficult to overcome. NEE

Translated by Justyna Chada

Marcin Kaczmarski is an adjunct professor at the Institute of International Relations at the University of Warsaw. He maintains a blog dedicated to Russian-Chinese relations at www.russiachinarelations.blogspot.co.uk.

The Second Integration War

WOJCIECH GÓRECKI

With an aspiration to integrate the post-Soviet space under its aegis, the Kremlin will try not to allow any other actors to emerge. More than anything else, Moscow shows that it aims to maintain, if not expand, its influence. In 2008, the Kremlin showed that it was ready to use military force outside Russia's borders. In 2014, it decided to move borders. Despite many difference, these two wars are linked by one common denominator – integration.

In the language of the Kremlin propagandists, the 2008 Russian-Georgian war was an operation to enforce peace (*принуждение к миру*). When it had ended, a joke spread that the goal of the next war would be to enforce friendship (*принуждение к дружбе*) with Ukraine. Now, a few years later, when we have this next war (the Ukrainian war – or not really a war, rather a hybrid or intelligence war) this joke describes the essence of the Kremlin's policies surprisingly well.

Both wars can be regarded as preventive. Six years ago, Russia wanted to prevent NATO's expansion to the East. It took place soon after the Alliance had announced that it could invite Georgia and Ukraine to become members. And indeed, back then Georgia's accession seemed quite probable. Unlike in Ukraine, Georgia's membership in NATO was supported by both the country's authorities and majority of the society.

Post-Soviet integration 101

The vision of American marines in the Caucasus, however, raised concern in Moscow, especially from the perspective of the upcoming winter Olympic Games (Sochi was selected as an organiser of the 2014 Winter Olympics in July 2007). Nonetheless, after the five-day war, NATO's expansion to the East was postponed *ad Kalendas Graecas*. Now, Russia aims to halt Ukraine's association with the EU.

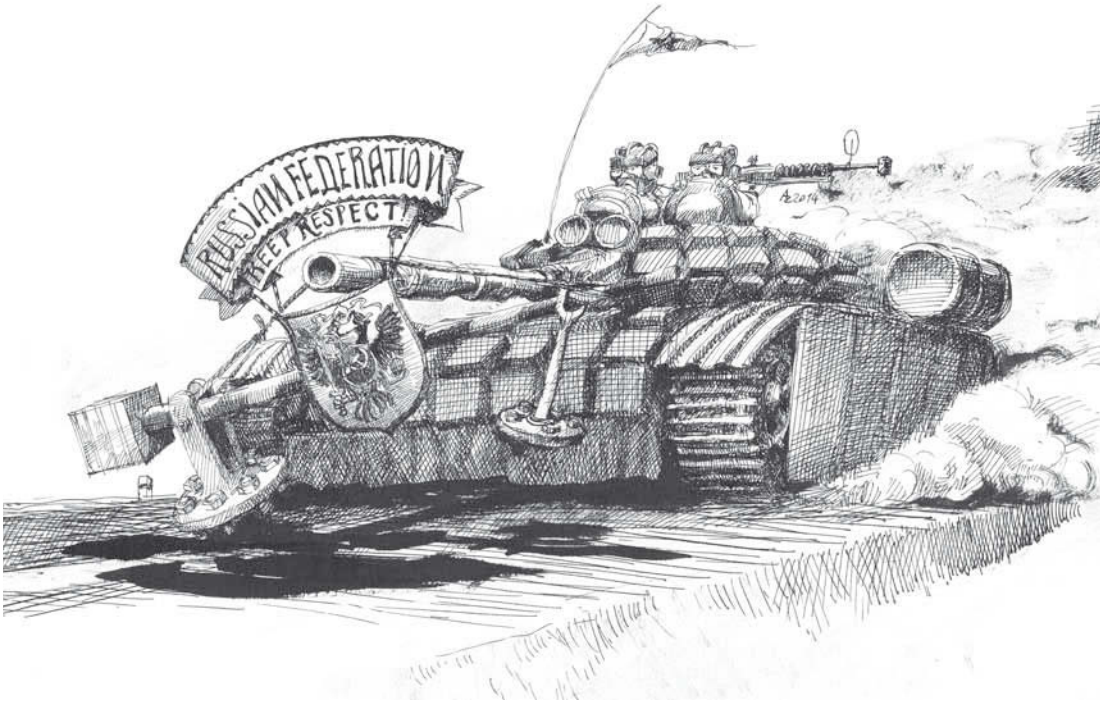
With an aspiration to integrate the post-Soviet space under its aegis, the Kremlin fears the role of new actors. More than anything else, Moscow shows that it aims to maintain its own influence, and ideally expand it. However, reaching this ambitious goal will not be possible as long as there are former Soviet republics governed by people who are unfriendly towards Russia and unwilling to respect its interests. This explains why the friendship enforcement with Ukraine is a key issue.

Re-integration has been a Kremlin foreign policy goal since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Even though re-integration has been a Moscow foreign policy goal since the collapse of the Soviet Union, no serious movement has been made in this regard until three or four years ago. It was also until that time when the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) was the most important and actually only regional economic organisation that enjoyed Moscow's blessing. Within the framework of the CIS, a whole series of specialised structures and agendas were created, even though they did not show much activity. Amongst the most important ones were: the 1993 agreement foreshadowing the establishment of the economic union, the 1994 agreement on a free trade zone and the Russian-Belarusian-Kazakh agreement on the customs union concluded in 1995. In turn, the Collective Security Treaty, which was transformed into the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) in 2002, played a key role in joint political-defence policies.

On October 10th 2000, Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan created the Eurasian Economic Community (EAEC or EurAsEC), which has existed in the same form (from 2006 to 2008 Uzbekistan was also a member) up to now. The purpose of this organisation was to create a common market and negotiate common tariffs, prices and customs policies. Again, its achievements did not go beyond declarations. A turning point came with the establishment of the Customs Union on July 1st 2010 that appropriated the core of EurAsEC – Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus. This new initiative turned out not only to be a stable project, but also one that created frameworks for further integration. It did not take long before internal customs controls were abolished between the member states. This was all possible thanks to the determination of Vladimir Putin – then Russia's prime minister – and a tactical resignation from "wide" integration, one which includes the largest possible number of countries, for the sake of "deep" integration with fewer states but closer ties.

On December 9th 2010, the presidents of the three Customs Union members signed a declaration creating the Common Economic Space (CES), which assumes complex economic integration for their countries. The CES, being a platform foreseen for the members of the Customs Union, started its formal operations on January 1st



2012. Characteristically, a month and a half earlier, the three presidents set up the Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC), which has become a permanent regulatory body of both the Customs Union and the CES. It was also the first decision-making body on the post-Soviet territory. At the same time, the presidents announced that, starting in the beginning of 2015, the Eurasian Economic Union (or Eurasian Union for short – clearly an analogy to the European Union) will combine both economic and military components, completing the process of the post-Soviet integration.

Importantly, soon after having again announced his candidacy for Russia's president, Putin outlined the main assumptions of his integration policy in an article published in the Russian daily *Izvestia* on October 3rd 2011. Reading the text, one can clearly see that "wide" integration was definitely on the agenda of the president-to-be. At that moment, however, such a goal did not seem very realistic and numerous commentators noted the fact that 12 states joined the Commonwealth of Independent States (established in 1991), nine joined the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (1992), and five joined the Eurasian Economic Community (2000), while the number of states in the Customs Union (2010) was a mere three. In addition, some political analysts began hinting that after the Russian-Georgian

war, Moscow was unable to convince any partners from the CIS to recognise the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. It did not take long, however, before Putin showed that not only does he know *what* he wants, but also *how* to achieve it.

The Eurasian Empire and post-Solzhenitsyn

In December 2011, Islom Karimov, president of Uzbekistan, was one of the first to speak out about the possibility of Moscow-led integration initiatives aimed at reconstructing the empire. A year later, Hillary Clinton, then the United States Secretary of State, reached the same conclusion during a lecture in Dublin. Clinton labelled the Kremlin's projects as a "move to re-Sovietise the region". Around the same time (at the turn of 2013), some caution in regards to Putin's ambitions were expressed by Kazakhstan, which was not only member of all the integration initiatives but also an initiator of some. Evidently, Astana regarded participation in these integration projects as a tool to balance China's increasing influence. Moscow's declarations, however, were more concerned with the West than China.

Putin's strategy was only tactically focused on "deep" integration, with fewer states but closer ties.

The first breakthrough moment came on January 18th 2013, when Kazakhstan's president, Nursultan Nazarbayev, declared during a meeting with the accredited heads of diplomatic missions in Kazakhstan that his country was against the transformation of economic projects into a platform of political integration with Russia. Nazarbayev explicitly said, "There is no return to the Soviet Union," and assured that Astana was not interested in establishing any supranational bodies of power. More symbolic was the Kazakhs' decision to change the transcription of their alphabet from Cyrillic to Latin, which was seen as a clear move away from Russia. However, it was the annexation of Crimea which made this big Central Asian country to start feeling truly threatened, especially since its northern parts are also inhabited by Russian communities.

The year 2013 was the year of an effective Russian offensive. As a result of diplomatic games and Kremlin's pressures Armenia and Ukraine resigned from signing the Association Agreements with the European Union. Armenia additionally declared to be willing to join the Customs Union (interest in the Customs Union was also expressed by Bidzina Ivanishvili, the then-prime minister of Georgia). In Ukraine, a protest movement emerged against this decision – popularly known as the EuroMaidan revolution.

At the theoretical level, two concepts serve as an ideological justification for Moscow's policy. On the one hand, there is neo-Eurasianism – a concept referring

to the 1920s assumption that Russia is not a part of the West, but constitutes a separate civilisation. Supporters of this viewpoint, such as Aleksandr Dugin, opt for Russia's integration with Central Asian countries and are using civilisational and cultural arguments to justify Russia's dominance. On the other hand, there is the concept put forward by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn in the early 1990s in a booklet titled *Rebuilding Russia* (*Как нам обустроить Россию).* Solzhenitsyn believed (keep in mind that at the time of the booklet's publication the Soviet Union still existed) that Moscow should cut itself off from the Baltic, the Caucasian and Asian peripheries for the sake of enforcing its Slavic centre, in which he included Russia, Belarus, Ukraine and northern Kazakhstan. Quite possibly it was this vision that made Nazarbayev decide to move the capital from southern Alma-Ata (today's Almaty) to the city of Akmola, earlier known as Tselinograd and today called Astana, located in the north of Kazakhstan and closer to Russia. Clearly, by relocating their capital, the Kazakhs wanted to enforce their position in this part of the country.

The Eurasian Union will combine both economic and military components, completing the process of post-Soviet integration.

The unity of the three Slavic nations – Russians, Belarusians and Ukrainians – that have been "artificially" divided by state borders has become the leitmotif of many of Putin's speeches. These borders were even further crossed by the celebrations of the 1025th anniversary of the Kievan Rus' organised in July 2013 in three cities: Moscow, Minsk and Kyiv. Quite soon, it has also turned out that for the Kremlin collecting and integrating Russian territories is as much of a symbol as it is a policy.

Integration of a few speeds

Apparently, the Kremlin sees its post-Soviet integration concentrically. The first circle is Belarus and Ukraine. The second consists of Kazakhstan, while in the third are the remaining Soviet republics led by the pro-Russian Armenia, Kirgizstan and Tajikistan, maybe without (or with?) the Baltic states. The centre of the circle and its core is, of course, Russia regarded as the civilisation-state glued together by the Russian language and culture. Clearly, in this case, multiculturalism is not understood in the Western sense of the word. With regards to Russia, its meaning is better understood as plurality in unity.

Putin often make references to Russia's Tsarist and Soviet legacy. He gets inspiration from the times when Russia was powerful and strong, to the point that during the tenth meeting of the Valdai Discussion Club in September 2013, he said that without the participation of such a strong Russia it would be impossible to build a stable system of European security. He then mentioned that the decisions

of the 1815 Vienna Congress and the 1945 Yalta agreements, in which Russia played a key role, ensured "long periods of peace" in the world. Contrary, the 1919 Treaty of Versailles, which was concluded without Russia's participation, lasted for only 20 years. However, both the Vienna Congress and the Yalta Conference were preceded by wars. Does this mean that now we won't be able to enjoy a long period of peace without a new war?

In 2008, Moscow showed that it was ready to use military force outside Russia's borders in defence of its own interests as it defines them. In 2014, for the first time since the collapse of the Soviet Union, it decided to move borders. Despite many differences, these two wars can be linked by the same denomination – integration. Not surprisingly, an old Soviet joke (from Radio Yerevan) became popular again after the announcement of Crimea's annexation. It goes like this:

"With whom borders Russia?" (in the original version – the Soviet Union)

"With whom it wants."

"But with whom it wants to border?"

"That's the problem – nobody!"

Translated by Iwona Reichardt

Wojciech Górecki is a Polish historian, journalist and analyst specialising in the post-Soviet space, especially the North and the South Caucasus and Central Asia. He is the author of many books, including *Abkhazia* (2013), and currently a member of the board of the Solidarity Fund PL (Fundacja Solidarności Międzynarodowej).

Europe in Alexey Miller's Embrace

GRZEGORZ KALISZUK

The Russian-owned energy giant Gazprom, headed by Alexey Miller, is feeling more and more comfortable in Europe. The Ukraine conflict seems to have had little impact on the gas business between Russia and most EU countries as the gas giant is taking root in the old continent's transit system, signing new contracts and buying out shares owned mainly by German energy companies.

The Nabucco Pipeline now lies in ruins following the official announcement on June 26th 2013 by the President of the Austrian company OMV. The head of OMV then announced that gas from Azerbaijan's Shah Deniz will flow through the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) directly to Italy and Greece, but not to Austria through Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary. This meant a definitive end to Europe's counter-offensive against the Russian South Stream project. The Russians again have shown significantly greater determination in entwining Europe with its gas cobwebs than the European Union has in building real energy independence.

Paralysis in Brussels

The final round of the South Stream game is currently unfolding. The European Commission has yet to adopt a formal decision on the project while the European Parliament has also not taken a final position. At the moment, we only hear recommendations on how to diversify energy sources from Brussels. At the same time, Russia continues to effectively move forward. Alexander Novak, the Russian energy minister, said that any blockade related to the South Stream taken by the EU will not stop the project.

The South Stream project is a joint initiative of the Russian Gazprom and the Italian-based company ENI. The gas pipeline will begin in Russia and then run on the floor of the Black Sea through Bulgaria, Serbia and Hungary to reach Austria and Slovenia. The biggest proponent of the South Stream in Europe besides Italy (rather, the ENI group more than the government, as chairman Paolo Scaroni considers the imposition of sanctions on Russia impossible) is Bulgaria. Intergovernmental agreements on the gas project have been signed by Russia with Bulgaria, Hungary, Slovenia, Greece, Croatia and Austria. *Yuzhny Potok*, the Russian name of the project, affects the interests of Ukraine the most, as 40 per cent of Europe's demand for Russian gas currently runs through Ukraine: worth around two billion US dollars a month.

European energy solidarity has little in common with reality and the pragmatism of the EU member states.

The South Stream projects shows that the theory of European energy solidarity has little in common with practise and pragmatism of the EU member states. On the one hand, Guenther Oettinger, the EU energy commissioner, recently announced a stricter stance on Russia's South Stream gas pipeline. In the European capitals, however, independent decisions regarding gas contracts are being taken. Sofia, which today is 100 per cent dependent on Russian gas, shows the most determination. In order to fend off any potential objections that Gazprom acts as the pipeline operator and supplier of raw materials despite the EU's "third energy package", the Bulgarian authorities have changed the statute of the South Stream gas pipeline to label it as an interconnector. This term does not apply to the energy package regulations.

Moscow again awaits action on the European side. The Kremlin, with Vladimir Putin at the helm, adroitly exploits the paralysis in Brussels. Russia has submitted a complaint to the World Trade Organisation regarding the provisions of the "third energy package", which, according to Russia, is in conflict with the principles of free trade. One gets the impression that once Russia was granted membership in the WTO, it has used its rights in full without missing any opportunities, while Europe is still deciding what to do.

Bogeyman

The annexation of Crimea will allow Russia to save $10 billion within the South Stream project. This is because the gas pipeline will be located on the shelf of the Crimea Peninsula, and not on the Black Sea floor. The total cost of this project is estimated at $70 billion.

The South Stream acts as a bogeyman to Europe, similar to the announcement of Russia's record contract with China for the supply of "blue fuel". The raw material is to be delivered through the Siberian Force pipeline, whose construction will only end in 2018 and whose output would reach only $38 billion cubic metres and therefore not a real danger for Europe.

The construction of the *Yuzhny Potok* is scheduled to begin in the middle of 2014. However, the Russians are also not letting anyone forget about them in northern Europe. The subject of unblocking gas transmissions via the Nord Stream pipeline has returned. The NEL pipeline, connected to the Nord Stream gas system in the northern lands, was launched in Germany at the end of last year. Russian gas can be delivered through this transit route to the Netherlands and Belgium, and, in the future, to the United Kingdom.

The gas business between Russia and Germany is remarkably alive and well.

The OPAL pipeline, which runs along the Polish-German border on the territory of Poland's western neighbour, is to be finalised soon. This pipeline will connect the Nord Stream with the Czech Gazela pipe, which in turn is connected to the German Megal pipeline, running from Bavaria to France. The gas business between Russia and Germany is remarkably alive and well, while Angela Merkel threatens Moscow with sanctions. Gazprom is the sole supplier of fuel to the NEL and OPAL gas pipelines and contradicts the basic principle of the "third energy package". Instead, Germany is becoming more and more dependent on Russian fuel. In 2013, the total imports by Berlin increased by over 20 per cent compared to the previous year and reached 40 billion cubic metres of Russian gas, one-third of the German demand for the "blue fuel".

Strong links

Russia has made its presence strongly felt in the shareholding structures of German gas companies that produce energy and administer transmission networks. The German company WINGAS opened access to this market to Gazprom (the Russian gas giant owns stakes in the company along with the German BASF). In December 2013, the company Astor, owned by Gazprom, took over all the shares in WINGAS. This now allows for the raw materials from the OPAL gas pipeline to be collected in the Katharina storage facility and be administered by Gazprom Germania. One-third of another storage facility in north-western Germany connected to the NEL gas pipeline also belongs to Gazprom Germania (the remaining shares are owned by the British BP and the Danish Dong Energy).

The German national gas pipelines are no longer "German". They are in fact managed by Gascade Gastransport, which belongs to Gazprom. That company is a joint venture between Gazprom and BASF, but the latter transferred its shares to the Russian conglomerate in exchange for shares in the Russian oil fields in Siberia. Four major energy players such as BASF, E.ON, RWE and EnBW are now strongly linked via capital veins with Gazprom. The latest news regarding this interdependence is the announcement of the sale of RWE Dea, a German company engaged in oil and gas extraction in the North Sea. The sale of RWE Dea went to LetterOne, a Russian fund.

Russia's energy expansion to Western Europe is a fact.

According to the Polish analytical centre *Polityka Insight,* Poland is similarly dependent on Russia like Finland and Bulgaria. Lithuania is the most dependent country in the region. The centre's dependency ratio was prepared on the basis of three factors: the share of exports to Russia in the country's total exports, the share of imported energy from Russia in the total imports from Russia and the share of direct investment in Russia made by a certain country.

Needless to say, Russia's energy expansion in Western Europe is already a fact. Speaking of economic sanctions against the country is more like tying a noose around old Europe's neck. As long as the European Union speaks with many voices and the interests of the individual countries are less important than the interests of corporations, Russia will continue to increase the old continent's dependency on its resources.

Grzegorz Kaliszuk is an economic analyst with a PhD from the Warsaw School of Economics. He is an author of over 80 articles devoted to Russia, the CIS countries and energy issues. He currently works for the Allianz Group.

The Two Per Cent That Matters

EVELYN KALDOJA

Despite a recent increase of international attention to Estonia's cyber-security policies, there is something much more important that should be noticed. It is Estonia's eagerness to allocate money on defence.

Should I shout "Hurrah!", start clapping or maybe even do some somersaults? That is usually my first (very cynical) thought whenever there is an international briefing for journalists and a public official or a politician mentions cyber-defence asking if there's an Estonian in the room. I can see that warm reassuring smile which I will get from the speaker as I am "a representative of the country with the cyber-problem".

Don't get me wrong. I think our civil servants and politicians have done an excellent job at promoting Estonia's issue of cyber-security. I have no doubt that the goal itself is noble. In the contemporary internet-based world, cyber-security is vitally important from both a civilian and a military perspective.

Just to give you an example. Two years ago, Tunne Kelam a member of the European Parliament, joined the ranks of Estonian politicians who have done something to advance the issue. He wrote the report "On Cyber-Security and Defence" for the European Parliament. From this text we can learn something quite shocking: only ten EU states had, as of June 2012, officially adopted a national cyber-security strategy. This clearly demonstrates the need for outspoken advocates. And yet, as the average Estonian I consider myself to be, I have to admit that I am not very interested in the issue of cyber-defence.

Sacred commitment

I would take a bold guess – mostly basing my opinion on the infrequency that the subject of cybersecurity comes up in our domestic public debates – that the majority of Estonians are not very interested in this issue either. This is all despite

the fact that the overall concern for defence matters is relatively high in Estonia, as it is in any other NATO country with eastern borders. Cyber-defence, on the other hand, is an unattractively technical and abstract concept. Not surprisingly, it is hard to find its avid supporters, among the Estonians or other nations.

I have seen my share of foreign politicians and high officials who come to Tallinn and make enormous efforts to mention "cyber" in their interviews, thinking that it will have a special appeal on the local readers. I have seen disappointed foreign ambassadors who have discovered that the fact of their country joining the NATO centre of excellence in Tallinn will not be much news. I'm so sorry for their trouble. It is only our elite who help "save the world" from its own carelessness by constantly exporting the subject of cyber-security to different seminars, summits and declarations.

The overall concern for defence matters among Estonians is relatively high.

There is something else related to Estonia's defence, however, that should fascinate the allies. It is the country's eagerness to allocate money on defence. Indeed all NATO members are assumed to give their fair share to keep themselves and the alliance secure. The equilibrium has been put at two per cent of the countries' GDP. But when you look at the chart of defence expenditures of different NATO countries, you will notice that only four countries meet the criteria: the United States with 4.4 per cent, the United Kingdom with 2.4 per cent, Greece with 2.3 and Estonia with precisely 2 per cent of GDP. In this regards, I daresay that in the eyes of the Estonian public, the requirement to allocate this specific amount to the country's defence system has taken a special place; almost the same special place that the foreign experts assign to cyber-security.

Considering that the majority of NATO members themselves evade this commitment, it comes as no surprise that for fulfilling its obligation, Estonia does not get as frequent praises as it does for the vague subject of cyber-defence. Clearly, a minister from another NATO country will not come to Tallinn and say: "Although I do not see any chance of us earmarking more than 1.1 per cent of our GDP to military, it is commendable that you still remind us of this ancient tradition of the two per cent."

For the Estonians, this specific requirement seems so sacred that the government aspired to reach it even at a time when the country was hit by the worst economic crisis. Wages were cut, jobs were axed. Everybody knew someone who was affected. Even the prices at the pubs and restaurants shrunk since people had no money to spend. But nobody – neither the public nor the politicians – seriously questioned our defence expenditures. Estonians, the eager internet users as they are, know very well that their country is one of the few NATO countries that still maintains the

required level of spending on military. What's more, the voices who recommend joining the ranks of the more "laid back" allies were quite modest even before the tensions in Ukraine had started. Today, suggesting a reduction in defence expenditures would probably be viewed almost as asking to be annexed by Russia.

Wide consensus

Kaarel Kaas, a security analyst and editor-in-chief of the monthly magazine *Diplomaatia*, points to two reasons of this constancy: "First would be caused by Estonia's geopolitical position," he claims. "Due to the fact that Estonia has Russia for a neighbour, the fear of a serious threat to its very existence has never ceased to exist, maybe just softened during certain periods. For Central Europe, this classical sense of threat ceased to exist with the end of the Cold War. The second reason is internal and it is owed to a large extent to the reforms Estonia has carried out in regards to its defence system and defence communication," Kaas continues. To explain how a wide consensus in regards to military spending has been built in Estonia, he gives three examples. None of them is about blunt propaganda. All are aimed at different segments of the national elite and two of them are totally voluntary for the target group.

The first example is the Estonian National Defence Course. This is a week-long seminar on the basics of Estonian security. The course follows the Chatham House rules and has speakers from the highest possible expert level. Ambassadors, top civil and military officials, several ministers and the president are all lecturers during the course. It is organised twice a year and the well-selected list of invitees includes a wide range of top officials – from members of parliament to journalists, senior military officers, respected clergy, businessmen and acknowledged artists. The number of participants is quite limited and the demand for an invitation is quite high.

In Estonia, even young men who go to universities have no exemption from common military service.

The second example is the voluntary courses for people who want to become reserve officers. In some cases, an eight-week long course might be a prerequisite for a civilian (a doctor or a clerk, for example) who wants to join the military career system. But quite often the majority of people who go through the course do not have any specific military ambitions. They only want to learn practical skills and get an officer's rank. Upon graduation, they are integrated into the Estonian defence system as reservists. Since 1997, they also have had the opportunity to join a special non-profit association – the Estonian Reserve Officers' Association (EROA). To

illustrate the status of this organisation it is suffice to say that some of its members, usually businessmen, buy themselves special jeeps to attend military exercises.

The third example that Kaas highlights is related to conscription. To be more precise, a 2000 law instituted obligatory military service for male university students. "This meant a complete change in the profile of people who join the armed forces as conscripts," Kaas recalls. "Previously, about one-third of conscripts had merely a basic education. At best, 50 per cent of them had a high school diploma. About two or three per cent had a higher degree. Before, many of the conscripts had even a criminal record. With this change, a part of the society that influences the public opinion has been included into the system of conscription. And that, in turn, has helped to maintain the conscription," Kaas continues. "Conscription has become a connector between the public consciousness and the military. This has further created strong public support for raising defence expenditures and keeping them on the level of the two per cent of GDP as NATO requests."

In addition to the three programmes that Kaas mentions, there is the Defence League –a voluntary paramilitary organisation, open to all citizens who want to learn basic military skills and take part in drills. The league has branches throughout Estonia, in all counties. Its structure includes the main organisation and a system of corps, be it for women (women can actually also join the main organisation), young boys or girls. Most importantly, the members of the league are an integral part of the Estonian defence system.

Baltic defence

The Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are the three NATO countries that seem the easiest to compare. Starting with the year 1940, the histories of these three small states have basically been the same. They were all occupied by the Soviet Union. They all regained independence in the same year. They all had become eligible to join both NATO and the European Union by spring 2004. Even now, all three face harassment by Russia and thus share the same very basic fear of losing independence as a result of their neighbour's conquest.

Naturally, all three of these states have their own strengths and weaknesses. They provide each other with the best background to point out country-specific particularities that cannot be a result of exterior factors. Estonian fidelity to the two per cent seems to be one of them. Conversely, the latest statistics suggest that Latvia spends 0.9 per cent and Lithuania 0.8 per cent of their respective GDPs on defence. If you need proof how "holy" this issue is for Estonians, just ask them what they think about Latvians and Lithuanians spending so little. Most people are quite aware in this regard and tend to feel judgemental about their neighbours.

Photo: Estonian Foreign Ministry (CC) commons.wikimedia.org

Of all NATO members, only four countries meet the obligation of at least two per cent GDP spending on defence: the United States, the United Kingdom, Greece and Estonia.

Kaas stresses, however, that when it comes to defence, the interpretations of certain nuances are slightly different between the three states: "For example, conscription in Latvia and Lithuania has not worked out," he says. "In Latvia, there was a stronger Soviet legacy in the system of conscription and the conscripts were not used efficiently. For the most part, they were just guarding different objects and performing other kinds of auxiliary tasks. That, in turn, has contributed to virtually no support for conscription in the society."

"The difference for Estonia," Kaas continues, "is also a widespread knowledge about the Finnish experience. Estonians know that they owe their success in regaining independence thanks to the Winter War," meaning the military conflict which took place between Finland and the Soviet Union in 1939 and 1940. Kaas also adds that Finland is one of the few European countries that heavily relies on conscription and was the first country to offer assistance to Estonia when it began rebuilding its military after regaining independence in the 1990s. That is why the impact of Finnish military thinking can still be felt in Estonia although it has already been over ten years since Estonia joined NATO while Finland has not.

Jānis Bērziņš, the director of Centre for Security and Strategic Research at the Latvian National Defence Academy, while stressing that he only expresses his personal opinion and not official policy of the Lativan state, firmly says that "The Latvian defence budget should also be two per cent of the country's GDP." However, as he further argues, there are political obstacles as "Latvia has many sensitive questions to be addressed, including education, health, etc. These are

the sectors where the reforms are being implemented. The truth is that money is limited. And the priority until now has been investing in healthcare, education and so on," he explains.

Lithuania spends less on defence than Estonia, yet it that maintains the largest army among the three Baltic states.

Bērziņš also states that Latvia has already outlined a plan to reach the two per cent objective by 2020. Rumour has it now that politicians in Riga are in favour of speeding it up. Without a doubt, the crisis in Ukraine has made both ordinary citizens and politicians alike begin to pay more attention to the issue of defence spending. "The minister of defence has always cared about it, but now the politicians who did not pay attention to this issue before have started to care," says Bērziņš expressing hope for change.

When compared to Estonia, Lithuania also spends less money (not only in terms of GDP percentage but also in absolute numbers) on military and defence. Yet, this southernmost Baltic state has managed to keep the largest army among the three Baltic states. Lithuanians still take great pride in the deeds of their historic grand dukes and the longest and best organised anti-Soviet resistance movement in the Baltic region. In fact, some still believe that it was the strong partisan movement which kept the majority of Soviet immigrants away from Lithuania. This, in turn, has resulted in a considerably smaller Russian population living in Lithuania than in Estonia or Latvia.

Crowding out defence

How does Lithuania then manage to keep its military on such a modest diet? Tomas Jermalavičius, a research fellow with the International Centre for Defence Studies in Tallinn, suggests that first and foremost it is thanks to the structure of Lithuania's public finances. "By means of the tax system, Estonia redistributes almost 40 per cent of its GDP. In Lithuania this number is just about 25 per cent," he explains. "In Lithuanian we have a lower personal income tax than Estonia. Second, our tax code is a bit messy and has plenty of loopholes. Taxpaying discipline is weaker, people don't like paying taxes. As a result, the two per cent would take much more from our budgetary pie than it does in Estonia." Jermalavičius also adds that "the cultural inclination of Lithuanian politics is much more populist. Politicians are more prone to make social promises and people expect a welfare state. It is the social spending which crowds out other spending, including defence," Jermalavičius adds. "Estonia is much more self-sufficient in this regard."

"There is also an underlying trend within the Lithuanian society which is in line with the term 'post-military society' where the non-military security threats – corruption, unemployment, migration, drug trade, etc. – take a higher priority compared to the hard military threats," Jermalavičius continues.

As a third element he mentions the country's lesson from history which is almost the complete opposite of the popular narrative in Estonia: "Lithuanians draw vastly different lessons from two episodes of history – 1940 and 1990," he says. "In 1940 we lost independence despite having spent massively on defence. At this point we had one of the most modern armies in Europe and spent about the quarter of our national income on military. We lost independence despite having this military and we regained independence despite not having any military. The conclusion the society has drawn from this experience is that the military doesn't matter."

Evelyn Kaldoja is the head of the foreign desk at Estonia's largest daily *Postimees*, among other subjects she is regularly covering defence and security issues.

Forrest Gump Recognises Mao

ZBIGNIEW ROKITA

For an unrecognised state, like Abkhazia – the breakaway region in Georgia – any recognition of their independence is important. This is true especially in the case of Abkhazian sport. While not many official international leagues allow an Abkhazian team, the few that do, have found that recognition is more than just symbolic.

Generally, unrecognised states desperately try to emphasise being independent in every way possible. To the point that they interpret every intentional (or unintentional) step by other states as an acknowledgment of their independence. For example, in the winter of 2010, the Abkhazian media were swept with the news that a McDonald's Restaurant on Sofiivska Street in Kyiv recognised the independence of Abkhazia: the restaurant screen displayed information on various countries in the world including Abkhazia. In the summer of 2011, the Azerbaijan authorities hammered Skype after its operators had changed the call rates' description of the Nagorno-Karabakh region from "Azerbaijan-Nagorno-Karabakh" into "Armenia-Nagorno-Karabakh".

Sport and diplomacy

Have you ever wondered why in *Forrest Gump* there is a scene in which the main character is playing table tennis with the Chinese? This is a reference to true events which took place in the spring of 1971. Until that year the United States had pursued the policy of One China, recognising Taiwan as the only representative state while boycotting the communists. In 1971, they had a change of heart. In the spring of that year, representatives of the American table tennis team were sent to the People's Republic of China. They became the first Americans to visit Maoist China after the communist coup in 1949. The game went smoothly and a few months later the United States recognised the Beijing authorities while taking away Taiwan's seat in

While not recognised as an official state, the World Domino Federation admitted Abkhazia as a member in 2007. They were then selected to host the 8th World Championship Domino Tournament in 2011 hosting nearly 300 contestants from 25 countries.

the Security Council and handing it over to Beijing. Richard Nixon then sent the best American table tennis players, as sport is the litmus paper of politics.

A similar situation occurred when the Soviet Union began to disintegrate. In the early 1990s, over a year before proclaiming independence, Georgians who were then playing in the Soviet League established their own football league. The Abkhazian Dinamo Sukhumi Club, however, did not join the football "separatists" and remained in the Soviet league. It was a sign of things to come. While watching sporting developments and events, one can sometimes learn more about politics than from the leaders' public declarations. The quasi-state of Abkhazia is a good example here.

A game of dominoes requires little equipment – a table and blocks will do. The rules are not very complex either. While sipping Turkish coffee and chain smoking, Abkhazians both young and old spend their days playing dominoes. Michael Schwirtz, when writing in *The New York Times* about Sukhumi (the capital of Abkhazia), noted: "Other men can be seen playing chess and sometimes cards, but the domino players seem to have command of the boardwalk. Women in this highly patriarchal society are rarely present at the tables, but locals insisted that they also played in their kitchens and courtyards."

Even before the 2008 Russian-Georgian War, Abkhazia had already been recognised by the World Domino Federation in 2007. Although the Abkhazians were sent away empty-handed by the federations of various sports, officials from the Domino Federation could afford to take this step since dominoes are not an Olympic sport. Admitting a state to the federation does not entail the most symbolic decision: allowing participation in the Olympic Games. The Abkhazians are already prepared for the day when the International Olympic Committee recognises their state; they have set up their own Abkhazian National Olympic Committee. For the time being, however, Abkhazia can only dream about the Olympics, which hurts even more since Sochi was less than 50 kilometres away. Yet, instead of getting closer to the Olympic village, the Abkhazians moved further away from it – for the duration of the Olympics, the authorities in Sukhumi agreed to temporarily move the Abkhazian and Russian border 11 kilometres inside its territory so that the Olympic athletes would enjoy more space.

The 2014 Winter Olympics, which took place less than 50 kilometres from Abkhazia, did not allow an Abkhazian team to participate.

Domino independence

The promoters of Abkhazian independence, recognised by the World Domino Federation, put all their efforts into their membership. The local tradition of dominos soon brought good results as the team began to be more successful. Within two years, the Abkhazian team caught up with the best ten teams in the world. They were then selected to host the 8th World Championship Domino Tournament, planned for 2011. Nearly 300 contestants from 25 countries, including the United States and Spain, visited Abkhazia for the tournament – a more symbolic moment could not have possibly been imagined. For that short time, the world ceased to ignore their existence. No expense was spared on organising the event – the poor quasi-state dedicated twice as much money to the championship than rich Venezuela did a year earlier. Oliver Bullough, a British journalist who visited the championship, recalls in the monthly *Prospect* a statement made by Giorgi Ardzinba, an elderly man he had met in Sukhumi: "There are even people in Russia who don't know what Abkhazia is. We might not have won the championship, but now there are people from beyond the ocean who know that we have a country. They will tell other people, and that has to help us, if only a little."

Old Giorgi was right. The Abkhazians did not succeed in the competition, placing only 14th, but it was the first domino championship so widely covered in the world media. Lengthy articles were published in the *Guardian* and *The New York Times*.

After the championship, the Abkhazians still use dominoes as a tool of foreign policy. During the subsequent world tournament, Artur Gabunia, president of the Abkhaz Domino Federation, was even unanimously voted the greatest president of the national federations in the world. Former President Alexander Ankvab admitted that in Abkhazia, sport is given more value than politics. It might be because they are less successful in politics than in sport.

Sometimes, however, Abkhazian domino lovers are confronted with a grey reality. At the 2013 world championship, which took place in the United States, an incomplete Abkhazian team was forced to participate as not all of them had been granted American visas. Nevertheless, they managed to achieve a big success by placing 2nd. The Sukhumi news agency ApsnyPress, without disclosing its sources, reported, "In the final match, Abkhazia was cheered on by Panama, Russia, Brazil, Venezuela, Mexico and Puerto Rico."

Sport franchise

On September 26th 2008, the Abkhaziya.org news service announced: "Today in Abkhazia, we are celebrating the 100th anniversary of Abkhazian football. Because of this event, a jubilee concert as well as a football match between the old boys of the Soviet Union and the Abkhazian teams will take place at the Stadium of the Republic in Sukhumi."

In Abkhazia, sport is given a higher value than politics. It might be because they are less successful in politics than in sport.

Beggars can't be choosers – you celebrate your 100th anniversary only once, and the Abkhazian team had to play somebody to emphasise its independence, questioned only a month earlier by Georgian tanks. The game ended in a 3-3 draw and a high number of spectators admitted they had not known whom to support in the game. The game took place a hundred years after the first match was played by an Abkhazian club called *Veni, Vidi, Vici Sukhumi*. Half-jokingly, the name might have come into being since in the early years they used to play mainly with sailors from all over the world who entered the port in Sukhumi and were bored after coming ashore.

The battle is not only about Abkhazia's participation in world tournaments, but also the right to represent it. Abkhazia, however, has not only one, but two, unrecognised national football teams: the pro-Sukhumi "separatists" and the pro-Tbilisi "refugees". Both teams played their celebration matches: one in Tbilisi, the other in Sukhumi. In reality they did not, however, compete against their opponents on the pitch, but against real enemies across the Abkhazian-Georgian border. As

the Abkhazian representation cannot participate in ordinary championships it has no choice but to play in the separatists' championships. That's why, in 2014, it took part in the ConIFA World Football Cup where it played next to such teams as Nagorno-Karabakh, Quebec and Darfur.

The tournaments of quasi-states are accompanied by plenty of absurd situations worldwide. Not to mention that there are more global championships in which unrecognised states participate. Those championships compete with each other to be recognised as the main tournaments of unrecognised states.

The boundary between the international recognition of a state on the political level is quite vague. In official football, however, such a dilemma is non-existent. Key decisions are taken by FIFA (a permission to play in world championships) and regional organisations (in Europe, by UEFA). Sometimes, unrecognised states have recognised teams. The examples of such cases are Palestine and Gibraltar.

FIFA has made its position clear. At this moment, this is no place for Abkhazia. The Abkhazian quasi-state does not disdain any opportunity for its players to kick the ball. It was no different for the 10th anniversary of the Apsny club participating in amputee football: a type of football played by teams consisting of footballers with one lower limb amputated in case of field players and one upper limb amputated in the case of goalkeepers. As the news service Abkhazia.ru reported: "Our footballers competed for the Cup of Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation in the tournament that took place in a holiday resort in Pitsunda. They competed with teams from Moscow, Barnaul, Kazan and Kemerovo. Our champions were placed fourth. Currently our Abkhazian players are facing the challenge of winning the Cup of President of the Russian Federation." No doubt that any opportunity is good to empower oneself.

The best Abkhazian athletes have to go to represent other countries if they want to participate in serious international competitions.

The discipline that Abkhazians are the best at is fighting. Sambo, karate, judo, boxing – in these disciplines they are too good to arrange confrontations with quasi-teams in quasi-championships. So they take advantage of a method which might be called the "sport franchise": they wear the colours of the country that is willing to sponsor them. Practically speaking, this country is Russia. In 2005 while playing on the Russian team, David Arszba, an Abkhazian citizen, won the European championship in boxing. In 2006, Aslan Akba won the wrestling championship in Russia. Abkhazia has, however, become famous thanks to Denis Cargush, a wrestler and a citizen of Abkhazia and Russia as well as a four-time Russian champion, a three-time European champion

and a two-time world champion who won the bronze medal at the London Olympics in 2012.

Please refrain from laughing

A few years ago Alexander Ankvab, the former Abkhaz president, received a visit from Alexander Smoltczyk, a journalist of the German weekly *Der Spiegel*. In his article "The ABC Republic: Abkhazia Attempts to Invent Itself", Smoltczyk quotes Ankvab saying: "You can write whatever you want. But please do not laugh at us."

Writing about the Abkhazian reality without making the reader burst out laughing is a difficult task. Did Smoltczyk break his word when he wrote that Ankvab governs a state "in which cities are called Pzyb, Gwylrypzh, or Gyazhrypzh"? Despite the writer's best intentions, even when described in a dull way, Abkhazia is amusing since on the political level it is under construction – rough and angular.

How can one refrain from a friendly smile when encountering a high number of attempts to conceal reality? For example, Abkhazia has manoeuvred with its website addresses. The domain ".gov" is granted only to authorities of recognised states (for instance the Polish government address is Premier.gov.pl, and the official website of the US president is Whitehouse.gov). The website of the President of the Republic of Abkhazia is Abkhaziagov.org. Simply put, as a quasi-state, Abkhazia was unable to obtain the official ".gov" domain but it had a feeling that the head of a respectable state should own one. Therefore, the Abkhazians themselves decided to squeeze "gov" into the website name.

With tenderness, we refer to Abkhazia's sporting achievements such as the one recently accomplished by Tengiz Tarba, head of the Information Department of the Abkhazian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. On January 11th 2014, Tarba climbed almost 7,000 metres to the summit of Aconcagua, the highest peak in the western hemisphere. There he planted the Abkhazian flag to celebrate his achievement. One thing we do not know for certain is whether Tarba was sent there by his superiors at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Translated by Justyna Chada

Zbigniew Rokita is a Polish journalist and an editor with the Polish-language bimonthly *Nowa Europa Wschodnia*.

10 years

GALICIA JEWISH MUSEUM

Commemorating the Jewish Past, Building a Jewish Future

10 YEARS OF THE GALICIA JEWISH MUSEUM

From the point of view of Jewish history, the area of the former Galicia province is a special one. Nowhere else in such a literal and visible manner do traces of Jewish life stand side by side with those of the Holocaust and destruction, which was brought to this world by the Second World War. Nowhere else in Europe is the presence of the void created by the Holocaust as tangible as in the lands of modern Poland and Ukraine. Nowhere else is the evidence of destruction as lasting and ubiquitous as it is here – because nowhere else in Europe was Jewish life as developed as it was in historic Galicia. For centuries, this area was the centre of Jewish life; and during the Second World War, it was the central point of the Holocaust, its epicentre.

The political and social realities of the post-war period meant that what physically survived the Holocaust was condemned to years of oblivion. In the place of memory, a type of amnesia developed, a collective amnesia sanctioning mass devastation of the surviving fragments of this shattered world. But Jewish life, which for decades under communism smouldered under the surface, has begun to recover in the last few years and is proudly manifesting its presence here in Poland. This new, contemporary Jewish world is founded not only on remembering the Holocaust, but also on the awareness of the centuries of the Jewish presence in this country and its contributions to every aspect and sphere of life. The people and institutions involved in this process cannot change the past, but they can change the world around us. Although much remains to be done, today, looking back on the last few years, we can clearly see how much we can achieve together. The Galicia Jewish Museum was an important part of these processes.

When Chris Schwarz opened the Galicia Jewish Museum in April 2004 – exactly 10 years ago – he wanted to create a place that, in the shadow of Auschwitz, would tell a story of life, pay tribute to the victims of the Holocaust, but also restore the memory of the Jewish world that once existed in the historic Galicia province and help create a space where Jewish life could be reborn.

Today, the Galicia Jewish Museum is one of the most respected Jewish museums in Poland. In the last 10 years, more than 300,000 people from around the world have visited us, and over 60,000 have participated in programmes organised by us outside of the Museum: in schools, cultural centres and museums around Poland. The Museum's activities have been recognised both by governmental institutions (such as awarding us a prize in the "Preserving Cultural Heritage" category of the Salt Crystals Competition organised by the Office of the Marshal of the Małopolska Voivodeship) as well as individual visitors (according to the Trip Advisor website, the Galicia Jewish Museum is one of the 3 best museums in Kraków).

None of our achievements over the last 10 years would have been possible without the support and help of friends like you. Thus, on behalf of the entire team at the Galicia Jewish Museum, we would like to extend my deepest thanks to you.

Director & Staff of the Galicia Jewish Museum

Galicia Jewish Museum
ul. Dajwór 18, 31-052 Kraków
0048 12 421 68 42
www.galiciajewishmuseum.org

Philosophy in the First Person Singular

A conversation with Vladimir Varava, professor of philosophy and one of the most well-known contemporary Russian thinkers. Interviewer: Daniel Wańczyk

DANIEL WAŃCZYK: One of the main problems of Russian philosophy has been the question of its essence and originality. Talking with you, a contemporary Russian thinker, I can't evade this problem either. Would you say that a solution has been already found in this respect? Has any consensus been reached here?

VLADIMIR VARAVA: Indeed, this is one of our omnipresent, cursed questions and it seems that there is no possible consensus. Let me try to explain why. First of all, when we talk about philosophical problems, we need to ask ourselves what we understand by the mere term "philosophy"? Do we look at it from a Western European rationalist tradition? Or maybe more broadly, from the point of view of a more metaphysical or spiritual practice – by means of which a nation presents its own truths, shows its essence and, by doing so, contributes something to humanity. Should we choose the second option, we choose what I will call here philosophy-making. In this case, we can, for sure, speak about Russia's significant contribution into the worldwide development of human thought.

I assume then that in your view Western philosophy is mainly systematic and rationalistic and rooted in the Greek-Roman tradition. Thus, everything is quite clear. What would you say is the difference between this tradition and the Russian philosophy-making which emerged, as you mentioned, from spiritual practice?

The most important characteristic of Russian philosophy is the constant mixing and overlapping of philosophy and literature. In other words, Russian philosophy is of a literary-centric nature. The beginning of this process can be traced back to the 19th century when the true Russian literature emerged. From the very beginning, it was focused on deeply ethical and moral questions. These were

the cursed problems which, in essence, were philosophical questions. Let me also stress here that for sure until the 19th century, but also later, there were no systematic philosophical treatises written in Russia. Characteristically, many issues which in the West were analysed within the walls of university buildings, in Russia were expressed in literature. Here, of course, the most illustrative examples are the novels written by Fyodor Dostoyevski and Leo Tolstoy. As you may know, it is in their works where the problem of the meaning of life, death, history (not only Russia's history, but also European and world history), relations between man and God, faith and atheism, freedom and enslavement, found a very strong expression and further influenced other thinkers around the world.

In my view, this literary-centric paradigm of Russian philosophy was not only limited to the 19th century. It also characterised the 20th century and some of its traits can be observed even today. Unfortunately, we now don't have enough time to discuss this issue in full detail, but let me point to such names as Osip Mandelstam, Boris Pasternak, Andrei Platonov, or Josif Brodski to indicate what I have mind.

What would you say is the main difference between philosophy captured in the form of systematic treatises and this philosophy-making by means of literature?

As I have pointed out before, Russian philosophy essentially deals with eternal questions focused on the meaning of life, death, history, etc. In my view, these issues can't be discussed in a dry, purely rationalistic form. The advantage of literature here is that it does not use the third person singular as the classic philosophical treaties do. It speaks in the first person singular. Literature does not analyse problems from the outside, nor in a "cold manner". It gets into the core of the problem. It becomes one of its parts. In addition, literature communicates with images and not by means of rational and often artificially created concepts.

In other words, Russian philosophy has reached this stage of philosophy-making, unknown elsewhere, by placing these deep moral problems at the heart of analysis and analysing them from the "me" perspective. In this way, the horizons of philosophy were expanded; it reached a new form and began to include new aspects, as well as dealt with some new, yet very important, problems that need to be solved. This is an exit from the closed circle of professional philosophy towards a wider circle of recipients: towards a man who thinks, feels and deals with these eternal problems every day.

As we already know a bit about what kind of philosophy we are discussing here, we may also want to learn what Russia we are talking about. Is the way of thinking that you have just described characteristic for all of Russia (previously the Russian Empire) or is it limited solely to what we call European Russia?

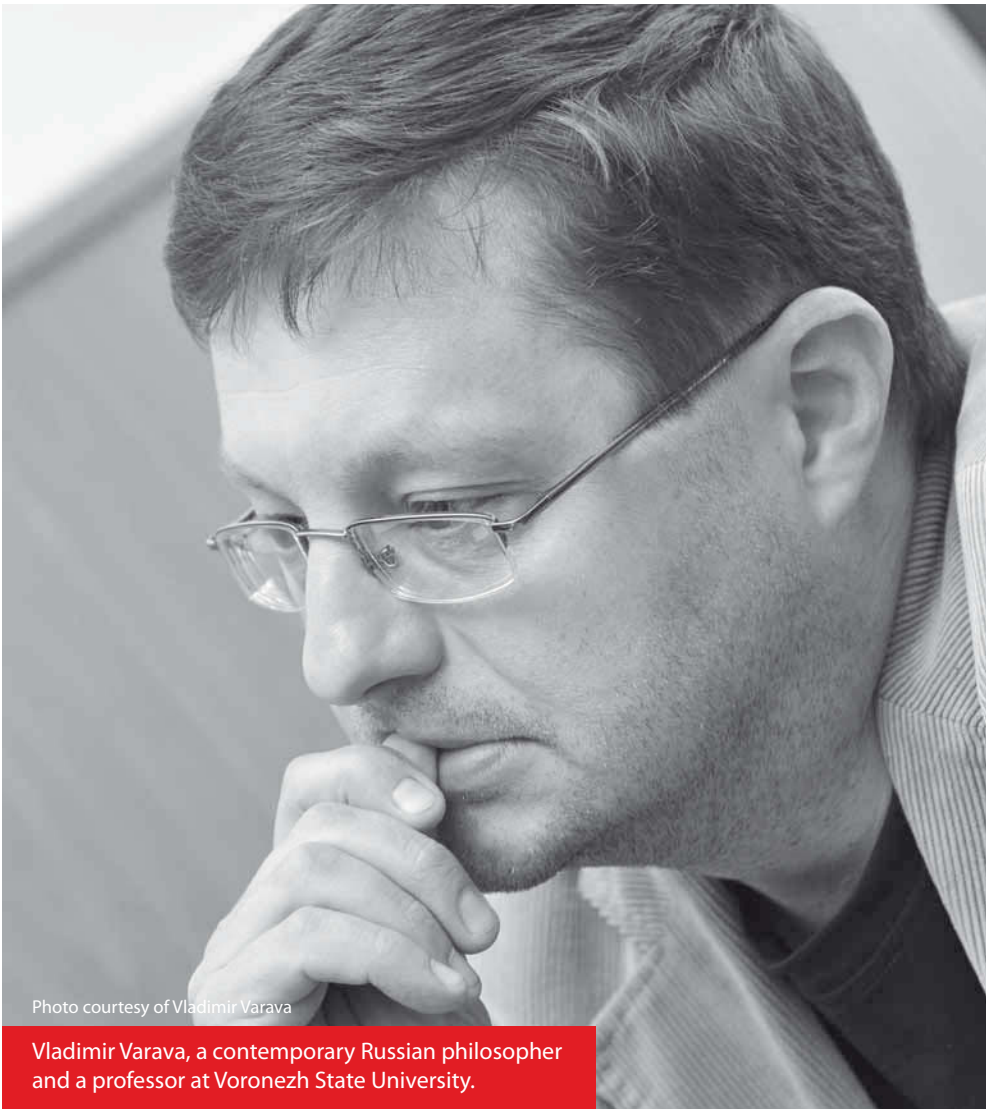


Photo courtesy of Vladimir Varava

Vladimir Varava, a contemporary Russian philosopher and a professor at Voronezh State University.

The trend we have been talking about indeed refers to the European parts of Russia. This is the case mainly because we can find its origin in the reforms introduced by Peter the Great and the encounters that the Russian elite experienced with Western Europeans. At that time, the Asian parts of Russia surely had a very large potential but weren't developed enough, nor did they have the adequate language to implement it.

But today we can see more and more research carried out into different philosophies of Russia's ethnicities. For example, vast academic research has recently been undertaken in Kazan aimed at examining the philosophy of

the Tatar people. Does this trend have a significant influence on the pan-Russian discourse or are we talking about two different worlds?

It's difficult to give a straightforward answer to this question. In my view, at this moment, the academic research into different philosophies of Russia's ethnicities does not have a significant influence on the characteristic of Russian philosophy that I was describing to you earlier. However, I must also say that it is a very positive trend as undertaking deep research into the different philosophical traditions of smaller ethnicities allows us to complete the picture of Russian philosophy and reveals some traits that will piece it together into one whole. Or just the opposite: it allows us to differentiate the understanding of some of the specific aspects which result from territorial locations and ethnic traditions.

One way or another, when I speak about the literary-centrism of Russian philosophy, I am referring mainly to the European part of Russia and I would never risk a statement that this also refers to the philosophy of, for example, the Tatar people. To make such a statement, additional research would be needed.

How do you assess the recent attempts undertaken by the central authorities – and here I am referring to the rather significant role of President Vladimir Putin – in creating the so-called official philosophical doctrine?

Indeed, recently in Russia we have been seeing politicians making references to the ideas developed by such thinkers as Vladimir Solovyov, Nikolai Berdyaev and Ivan Ilyin. However, I would also risk the statement that authorities always look for an ideology that legitimises their programmes. When we talk about this phenomenon in the post-Soviet world, we should first and foremost mention Boris Yeltsin, who indeed began to implement a plan for creating an official version of a Russian philosophical doctrine. This plan raised a sense of pity in some of us, but, on the other hand, it also had some positive effects, especially because it had served as an impulse to uncover the works of the philosophers and thinkers who were forbidden in Soviet Russia. I say this being of course fully aware that eventually such a plan could not be fully implemented as philosophy does not succumb to ideologisation and, in principle, it is always in opposition to official authorities.

Let me also point out that politicians tend to make references to philosophers who are no longer alive and who, for this reason, have no chance to distance themselves from any political usage of their ideas. The same applies to our current authorities; all of the earlier mentioned philosophers are long dead and using them instrumentally seems to me quite inappropriate and ineffective. Maybe the only exception is Ivan Illyin, the conservative philosopher and supporter of a strong state. Indeed, some elements of his philosophy can be easily used

even today. Nonetheless, the authorities should restrain from such temptations as his thinking was highly nuanced and the simplifications which we can make while using it could be quite hurtful.

And yet President Putin likes to surround himself with philosophers. It is suffice to mention Alexandr Dugin who is widely believed to have a significant influence on the shaping of the Kremlin's policies.

Without a doubt Alexandr Dugin is currently the most recognisable Russian thinker, both in Russia and abroad. However, I would not call him a philosopher. He is more of a political thinker, not to say an ideologue. Philosophers tend to be sceptical, suspicious and critical. This is simply their nature. Dugin, conversely, is a self-confident propagator of his own geopolitical ideas. To me personally, this way of thinking is very foreign.

When it comes to his influence on the president's circle, I don't have the sufficient knowledge to make any statements in this regard. All I can say with certainty is that he is highly respected by Russian society. I myself must admit that in the early 1990s, I was under the influence of some of his cultural and geopolitical concepts. But please bear in mind that back then Dugin was not the philosopher of political elites, but a radical oppositionist.

Overall, my view in regards to the relation of politics and philosophy is quite straightforward and clear – real philosophy does not succumb to ideologisation since, as I said before, it requires a critical, or at least sceptical, position towards the existing reality and conventions. It points to shortages, looks for possibilities of change and does not legitimise the status quo.

The state should not interrupt this free development of philosophy, either. Only uninterrupted philosophy is the most fruitful and brings the greatest benefits to society. Conversely, any temptations to instrumentally use philosophy to legitimise political power bring no benefits – neither to philosophy itself, nor to the state.

Translated by Iwona Reichardt

Vladimir Vladimirovich Varava is a doctor of philosophy, professor of Voronezh State University. Author of numerous articles and books on Russian philosophy and culture, among them: *The Ethics of Not Accepting Death* (2005), *The Psalm-Book of a Russian Philosopher* (2006), *Idols of Death in Modern Culture* (2011), *The Unknown God of Philosophy* (2013). He is a member of the Writers' Union of Russia.

Daniel Wańczyk is a PhD student at the Jagiellonian University, Kraków.

The Dilemmas of a Ukrainian Writer

A conversation with Oksana Zabuzhko, Ukrainian poet and writer.
Interviewer: Iza Chruślińska

IZA CHRUŚLIŃSKA: Your last volume of essays *From the Map of Books and People* came out in the autumn of 2012. How did the idea for this book come about?

OKSANA ZABUZHKO: I have written a number of essays over the last decade. I selected some of them, already having in mind the title *From the Map of Books and People*. It is something I tried earlier with *The Fortinbras's Chronicle*. Quite simply, this is the most exciting way of composing a book, which in my case exists from the moment its title is conceived. The next step is giving it the right form.

The title *From the Map of Books and People* crossed my mind about five years ago, as I was in the final stages of *The Museum of Abandoned Secrets*. It comes from Henry Miller who used this form of "hidden dreaming" when talking about his future house, where one room would be left empty with two naked walls as star atlases. One of the walls would show the history of his friends, while the other one would represent the most important books in his life. Obviously, I had to be very selective in drawing my own map of books and people. But this selection follows a certain logic. There are a few essays on books, mostly from my childhood and teenage years. In those essays I discuss the literature read by the generation born in the 1960s and thus succeed in building its profile. In our youth, my generation read a lot of good books.

There are a few other important texts in *From the Map of Books and People*. All of them taken together should create a portrait of the intellectual circle of the 1960s and 1970s to which I belonged. Thus, this book is not only my personal map, but also a local history of culture. Part of it was dedicated to people who have been important to me, especially those who have left us. This is why I include my correspondence with Yurii Shevelov, and my memories of Solomiya Pavlychko and Jurek Pokalchuk. I also wrote about

Leonid Plushch. First and foremost, I wanted to include these people in the pantheon of Ukrainian culture, which is still in the process of formation and contains many figures inherited from the Soviet times who should not be there.

While writing this book, it occurred to me that these texts could be an attempt at laying out the first pieces of the mosaic that is Ukrainian culture since 1991. It was this culture that shaped me and did not need to prove its existence because it simply existed. Of course, you can arrange these pieces for as long as you live. Thus, I cannot guarantee that there will not be more books of the kind.

While you enjoy wide popularity among your readers in Ukraine, how are your books received abroad? Can they help readers better understand Ukraine?

I can say that I was honestly surprised by the interest that publishers expressed in *Notre Dame d'Ukraine*. From the very beginning, this work was intended for Ukrainian readers. In fact, I was convinced that it would only reach a very limited number of readers. However, the entire print-run sold out in the second month and there was a need to print more. Over three years, the book sold 23,000 copies. I was then contacted by a German and an American publisher who wanted to translate it. But it worried me that it was totally unsuited for foreign readers. The book was full of Ukrainian references that are completely undecipherable to a foreigner.

Western writers before me have discussed the history of female dominance in early Christianity and the way it was subverted by Orthodoxy. I used this example to explain some of the phenomena taking place in Ukraine and suggest an interpretation of Lesya Ukrainka and her plays. No one had shown her in this European context before. I realised that adapting this to a western reader would mean rewriting the book. That's why I did not grant permission for its translation and recognised that a few reviews, one of them in *Slavic Review*, would be enough.

But overall this example serves well to illustrate a phenomenon that is worth highlighting. Not everything I write and publish is suitable for the western market and that makes me a Ukrainian writer. Many of my colleagues take a different path, writing with the thought in mind that their works will be translated. This shows us very well the dilemmas of a Ukrainian writer. While he or she feels part of European culture, he or she is consigned to the role of an intermediary between Europe and Ukraine, between the natives and western readers.

This is much like the Polish Film School in the 1950s and the 1960s. Those films explored entirely Polish topics, truths, experiences of war and human destinies, but nonetheless received great acclaim in the west. In turn, contemporary Polish cinema, which to a large extent is the same as

Photo courtesy of the Jan Nowak-Jeziorański College of Eastern Europe in Wrocław

everywhere, is much less recognised by foreign audiences.

I am convinced that a good writer must be able to universalise Macondo, the fictional city from Marquez's *Hundred Years of Solitude*. One must visit Columbia, experience that landscape to understand how much that novel is Columbian, local and not fictional. Everything exists in that space and, as the saying goes, "he who wishes to understand the poet must go to the poet's land." Columbia is a fascinating country. The national myth building is ongoing. I was there a few years ago. As I was going from the airport, the taxi driver pointed outside the window and said, "Please take a look, this was Pablo Escobar's villa." I nodded, simply thinking "So what?" He is just a dead drug baron.

However, some days later in Medellín, I saw a piece by the Columbian painter Fernando Botero titled *The Death of Pablo Escobar* done in the best Latin American tradition of Christian primitivism. It depicted a scene of Escobar fleeing over the roofs with a pierced heart that is open to see, like in those popular pictures of Christ. Blood is dripping and spattering over the roof tiles. And still you see the touch of genius. But looking at the painting, I could not escape the thought that this death was not all too different from the death of Yevhen Shcherban, killed at the airport in Donetsk in 1996. It brought back memories of the Ukrainian gang wars of the 1990s. Every region back then had its own criminal hero. These wars are an important page in Ukrainian history that effectively led to the contemporary oligarchs. However, the myth-making in Ukraine finished in the 19th century with songs about Karmaliuk.

The 19th century helps us understand the ways in which contemporary history is mythologised. While this no longer exists in Ukraine, it is continued in Columbia. If any of the Ukrainian painters, say Anatoliy Kryvolap, Oleksandr Roytburt or Sasha Hnylychkij painted the death of Shcherban in a similar style as Botero, the work would be met with a smile. We have left the myth-making behind. This is exactly what makes the Latin American novel so successful. It is based on a local setting and does not try to charm the outsider.

It is said that every writer writes about himself…

And that's great. That is how it should be. Let him write about his coming of age, his circle of friends, or about the flaws of his society. The rest should not bother him. If he succeeds in treating these issues with enough honesty, he will win recognition outside his country.

But if the writer is already writing with the thought in mind that his observations need to be presented in a way which is intelligible to an outsider, it just suggests his provincialism. Something similar occurs in academic circles, where western methods are by default applied to Ukrainian material without due reflection – just to prove that the processes taking place in our country are

like those in the civilised world. This is what is nicely illustrated by the success of *The Museum of Abandoned Secrets* in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. For an ordinary German reader, Ukraine is completely unknown. Poland is only now being discovered. The rest is simply the East, often connected with the Eastern Front during the Second World War and thus mixed feelings of guilt and fear.

Readers at literary events would tell me that thanks to my novel, they have discovered Ukraine and its history that was previously completely unknown to them. Some, thanks to Timothy Snyder, would associate Ukraine with the "bloodlands". His book was originally intended for western audiences and had to reveal new chapters of history.

There are moments, however, in my story that could be perceived as universal and could occur anywhere in the world. For example, the conversation between Daryna and her TV boss, who after watching her show suggests she do an unsophisticated reality show instead. One German journalist after reading *The Museum...* told me that she was slightly disturbed by how much I dedicated to Daryna's sexuality. She considered it absolutely unnecessary. Only after visiting Ukraine with a group of journalists and going to a meeting with Mykola Azarov, she understood why I put so much emphasis on it. The prime minister's office was full of young female civil servants in short skirts and high heels, flaunting their sexuality. The journalist thought this must be the Ukrainian way of treating women, where a woman's career is based on her sexuality.

In my novel, I address these issues directly. I wanted to show Daryna as part of this system and present her sexual biography. Nevertheless, I also wanted to make it clear that despite her stormy sex life, the heroine has always remained faithful to her partners. I could not leave out the "uncomplicated affairs", as that would have made her career impossible to understand. Foreign readers most often identify with her, not on the socio-cultural level, but rather personally. The novel deals with very general issues. Why do we love those who abuse us, but not those whom we should? A reader can always find something for him or herself in these questions.

Is it not the case in Ukraine that a writer fills the role of a guide? Such a view would mean a great sense of responsibility for the writer...

Unfortunately, yes. I say "unfortunately", because a writer cannot escape political responsibility. More than once I have heard from our diplomats, who are genuinely concerned with the country's image (such diplomats do exist), a phrase that captures the purpose of promoting Ukrainian culture abroad. It has to become "national diplomacy".

I would point out two factors that force a Ukrainian writer, when abroad, to take on such a responsibility. First, for some time the Ukrainian state has been absolutely ineffective. For non-Ukrainians, it is totally unclear to what extent the present

political class represents Ukraine. It took the tourist surge during the Euro Football Championship in 2012 for Europeans to see "the other Ukraine" and not the official Ukraine. Another factor that obliges a Ukrainian writer to take responsibility is the fact that in the 1990s Ukraine entered the international stage unprotected by recognisable cultural attributes. It did not have its own Tolstoy or Chopin. There were no symbolic forefathers under whose authority a contemporary Ukrainian author could develop.

So a writer could not speak in his or her own name without the fear that his ideas would be projected onto the whole country. Even those Ukrainian artists whose works are a part of world culture have been divested of their Ukrainianness. A good example is Mykola Leontovych, whose *Shchedryk* has been globalised as *Carol of the Bells* but is not identified with Ukraine. None of the museums displaying Alexander Archypenko's cubist works label him as a Ukrainian. It is very rare to find Ukrainian works labelled as Ukrainian while the label Russian is ubiquitous! Oh, poor Alexander Dovzhenko, who spent almost half a century under Stalinist house arrest and is now presented as a great Russian film director. Ukrainian works of art are like objects in a house without an owner. It is all up for grabs!

It seems that it is not our Ukrainian symbolic forefathers who influence contemporary artists as in happens other countries, but quite the contrary, we have to work to promote them as Ukrainian. We have to present them to the world as Ukrainians, dragging that "lost tradition" out into the light. Therefore, not to be lumped with other cultures, as has happened to me. Despite the publication of three of my books in Germany over last fifteen years, it was only after the Euro 2012 that on the German Amazon I was moved from the Russian Literature category to Eastern European Literature. For a Ukrainian writer, this burden of an intermediary is simply unavoidable. And this burden falls on the shoulders of my generation.

A Ukrainian writer also has to be equally good at explaining the West to Ukrainians. That is no easy task, because to do this one has to be well-known both in the country and in the West. In my case, I would say that ever since the novel *Fieldwork in Ukrainian Sex,* I have strived for these two sides, Ukraine and the West, to be in constant contact. I feel that being an intermediary is an essentially Ukrainian experience and that of a borderland culture. Culture is always born out of dialogue in the borderland, at the intersection of different points of views. And every artist is a lens refracting rays from different cultures.

Looking at my western colleagues I sometimes think to myself that in fact, despite all my laments, I am very fortunate to have been born at that time and to be a Ukrainian writer. This has worked to my advantage. Western writers often talk of postmodern exhaustion, writer's block

or a creativity crisis, but I know none of this. Thus the burden of responsibility also works in the other direction. It motivates. There are so many topics and unanswered questions that a Ukrainian writer can and should write about.

Translated by Laurynas Vaičiūnas

Oksana Zabuzhko is a contemporary Ukrainian poet and writer.

Iza Chruślińska is Polish writer and activist involved in issues relating to Polish-Ukrainian dialogue.

This interview has been adapted from the book titled *Ukraiński palimpsest: Oksana Zabużko w rozmowie z Izą Chruślińską* (*Ukrainian Palimpsest: Oksana Zabuzhko in Conversation with Iza Chruślińska*) published by the Jan Nowak-Jeziorański College of Eastern Europe in Wrocław, Poland (2013).

Notes from the Silk Road

PHOTOS AND TEXT: STUART WADSWORTH

The desert country of Uzbekistan is most vividly associated with the Silk Road, with three UNESCO-listed medieval towns that were all visiting points on this route. If it were not for the closed political system, the country has the potential to be a strong tourist destination, with ancient sights that have been extensively and meticulously renovated.

The road to the border between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan was in poor condition, but Uzbekistan's roads were much better than those in Tajikistan, the country I travelled to before making my way to Uzbekistan. Its infrastructure is way ahead of Tajikistan; this was going to be the first time in the region that I would be able to sample the relative luxury of railway travel. All things are relative, however. Uzbekistan is 74th in world GDP, just above Lithuania, whose population of around three million is nine times smaller than that of Uzbekistan. The country consists mostly of desert and it is only in the easternmost part around the Fergana Valley and the capital Tashkent where it is greener.

Proof of employment

My aim was to head first to the southern city of Termiz before heading north and west through the great Silk Road cities of Samarkand, Khiva and Bukhara. The Silk Road, a term coined as recently as 1977, actually refers not to one road but to several ancient routes linking eastern China to Asia Minor, specifically Turkey. For hundreds of years, traders in silk, spices, highly-prized gems, fragrant teas and other exotic goods travelled in slow-moving caravans across Central Asia, bringing back not only western goods but new ideas, technology and culture, thus changing the relationship between the East and West forever. The desert country of Uzbekistan is today most vividly associated with the Silk Road, with three UNESCO-listed medieval towns that were all stopping points on this route.

Logistically, Uzbekistan was very difficult for me to enter. I had secured a visa while in Bishkek in the Kyrgyz Republic, but only after a great deal of waiting around and paying for a letter of invitation that arrived at the very last moment. On the visa application, I was asked to specify exactly where I would be and when, how I was to enter the country and where I would be leaving, and in what accommodation I would stay. I also needed to provide proof of employment. Independent travel is not encouraged in Uzbekistan and the government of Islam Karimov, the president since 1991, has made no moves to either abolish visas or make it easier to obtain one. The leader is an old-school ex-communist and has been in power since before independence. His regime stifles opposition and Uzbekistan is considered to be amongst the worst countries in the world for human rights abuses.

However, during the 1990s, and especially after September 11th 2001, western governments have tolerated the regime as Uzbekistan was seen as key ally in the US-led War Against Terror. Since the Andijon massacre in 2005, in which independent observers claim that up to 500 peaceful protestors were executed by state police in a pre-meditated ambush, relations with the West have deteriorated dramatically and many embassies and NGOs in the country have shut their doors.

Thus, I felt some degree of trepidation on entering the country, which I did on foot at the Sariosiyo border. Aside from the annoying level of bureaucracy and lengthy walk in the searing heat – it was September and still around 35 degrees Celsius – the process was pretty smooth. The first thing to do on entering a country is to obtain local currency, and in Uzbekistan this is rarely a problem. There is a thriving black market for currency, preferably dollars, and the rate is around 25-30 per cent better than the official rate – a consequence of the regular devaluation of the Uzbek som. Money comes in 1000 som note denominations (0.30 dollars) or lower, which has the irritating consequence of obliging one to carry around large bags of notes and carefully count through large wads for everyday transactions.

Cotton makes up around 20 per cent of Uzbek exports, it has been extensively cropped since communist times.

Quickly negotiating a taxi-ride to Termiz – disappointingly, there was still no public transport available here at least – I was able to watch the Uzbek scenery unfold: fields and fields of white, with heads bobbing up and down in them. Uzbekistan's main crop is cotton, and this was *pahta* – harvest time. Cotton accounts for around 20 per cent of Uzbek exports, and it has been extensively grown in the country since communist times. Introducing a strain of cotton from the United States, the Soviet regime aimed to emulate US production and went to great lengths to achieve this through extensive fertilisation and irrigation.

Unfortunately, the thirsty crop proved unsuited to its dry environs and this had major consequences on the environment, most notably on the Aral Sea, which has shrunk in area by 70 per cent since the diversion of the Amu Darya and Syr Darya Rivers in the 1960s. The Aral Sea is perhaps the world's worst ecological disaster, its once bustling ports now lie in the desert, hours from the shrinking shoreline. Local incidences of respiratory illness and skin disease are common due to chemicals from fertilisers that have remained in the soil after the sea evaporated. The sad image of ships stranded in the sand epitomises the disappearance of the Aral, once one of the world's greatest lakes.

Additionally, the government stands accused of allowing child labour in cotton production and of forced, badly-paid labour in general at harvest time. One million people are thought to be involved in its collection at this time of year, bringing the countryside to a virtual standstill. Uzbekistan has paid a very high price for its cotton.

A shot in the arm

Termiz is a fairly uneventful town which, bordering Afghanistan, has a slightly edgy feel to it, and it is not used to tourists visiting. The highlight of my stay was exchanging black market money with a local policeman. Officials are clearly not going to enforce the law when it comes to money changing – the country's economy would collapse without the black market – and are often not averse to supplementing their meagre incomes by this means. Pushed for time, I missed the opportunity to explore Termiz's environs, which contain ruins dating back to Ghengis Khan's time including ancient Buddhist temples and Sufi mausoleums. I went past a few of these deserted sites on the road to Samarkand. The road was pretty smooth, but our taxi crawled along at an average of 60 kilometres per hour for most of the 350 kilometre journey. Perplexed as to why this was, I asked the driver in bad Russian and he replied grimly: *militsya*. There is a 60 km per hour speed limit in the country, even on open desert roads, and the police zealously enforce it with frequent speed checks. Drivers even have anti-radar devices in their cars, but we were stopped at one point for exceeding the paltry limit and had to pay the inevitable bribe.

For centuries, Samarkand has held a special place in the imagination of western writers, artists and travellers.

Samarkand has for centuries held a special place in the imagination of western writers, artists and travellers. In 1913, James Elroy Flecker wrote the poem "The

The intricately-tiled brickwork and perfect geometrical lines leading up to splendid round turquoise domes literally inspire awe and one wonders how these mosques could even have been conceived in the 15th century.

While still underdeveloped, there is a strong potential in Uzbekistan's tourist industry; the country contains more ancient sights than any other state in Central Asia.

Golden Journey to Samarkand" containing the lines: "We travel not for trafficking alone / By hotter winds our fiery hearts are fanned / For lust of knowing what should not be known / We take the golden road to Samarkand".

Evocative of Silk Road romance, Samarkand's turquoise-domed, intricately-tiled mausoleums, medrassas and towering minarets have been the subject of endless discussion amongst 19th century explorers even though few ever made it this far. Samarkand faded from public consciousness during Soviet times and has only recently been rediscovered. But, to their credit, the Soviets took care in restoring the crumbling, earthquake-damaged city they found on the periphery of their empire. Today it is in pristine condition. Some would say they went too far perhaps. The old town and Jewish area is practically impossible to find, hidden away behind newly-built walls north-east of the centre. The parks and main thoroughfares have a new-town feel and the city's domes practically dazzle with fresh paint and scrubbed surfaces. But these are merely quibbles because Samarkand was for me the first truly great city I had entered in Central Asia and a shot in the arm after four weeks of exhausting mountain travel. Here, and for the rest of the trip, I was to be a tourist.

Uzbekistan seems to attract and repel tourists in equal numbers.

This was the first country in Central Asia where I had seen even a modicum of mass tourism, and even though it is slight for a country with such enviable architectural riches, it was a bit of a shock after my journey to Tajikistan. If Samarkand was in Europe, it would be inundated constantly. As it is, the summer season brings over some intrepid groups of Europeans, but it's hardly a deluge and often you still have sights to yourself if you visit at the right time. One place you won't be alone is the Registan, one of the single greatest sights in Central Asia, which was, well, regal. Its massive minarets, intricately-tiled brickwork and perfect geometrical lines leading up to splendid round turquoise domes literally inspire awe and one wonders how these medrassas and mosques could even have been conceived, as they were, in the 15th century.

Samarkand is the hometown of Timur the Great (Tamerlane), one of history's most revered and reviled leaders. It was he who built it all up from scratch to rival any city in the world for opulence and majesty. Scholars estimate that his military campaigns across Central Asia accounted for the deaths of around 16 million people, or five per cent of the world's population. His city was, as far as he was concerned, literally the centre of the world. The Bibi-Khanym Mosque just to the north was one of the most impressive religious buildings I have ever seen, perhaps only equalled in terms of beauty by the Taj Mahal.

Low-key appeal

Uzbekistan offered something unexpected: comfort. Hotels, restaurants (or a few decent eateries worthy of the name) and most of all travel were all far and away superior to what I had experienced in other countries in Central Asia. The fact that it has a fully-functioning train system was also a major boost. To be able to sit in a cool carriage with leg-room watching a soap opera for the three-hour trip to Bukhara was approaching luxury. A left-over from Soviet times, Uzbekistan along with many other former Soviet states boasts an efficient system which seems to run on time, has clean, comfortable carriages and is very cheap by western standards.

Uzbekistan's ancient cities had reinvigorated my inspiration and my desire to travel.

Bukhara is another wondrous town and dates to ancient times, having been its own khanate for hundreds of years before the Russians took over. Unlike Samarkand, it lacks a single "wow" factor, but its lower-key appeal is a perfect counterpoint to the glitz and glamour of the country's main draw card and is no worse for it. Government restoration efforts have been less indiscriminate and more subtle than in Samarkand. The city is more compact and can be seen in two or three days; its warren of streets and back alleys are hugely appealing, almost as much as its splendid sights – mosques, medrassas, mausoleums and minarets – which the city is literally strewn with. The arresting Ark – a walled city within a city, which resembles an ark from the outside – is an interesting place to visit for anyone interested in the Great Game, played out in the 19th century as Britain and Russia struggled over their interest of the area. Two hapless British officers, Colonel Charles Stoddart and Captain Arthur Conolly, on a mission to assure the Emir Nasrullah Khan about Britain's invasion of Afghanistan, were imprisoned here, accused of treason and eventually made to dig their own graves before being publicly beheaded. That was in 1841, under Queen Victoria's rule.

The city is also famous for its Jews, who have been in Bukhara since around the 12th century. The community evolved its own culture and language – Bukhori – and spread around the Central Asian region, making up around 10 per cent of the population. Today, only a few remain. Many were driven out by successive antisemitic regimes. The city's synagogue in Sarrafon, in the centre of town, is all that remains of this once-thriving community. Again, it is a place that, though touristy, is very easy to have to yourself. On my last evening there I dined in style, gazing over a plaza that was an artist's dream, containing the beautiful 12th-century Kalon mosque and minaret, dimly lit by a full moon. The only other soul around was a stray cat.

My last stop on the Silk Road was Khiva, another 400 kilometres west, close to the border with Turkmenistan. The temperatures were still in the mid-30s and it

was into the second half of September. The scenery had changed from barren and arid to absolutely parched: this was the Kyzylkum Desert one of the driest places on Earth. What remains of the Aral Sea lies several hundred kilometres to the north-west, beyond that is the Caspian Sea. To the south lies Turkmenistan's desert wasteland. To the north is Kazkstan's steppe – thousands of miles of nothing in every direction. This was literally the end of the road.

Feeling a bit like an ant following a trail of other ants around the country, I kept bumping into tourists I had seen in Bukhara and Samarkand, most of whom were being led around in big groups. There was a trickle of backpackers, too, and I wondered how many there would be if the visa regulations were lifted. Uzbekistan seems to attract and repel tourists in equal numbers, but if the government truly opened itself, tourism could could become a key resource generator since it contains more ancient sights than any other country in Central Asia.

A museum city

Khiva, smaller than Bukhara and much more intimate in feel than Samarkand, provides the traveller another contrast on Uzbekistan's Silk Road. Although its walled centre is about 600 by 400 metres, it is so literally crammed with sights and things to do that you need three days to comfortably see everything. Some have criticised Khiva for it being too much like a museum city. In a way it is – almost every building is for tourists and you need to buy a pass just to enter the city walls, but that only detracts slightly from the experience. That experience is of wandering around a city which has little changed since medieval times. Behind the walls, people trade, chat, play, eat, laugh, argue – basically live their entire lives within an incredibly confined space surrounded by mud walls. I scaled these walls and walked around them to get a better feel for the place and looked at the fat, but oddly beautiful, tiled Kalta Minor Minaret and the shining turquoise domes that are so symbolic of these ancient Central Asian towns.

Khiva is like no other place on earth. I had travelled over 4,000 kilometres through the heart of Asia and had seen, until recently, almost nothing older than a couple of generations. The modern-day capitals of Central Asia are uniformly disappointing, providing very little in historical or cultural interest. It is a sad truth that in over 600 years of civilisation, the buildings that we create are inferior to our ancestors, despite all our technology. In a square kilometre in Khiva there were more riches than not only Tashkent, but most modern cities in the world.

Uzbekistan's ancient cities really reinvigorated my inspiration and my desire to travel, and reminded me why I had come to Central Asia. Its people, like almost all I had met in Central Asia, were faultlessly charming and polite. Unlike, say, Morocco,

India or Egypt, where "friendliness" usually has a subtext, this is a major reason to travel here. People here do not beg, hassle or pressurise you as a tourist and there is no hard-sell. The tourist sector is nascent, and for now at least, independent travel is challenging but very rewarding. NEE

Stuart Wadsworth is a freelance writer and travel photographer.
He has contributed to Rough Guides, the Urban Travel Blog,
the *Krakow Post* and other media.

A Bazaar of Memories

JUAN M. DEL NIDO

A visit to the shipyard in Gdańsk leads one to wonder about the preservation of memories in Poland and highlights the current debates on the materiality of the past and its role in our present.

After 48 hours in Gdańsk I still hadn't seen the shipyard, despite it being the reason I went there in the first place. Kacper picked me up at the exhibition *Roads to Freedom,* we made a right and immediately the Monument to the Fallen Shipyard Workers was visible ahead, an imposing milestone-compass drawing wandering eyes towards itself.

The right to build this monument was one of the demands voiced during the 1980 strikes, Kacper explains, and the aim was to commemorate the deaths of 45 people during the 1970 riots. It stands on the exact location where the first three protesters were killed, hence the three crosses on the top. The seemingly chaotic collection of smaller monuments and plaques expanding concentrically around its base and on lateral walls became evident as we briskly approached the area. Some of the memorials commemorate the victims of the totalitarian regime, some celebrate the workers' bravery, some are exaltations of Solidarity – each has its own, yet all are there.

The Shipyard

Complementing this profuse semiotic cluster, a series of stone slabs lay on the grass in a supersized pattern, like a giant board game; an east-of-the-curtain Monopoly, "Segment" was installed by the Solidarity Centre Foundation in 2010. Each slab contains an anecdote about daily life under communist rule and instructions as to how to proceed; yet the obvious game-like layout and the rules of the game, known every Pole, are the only forces binding the exhaustive, yet unrelated, burlesque

collection of episodes of life under communism from beginning to end. Leaving the eclectic ensemble behind, we went through the gates and under the ominous *Stocznia Gdanska* sign, past a buzzing colossal building site and along a path into the shipyard itself.

We meandered through the buildings in various states of decay as Kacper elaborated on the relevance of the site for the preservation of memories of Poland and of the world. Some seem completely left to rot, colonised by weeds and stifled by ivy, as if memory had forgotten all about them. Yet we circled around them and lingered, for such ruins in cosmetic disrepair have a power to compel. Glimpses of neon lights through shattered windows and cracked, mouldy plaster peeling off sturdy walls all speak of a materiality once inhabited, familiar, heroic and strange at the same time. Familiar as these structures were purposeful and instrumental to others like us, whose plain humanity impregnated those spaces. Yet it is the heroism that sets them apart from us. We grew up hearing about "to Poland and the world", and it exudes in waves like Proust's *petites madeleines*. The final effect is one of affection: the familiarity of their relatable-human condition is further informed by our knowledge of what has happened here and we participate in this past presence that exudes from these buildings and seduces us into solemn awe.

Narratives of social memory are constructed and only possible through a mediation of a myriad of experiences.

Much to our disenchantment, narratives of social memory are socially constructed and only possible through the mediation of a myriad of experiences. I grew up on the other side of the world and both Kacper and I are too young to have any articulate recollection of political life in Poland in the 1980s. Universities, newspapers, films, national histories and parents construct these memories for us and anchor them in texts, songs and family albums. Our visit to the shipyard is also one of the many instances that creates and recreates shared memories, as are the *ogórek* (cucumber) bus tours led by former shipyard workers which take tourists on a memory ride, covering all the nooks and crannies that have stories awaiting to be unlocked – from the wall where Wałęsa climbed to access the shipyard to each spot where he gave his speeches.

Engaging with the past

Affection and intellect anchor firmly on material grounds and material is a natural seat for memories composed of both. Perhaps this is nowhere truer than in this shipyard, a legend in its own right. But managing the memories of Poland, of the world and their material reservoirs in a fully-functional urban setting is a thorny

business. Since the beginning of the post-communist era, the shipyard has entered a path of steady decline. They were converted into a joint stock company, partly owned by employees and partly by the national treasury. The "shock therapy" that the country chose to escort itself into capitalism brought decreasing competitiveness to the industry and in 1997 Stocznia Gdanska S.A. went bankrupt. Production was diversified: wind turbines, steel constructions and luxury yachts absorbed workers and facilities. The biggest blow was perhaps the privatisation of the area, for a pittance, to a Ukrainian group that ended up closing two of the three slipways.

Indeed, as the city develops and seeks to reinvent itself in a country that struggles to make sense of its failed capitalism, an army of cranes stands incongruously idle. Its proximity to the water, the tram, the train station and the city centre makes the shipyard and the land it sits on a coveted battleground for conflicting visions of its memories' future. The city government called for proposals from private investors as to how to revitalise the area. In April 2013, BPTO, a developer that owns 22 hectares of the area, made public its project to build a complex centre combining bars, restaurants, apartments, offices and waterside walkways connecting to the city centre.

Although the project proposes the restoration of some of the historical buildings, Lech Wałęsa repeatedly voiced his disagreement. In his grandiloquent style, he told *The Observer* that "the era in which Germany united, Europe united and the world started moving to a new global unity, started in the Gdansk shipyard." He went on to add that the shipyard was "the first monument to these events and should be preserved for humankind." The pragmatic local Solidarity chief, Karol Guzikiewicz, bitterly pointed out to the same newspaper that "history does not put bread on the table."

Should we let contemporary scrambles for identity engulf the past and reshuffle it into a fully-fledged urban centre?

These two stances aptly summarise the current debates on the materiality of the past and its role in our present. Things exist, they come to have a meaning and we must address that meaning. But how? Writing the past into contemporary identity, one of sanitised collections and carefully curated museums, forcing recollection into a historical area instead of letting the course of the events it brought about itself engage it with contemporaneity? Should we let contemporary scrambles for identity engulf the past and reshuffle it into a fully-fledged urban centre? Any answer, even maintaining the status quo, would directly tap into the issue of the country's collective heritage understood as the seat of memory. Any small attempt to engage with the shipyard and its materiality motivates the fiercest resistance; in 2012, as Andrzej Wajda was shooting his recently premiered

film *Wałęsa. Man of Hope*, protests exploded when the Lenin Shipyard sign was recreated.

The past that is present

These are times for recollection and reflection upon the past that started here. The very new order that this shipyard brought about is the one that questions its utility and attempts to engage with it in a controversial manner. Moreover, not only did Stocznia Gdańka bring about a new order, it brought new faces: workers and intellectual affiliates like former Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki, whose recent death prompted some acrimonious reflections on the current state of affairs. In *From Solidarity to Sellout*, economist and ex-Solidarity member Tadeusz Kowalik questions the collection of reforms that Mazowiecki implemented, which would in time create, according to him, the most unjust social system in Europe. Kowalik, who started his political life around these same cranes and with the same aspirations, blames the then-new administration directly for the structural unemployment and social inequality that has been Poland's lot ever since.

The Gdańsk shipyard is a Gordian knot, compressing the diverging array of memories stuck in it.

Indeed, once democracy took hold and the new order had time to prove its worth, longings for previous eras did not recede. Kacper tells me that the communist party is still active and some of the very same communists who were around back then are still in the public sphere. This posits yet another problem: how to manage memories of that which still is? Upon the shoulders of the Institute of National Remembrance falls the damned task of streamlining and cleansing the archives from those days. Some bitter stories still pop up, and the past with its memories appear as political weapons, truthful at best but sour nonetheless. It's no easy task and similar to that solid, physical "segment" game that welcomed us at the beginning of our trip. The whole imaginary space of an era of carefully straitjacketed recollections contained and mapped out on some twenty slabs: a game, a cautionary tale, a stance on our memory and our past, as we decide how to be remembered and what we can or should let go.

As a journalist, performer and writer Wojciech Stamm put it, the Gdańsk shipyard is a Gordian knot, compressing the stridently diverging array of memories stuck in it. There is a virility to memories, in particular collective ones, that actively seeks material purchases to entrench on and proliferate, much like the moss that took roots on the buildings where the memories of Poland took a turn that cannot be

undone. Indeed, as we walk towards the exit, the Monument to the Fallen Shipyard Worker reminds us that in the end, we always come back to where it all began.

I realise as we pass the colossal three crosses on our way out. Its material legacy, the paraphernalia around it and the emotions they jointly conjure up, guides our memory, fixates on its past, explains our present and informs our future. This future will now come in the form of a building shaped like a ship, under the name of the European Solidarity Centre. For this enormous structure in rusty shades will now be the guardian of memories.

Juan M. del Nido is a graduate of the University of Edinburgh.
His academic interests include national identity and social movements.

This essay won first place in a competition during the 2013 Solidarity Academy organised by the European Solidarity Centre and supported by New Eastern Europe.

Tryzub and Crescent

ADAM BALCER

Relations with Turkic and Caucasian Muslims have been a crucial factor in the development of the Ukrainian identity, although they are not well known and often misinterpreted. They are often looked at through the prism of the Cossacks fighting with the Tartars and Turks. However, one cannot imagine the Cossacks representing the essence of what is Ukrainian without understanding the profound impact of the Turks and Tartars – who were often their allies, not enemies – on the Cossack way of life.

It is no accident that the vision of Ukrainians as leaders in the struggle for freedom for the enslaved peoples of Russia and the Soviet Union (mostly Muslims) has become the foundation of Ukrainian nationalism. Relations with the world of Turkic Islam and the steppe, which is identified with it, had a tremendous impact on all aspects of life of inhabitants of Ukraine for centuries. The name of the country itself actually means "country at the border" of the Great Steppe, stretching from Manchuria to the Carpathians. Centuries of division between the settled agricultural north and the nomadic south that existed until the beginning of the 19th century still have an impact on Ukraine's regional diversity. In the process of building a Ukrainian identity and its relations with the Muslims, two visions of Ukraine have clashed for centuries: a bulwark of Christianity fighting against Islam, and a bridge to the Muslims perceived as allies.

Sometimes, these two archetypes intermingled and formed a hybrid full of internal contradictions. The vision of Ukraine as Prometheus, a liberator of nations dominated by Russia, has become the foundation of Ukrainian nationalism. On the other hand, Russia was perceived as an Asian and Tatar foreign autocracy. The tradition of the heroic struggle of Cossacks against Turks and Tartars coexists with the idea of an alliance with Turkey against Russia.

The spirit of crusade and robbery

The Cossacks, who are regarded as the essence of what is Ukrainian in the country's national narrative, experienced the strongest impact of the steppe and Islam. It is sufficient to say that the word "Cossack" is of Tatar origin, meaning a free man or adventurer. The names of military ranks (e.g. *ataman*, *essaul*), weapons and military organisation (e.g. *chaika* – a boat; *kosh*, *kurin'*), clothing, institutions (*maidan* – a place of meetings) and objects (*kobza* – a legendary instrument of the *kobzars*) are also of Tatar or Turkish origin. The Cossacks' roots are likely to be found among the so-called *chumaks*, traders with Crimea and Turkey. Historian Dymitr Evarnicki put forward a thesis that "the first *chumaks* were traders, craftsmen, and at the same time warriors," like the Cossacks. The name *chumak* most probably comes from the Tatar language and means "charioteer". The name *haidamak*, a peasant insurgency in the 18th century, is also of Turkish origin.

In terms of organisation, values system and way of life, the Cossacks resembled the Janissaries – the special forces of the Ottoman Empire. Janissary units appeared also in the Crimean Khanate. Even basic Cossack "trademarks" such as clothing (e.g. *sharavary* pants) and haircuts (*chub*), which became national symbols to Ukrainians, were similar as to those of the Janissaries. The pejorative name of Ukrainians *khakhol* comes from the Russian name of that hairstyle. On the other hand, the Ukrainian word *katsap*, a pejorative term to describe Russians, probably derives from the Turkish word *kasab* – a butcher. Living on the border of the steppe, the Cossacks became a part of it in terms of genealogy. They believed they were the descendants of the Khazars, a Turkic people who ruled over the Ukrainian steppe between the 8th and 10th centuries. Pylyp Orlyk, the 18th century hetman, used the titles Kagan of Khazars and Prince of Cossacks interchangeably.

The Cossacks did not recognise the Turkic roots of the Khazars and believed them to be Scythians. However, the Scythian origin linked the Cossacks with the Tatars. The latter were widely perceived in Europe as the descendants of the Scythians. Given all this, it should be no surprise that Stanisław Sarnecki, the 16th century Polish historian who was one of the first to describe Cossacks, believed that most of them were... Muslims.

Since the mid-16th century and through the mid-17th century, the Cossacks repeatedly raided and plundered the Crimean and Turkish ports and even the suburbs of Istanbul on the Black Sea, which was the lake of the Ottoman Empire. They fought against the Turks and Tatars in many battles that have passed into legend, such as the heroic defence of Khotyn in 1621. For nearly three centuries, the Crimean Tatars invaded the lands of Ukraine, taking slaves (*yasyr*). However, the scale of destruction by the Crimean Tatars is often exaggerated in the Polish and Ukrainian historiography.

The population of Ukraine had grown nearly two and a half times between the mid-16th and mid-17th centuries. The borders of settlements have also moved significantly to the south.

Some Ukrainian prisoners made illustrious careers in the Ottoman Empire. One of the most prominent figures in history, Roxelana (also known as Hürrem), was the wife of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent (1520-1566). She carried enormous influence behind the scenes. She was a daughter of an Orthodox priest from Rohtyn in Galicia, and contributed to the establishment of a golden era in relations between the Polish kingdom and the Ottoman Empire in the 16th century.

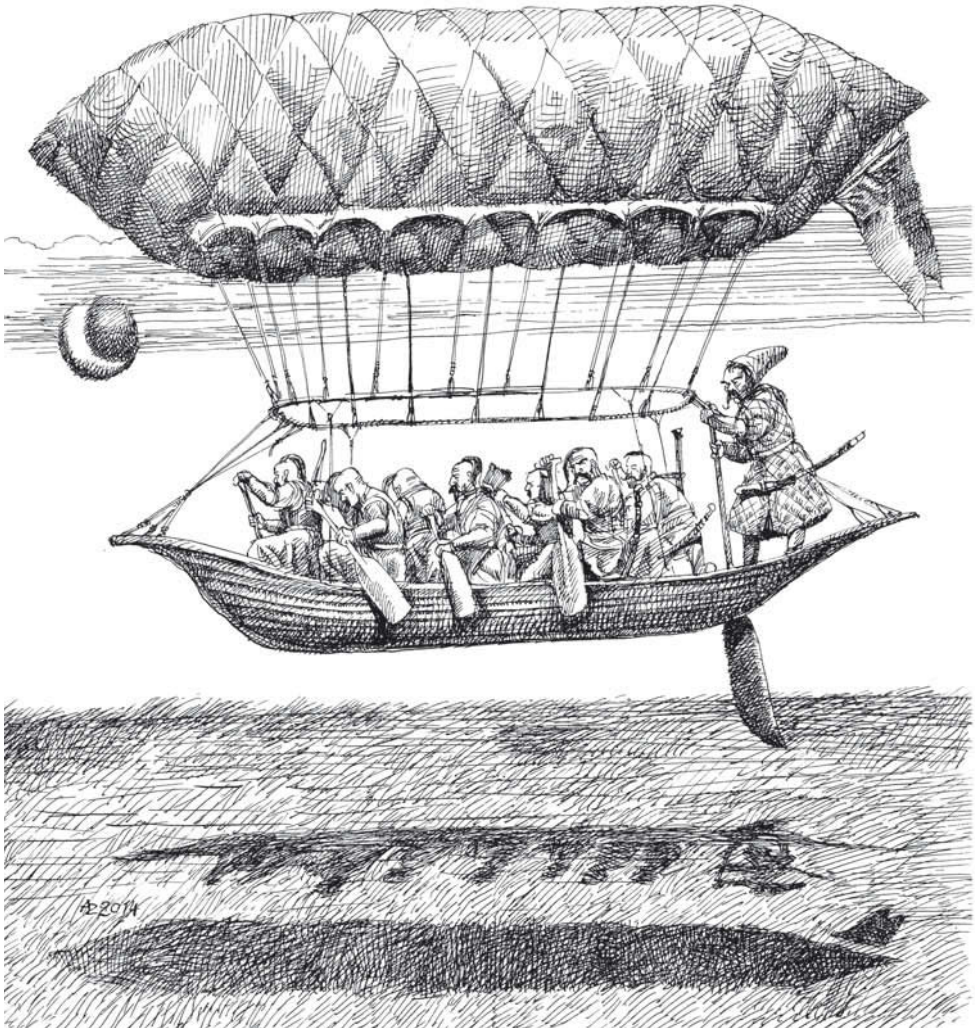
Cossack merchants

The Cossack wars against the Turks and Tatars had a significant impact on the history of Ukraine. According to Mykhailo Drahomanov, a 19th century Ukrainian historian, the main goal of the Cossack union with Moscow signed in 1654 was to obtain access to the Black Sea and the colonisation of the wild steppe. In the 19th century this alliance aimed not only at fighting the Tatars and Turks in Crimea or on the Dniester, but at conquering the Muslim North Caucasus. It is worth recalling that the Kuban Cossacks played a significant role here. Today, they are Russian ultra-nationalists, but also at the beginning of the 20th century, they declared themselves to be Ukrainians descending from the Zaporozhian Sich.

The main goal of the Cossack union with Moscow in 1654 was to obtain access to the Black Sea.

Many forget that the Cossacks did more business with the Tatars and Ottoman Turks than fought against them. In 1649, the Ottoman Empire granted Cossacks the right to sail on the Black and the Marmara Seas and the right to stop in ports without restrictions. They were allowed to build warehouses at the docks. They were exempted from paying taxes for 100 years. The Cossacks opened a trade mission in Istanbul, which was *de facto* their only embassy in the world.

The most famous Cossack merchant was Jerzy Franciszek Kulczycki (1640-1694), who was related to the family of Petro Sahaidachny, one of the greatest Cossack commanders. In 1683, Kulczycki served in the army of King Jan III Sobieski. Thanks to Kulczycki's excellent knowledge of the Turkish language and culture (he had traded in the Balkans for many years) he snuck into Vienna surrounded by Turks and provided information which led to the successful Polish-German attack. After the battle, Kulczycki became an interpreter of oriental languages in the service of the Emperor of Germany. Kulczycki opened one of the first European cafés in Vienna, disseminating the habit of drinking coffee. Ivan Franko, one of the most



prominent Ukrainian writers who lived at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, was Kulczycki's direct descendant.

Ruthenian merchants from Lviv, Kyiv and Kamenets were also engaged in trade with the Ottoman Empire and even established trade colonies in Ottoman cities. According to the Zaporozhian Sich archives, Cossacks often left for work in Crimea and the Black Sea cities of the Ottoman Empire. Maksym Zheleznyak, leader of the *koliivshchyna*, the great Ukrainian peasant uprising in 1768-1769, owned a small liquor store in Ochakov. On the other hand, the Cossacks allowed the Tartars to graze horses on the steppe they controlled.

Turkey and Crimea

In the 17th and 18th centuries, the Cossacks often fought together with the Tatars and Turks against the Poles or Russians. In 1624, an international treaty signed with the Crimean Khanate recognised Cossacks for the first time as an equal partner – a *de facto* state. In 1648-1653, Tatars were key allies (although not fully loyal) of the Cossacks during the most important uprising in the history of Ukraine, the one against Poland led by hetman Bohdan Khmelnytsky. Tatars also fought on the side of the Cossacks during their greatest triumph in the military conflict with Russia, the Battle of Konotop in 1659. This clash occupies one of the most important places in the historical narrative of Ukrainian nationalism.

The alliance between the Cossacks and Tatars helped improve the latter's image. In 1649, Khmelnitsky told the Polish ambassadors in Kyiv: "I'll have my hundred thousand doubled, tripled. The whole horde will be with me. And Tugay Bey (a Crimean Tatar leader) is close to me, my brother, my soul, the only falcon in the world. He will do whatever I want! Now, our Cossack friendship with them is eternal, the world will not tear us apart!"

Many forget that the Cossacks did more business with the Tatars and Ottoman Turks than fought against them.

The Cossacks unsuccessfully sought protection of the Ottoman Empire already during Khmelnytsky's uprising. Petro Doroshenko, one of the most prominent Cossack commanders, was the first to accept Ottoman rule in 1669. Part of the Cossacks remained under the protection of commanders loyal to the Ottomans for the next 16 years. In the late 17th century, Cossacks *slobodas* (free settlements) arose across the Dniester River. They were subject to the Crimean khans headed by Petro Ivanenko, a former secretary to hetman Ivan Mazepa. He took the title of hetman of the Khan's Ukraine. This name was used for about 90 years. In 1711, two years after the Battle of Poltava (1709), the entire Zaporozhian Sich moved south and accepted the rule of the Crimean Khanate for nearly 25 years. Disputes with Khan, trying to limit Cossack autonomy, made the Sich move back to the north.

After the elimination of the Zaporozhian Sich by Russia in 1775, part of the Cossacks found refuge in the Ottoman Empire, creating a new Sich in the Danube delta. It existed until 1828. The Cossacks were deeply divided. Roughly half of them fought loyally on the side of the Ottomans against Christian uprisings and Russian invaders. The second group fought on Russia's side during the Turkish-Russian War. As a result, the Ottomans eliminated the Sich, executing many Cossacks and resettling others. Those who survived moved to Dobrogea (today part of Romania and Bulgaria). They constituted the main base for the Sultan's Cossacks combat units created in Turkey during the Crimean War (1853-1856) by Polish émigrés

fighting on the side of the Ottomans to restore the Polish-Lithuanian-Ruthenian Commonwealth. A key role in the establishment of this unit was played by Michał Czajkowski (alias, Sadyk Pasha, 1804-1886), a Polish-Ukrainian who came from Volhynia. He was a very colourful and tragic figure. From his mother's side he was a descendant of a 17th century Cossack hetman. One of his grandparents died while defending the Sich in 1775. Czajkowski was a writer and a poet belonging to the Ukrainian school of Polish Romanticism. His most important works were devoted to the Cossacks. He was born a Roman Catholic. In Turkey, he converted to Islam. However, after many years of service in the Ottoman army, he returned to Russia, adopted Orthodoxy and became a strong supporter of Pan-Slavism. In the end, he committed suicide.

When the First World War broke out, Ukrainian anti-Russian opposition once again recognised Ottoman Turkey as one of the most important patrons in the struggle for an independent Ukraine. In November 1914, a delegation of the Union of Liberation of Ukraine arrived in Istanbul. This organisation was founded in Lviv. Its ultimate goal was to construct an independent Ukraine in cooperation with the central powers. Dmytro Dontsov, the chief ideologist of Ukrainian integral nationalism, was one of its first leaders. The delagation was successful. Talat Pasha one of three dictators of the Young Turks, a movement governing Turkey, issued a statement declaring that the establishment of an independent Ukraine was one of the war goals of the Ottoman Empire.

The phenomenon of Prometheism in Ukraine cannot be imagined without Taras Shevchenko.

This was the first document of its type in the world. Therefore, Ukrainian nationalists equate it to the Balfour Declaration, which provided the foundation for the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine. *Jeunne Turquie*, the magazine of the Young Turks, published an article stating that "the interests of Ukrainians coincide with the interests of Turkey. The state of Ukrainians, which they desire so much, would cut Russia off the Black Sea. The emergence of a new, non-Russian Slavic statehood would finally free Turkey from Russian intrigues, aiming to gain control over Constantinople and the Straits."

Ideologists of Ukrainian nationalism who dreamt of breaking up the Soviet Union during the Second World War also paid attention to Turkey. Yuriy Lypa (1900-1944), born in Odessa and living in Poland during the interwar period, wrote brochures titled "The Black Sea Doctrine" and "The Collapse of Russia" during the Second World War. According to him, Ukraine was primarily a Black Sea state and the Black Sea region needed geopolitical empowerment and emancipation in Europe.

Modern Turkey ruled by Kemal Ataturk was supposed to become a model and a major ally to Ukraine. Together with Turkey, Ukraine was to bring about the

collapse of Russia by playing the cards of national identity of the Caucasian and Turkic peoples. On the other hand, Lypa was a proponent of integral nationalism, recognising the ethnic homogeneity of the state as a precondition for the success of the nation building process. Thus, he regarded the migration of Crimean Tatars to Turkey (often forced) by Tsarist Russia in the 19th century as a positive phenomenon and postulated that independent Ukraine should encourage the Tatars to do the same.

Is Prometheism a Ukrainian invention?

Polish historian Andrzej Nowak believes that Pylyp Orlyk, the 18th century Cossack hetman, can be regarded as the creator of the idea of Prometheism – assuming the dissolution of Russia through the common struggle by the peoples it had conquered. Orlyk tried to create an alliance of Don and Zaporozhian Cossacks, Kazan Tatars and Bashkirs against Moscow. He also cooperated with Crimea and the Ottomans to achieve that goal. Orlyk was the most important of the Cossack refugees who found asylum in the Ottoman Empire after the Battle of Poltava. His ancestors came to Belarus from the Czech lands in the 15th century. His father was a Roman Catholic nobleman who died in 1673 at the second Battle of Khotyn. His mother was Orthodox and raised her son in accordance with that religious tradition. In turn, his children during baptism were kept by the Polish King Stanisław Leszczyński and Swedish King Charles XII. In 1711–1714, Orlyk fought against the Russians and their allies at the head of the army consisting of Poles, Cossacks, Tatars and Turks. In 1722, he once again settled in the Ottoman Empire, where he lived as the Sultan's subject until his death in the early 1740s.

> The most intensive ties between Ukrainians and Turkic Muslims can be seen in the case of the Crimean Tatars.

The phenomenon of Prometheism in Ukrainian culture cannot be imagined without Taras Shevchenko, the greatest poet in the history of Ukraine. For Shevchenko, the Ukrainians' purpose was to play the role of the leader in the struggle for freedom among all nations enslaved by Russia. Shevchenko warned Ukrainians against Russia's attempts to involve them in the conquest of other peoples. One of Shevchenko's greatest poems "Caucasus", published in 1845, is a moving anthem devoted to the peoples of the Caucasus and their fight in defence of liberty against Russian expansion.

Shevchenko compares the nations of the Caucasus fighting with the Russians to Prometheus who, despite terrible suffering, never lost his fighting spirit. The poet parodies Tsarist manifests that presented Russian expansion as a mission to

bringing civilisation to the "wild" peoples of the Caucasus. Shevchenko devoted the following words to the Caucasian highlanders: "Glory to the strong mountain peaks in the ice armour; glory to the great heroes, God stands by their side". This passage can be considered an inspiration for the famous slogan "Glory to Ukraine, glory to the heroes", used by the Ukrainian Insurgent Army and lately popularised by the EuroMaidan revolution. These verses show how closely Ukrainian nationalism is linked to the idea of Prometheism.

Between the Caucasus and Crimea

Ukrainians were the most numerous non-Russian people of the Russian Empire. Because of that, after the February Revolution in Russia in 1917, they were predestined to play a key role in the federalisation of Russia. In September 1917, the Congress of Nations and Regions of Russia was initiated by the Ukrainian People's Republic (UNR). The Congress adopted a declaration aimed at turning Russia into a loose federation of democratic republics. The Congress was also attended by representatives of the major organisations of Russian Muslims.

In July 1917, a delegation of Crimean Tatars arrived in Kyiv, seeking the opportunity to join Ukraine as an autonomous region. The Ukrainian authorities hesitated, fearing the reaction of the central government in St Petersburg. In 1918, after the declaration of independence of Ukraine, the idea of an autonomous Crimea under the Ukrainian umbrella was initially met with a reluctant response by the Crimean Tatars, supported by Germany and Turkey. However, in the autumn of that year, an agreement was concluded between Kyiv and the Tatars which led to the Crimean autonomy within Ukraine. Unfortunately, the occupation of Crimea by the White Army did not allow its implementation. In 1919, an alliance between the UNR and the Muslim highlanders of the Northern Caucasus against the White and Red Armies was established. The co-operation agreement remained on paper due to the defeats of the Ukrainian army in the battles against both the White and Red armies.

During the interwar period, emigration from the UNR played a key role in the development of co-operation between the leaders of nations enslaved by the Soviet Union. Politicians from the UNR gained the support of the Polish authorities. In 1928, the Prometheus Club was founded in Warsaw. It was headed by Ukrainian professor Roman Smal-Stotsky, a UNR diplomat and former ambassador in Berlin, London and Warsaw. Along with Ukrainians, leaders of the Muslim Azerbaijanis and Kazan Tatars were also key activists.

In 1934, Ukrainians initiated the creation of the Committee of Friendship of Peoples of the Caucasus, Turkestan and Ukraine in Paris. The position of its

chairman was taken by Oleksandr Shulhyn, minister of foreign affairs of the UNR government in exile and its prime minister in 1939-1940. The activists of the Prometheus Club as well as representatives of other nations "enslaved" by the Soviet Union were members of the board including especially Muslims from the Caucasus and Central Asia.

Bandera's Prometheism

Not all of the Ukrainian émigrés supported the Prometheist actions of the UNR and Poland. The Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), which was fighting for independence in Eastern Galicia and Volhynia, situated within the boundaries of Poland, launched the cooperation with political emigrants from the Soviet Union opposing the UNR and Poland. It's most important initiative was the League of Liberation of Eastern European, Caucasian and Caspian nations. In 1938, a prominent article, "Down with Bolshevism" by Ivan Mitrynha, one of the ideologues of the OUN, was published. The slogan "freedom to nations, freedom to man" appeared there. The slogan obviously referred to Shevchenko and became a motto of Ukrainian nationalists during the Second World War.

This programme was implemented in 1943 and 1944, when the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) created 15 non-Ukrainian units consisting primarily of Caucasian highlanders, Tatars, Azeris and Turkic peoples of Central Asia, particularly Uzbeks. The UPA also issued several proclamations and declarations addressed to those nations. In November 1943, the First Conference of the Enslaved Nations of Eastern Europe and Asia was organised in Volhynia. It was attended by 34 representatives of the enslaved nations. The vast majority of them were Muslims from the Caucasus, Tatarstan, Crimea and Central Asia. The conference was attended by, among others, Roman Shukhevych, UPA's chief commander. The Committee of Enslaved Nations was created during the conference. Its task was to create a national guerrilla and insurgent army modelled on the UPA. Raids from Ukraine to the Caucasus were among the priorities of the UPA's military strategy. However, the UPA appeared to be too weak to achieve this goal.

Today's Prometheism

After the end of the Second World War, the UPA continued promoting the idea of Prometheism. UPA soldiers who were sent to labour camps became the main organisers of the resistance movement, including representatives of all enslaved nations, particularly prisoners from Central Asia and the Caucasus. Natalia Shukhevych, the sister of Roman Shukhevych and an activist of OUN, was the

personification of this alliance. She was sentenced to a labour camp for her activities. There she met her future husband, who was a Balkar.

The anti-Bolshevik Bloc of Nations, uniting the majority of peoples of the communist countries, also referred to the idea from the Volhynia conference. It was formed in 1946 in Munich at the initiative of the UPA. Yaroslav Stetsko was its chairman for 40 years (in July 1941, Stetsko became the head of the Lviv government, which proclaimed independence from Ukraine; he was immediately arrested by the Germans).

Due to the Prometheist ideology of the UPA, when Ukraine gained its independence in 1991, the idea of supporting independence movements in the Russian Federation appeared among Ukrainian far right-wing politicians almost immediately. Ukrainian nationalists were present in Chechnya where they fought as volunteers against the Russian army. One of the most important was Oleksandr Muzychko, also known as "Sashko Bily", who was the bodyguard of then-Chechen President Dzhokhar Dudayev and received the highest Chechen military decoration. During the EuroMaidan revolution, he was one of the leaders of the extreme right-wing group the Right Sector. On March 24th 2014, Sashko Bily was killed by the police. Three weeks earlier, Russia's Investigative Committee opened an investigation against him, accusing him of committing crimes against Russian soldiers during the Chechen war. Another main suspect in this case is Oleh Tyahnybok, leader of the nationalist Svoboda party, which refers to the tradition of the OUN and UPA.

However, the most intensive ties between Ukrainians and Turkic Muslims can be seen in the case of the Crimean Tatars. For more than 20 years, the Ukrainian state avoided to show a clear support of the Crimean Tatar interests fearing Russia's reaction, even though the Tatars definitely were a very pro-Ukrainian community in Crimea. It was one of the biggest mistakes made by independent Ukraine.

In 2014, during Russia's occupation of the peninsula by Russia, Kyiv acted passively, causing a great disappointment among the Tatars. Despite these failures, when the legendary leader of the Tatars, Mustafa Dzhemilev, came to Simferopol in late April, a huge Ukrainian flag had been hung over their parliament, which outraged Russia and led to further repressions. NEE

Adam Balcer is a lecturer at the Centre of Eastern European Studies at the Warsaw University and an advisor at the office of the President of the Republic of Poland.

The Long Process of Building Peace

A conversation with Megi Bibiluri, a Georgian civil activist working towards Georgian-Ossetian reconciliation.
Interviewer: Elżbieta Kustra-Pirweli

ELA KUSTRA-PIRWELI: You have just received the Young Women's Peace Award in the Caucasus. This prize was established in 2011 with the aim to underline the important role of women in the peace process and recognise women's voices in peace negotiations. What does this award mean for you?

MEGI BIBILURI: In my work, I have often faced situations that make me wonder whether what I am doing makes any sense. I see concrete results, however, and that reassures me. This award was a surprise for me. It was also a very important moment which highlighted and distinguished the work that I have done in the region for so many years now. This award encourages me to continue and gives me more motivation to act. That being said, all the women nominated for this award are very active in the entire South Caucasus region and to be included in that group is a great honour.

What is your work specifically?

I fight for the safety of people in conflict zones. I also fight for the participation of women in peace-building, as well as educational and professional development for young people from my region – Shida Kartli, which includes Tskhinvali.

You are also the founder of a non-governmental organisation called The Bridge of Friendship Kartlosi. What stands behind this name and what are the main activities of the organisation?

I have been engaged in civil activities since I was a student of journalism. I come from a conflict region and have many Ossetian friends. During discussions with my Ossetian friends we realised that the people affected by the conflict, especially young people, were not engaged in the negotiation process and the events related to the conflict. We decided that their problems should be presented and

that the representatives of young people from both regions should be involved.

If young people don't have any contact with each other now, then in the future, there won't be any contact at all. In 2006, at one of the meetings, we as representatives from both regions decided to create the organisation that we called The Public Union Bridge of Friendship Kartlosi. The word "Kartlosi" is a combination of two Georgian words for the two ethnic groups: "kartl" meaning Georgian and "osi" which stands for Ossetian. Our idea was to restore the bridges that were destroyed. We began to conduct various programmes, organise meetings for young people and journalists from both sides. We were even able to organise them in the Tskhinvali region in the so-called South Ossetia. Our focus has been on youth, their engagement and development, especially in professional life. We inform them about the possibilities of education, exchange programmes and work, etc. We also try to involve them in the peacebuilding process and the negotiations, all in order to show them that fighting is not the only way to resolve conflict.

Unfortunately, since the 2008 Russian-Georgian war, the area where we worked, which was around 23 villages, are now occupied and there is no possibility for any action. The villages have been destroyed and now there are only Russian military bases and buildings.

Your organisation, however, continues to function despite the occupation?

Yes, in fact last year we launched a project called the "School of Debates". Its objective is to promote democracy in schools, strengthen self-governance, and develop critical and independent thinking among pupils. Last year, we also started a project aimed at introducing the institution of mediation as an alternative way of solving family, business and ethnic conflicts. At the moment, we have conducted the second stage of training for our Georgian group of future mediators. Last but not least, we received a positive answer from The European Endowment for Democracy from Brussels to start a new project, vital for the region. This project aims to stimulate civic activism and empower and increase participation of the youth in political and decision-making processes at the regional level in Georgia. The main objective of the initiative is for young people to realise that the problems they are facing in their everyday lives could be, to some extent, addressed by local representatives and that their active participation in local decision-making is not futile and could bring real results.

Another activity in the field of peacebuilding and dialogue is to strengthen media such as newspapers and radio programmes. In return, Georgian and Ossetian communities learn more about each other. In the information war, which is still ongoing between the

Megi Bibiluri (left) is a Georgian peace activist and laureate of the 2014 Young Women's Peace Award in the Caucasus.

two communities, the media can try to overcome the "enemy stereotypes" created between the Georgian and Ossetian populations.

The bilingual newspaper *Kartlosi*, which has been published twice a month since 2010, contains articles written by both Georgian and Ossetian journalists. The newspaper is circulated in the Gori region as well as in Tskhinvali. Its main objective is to allow those who live in the conflict zone to get acquainted with the situation in Tskhinvali and different regions of Georgia. For obvious reasons, the Ossetian journalists who agree to write articles for the newspaper write under pseudonyms as they don't want to risk being called traitors.

Since 2012, we have been also broadcasting a series of radio programmes called the "Kartlosi Voice" which is aired by the local Radio Trialeti covering also the territory of the Tskhinvali region and in the so-called South Ossetia. In the programme, journalists from both communities try to present different points of view. It is important also to stress here that we are an apolitical

organisation and work at the grassroots level. What makes our work important for peace is that on the official state level there is no Georgian-Ossetian dialogue. Our organisation has been trying to create a communication bridge connecting the two sides.

You come from one of the villages located in the vicinity of the Tskhinvali region. You have experienced two military conflicts. Based on stories from the wars, your organisation published the book *The Other Face of War*. Why did you publish this book and how do the stories correspond with your own memories?

On the evening of August 7th 2008, I was at home in a village called Pkhvenisi (close to the Tskhinvali region). I heard shots and explosions. I called my friends from Tbilisi, but nobody wanted to believe that the war had started. My parents were also in the house and did not want to leave it. They experienced an immense shock and our home was occupied until October 15th.

They say that the war lasted for only five days, but the truth is that the Russian troops were standing close to Gori and in our villages for three months, not allowing the Red Cross to evacuate the people who lived there. They severed mobile communications and I did not know where my parents or my friends were. In addition, I was afraid for my colleagues, Ossetians who lived in the neighbourhood. During the war there was a great need for humanitarian assistance. When there is war, you do not think, you just act and help. At that time, we tried to organise aid together and help everyone, regardless of whether someone was a Georgian or an Ossetian.

The idea for the book called *The Other Face of War* came from these examples of mutual assistance. The book brings together 40 stories of ordinary people whose lives were affected by the August 2008 war over the so-called South Ossetia. They described what they experienced and the memories of how Ossetians and Georgians were helping each other. The stories were collected by Georgian and Ossetian journalists as well as human rights activists.

At one meeting between Georgian and Ossetians, our Ossetian colleagues told us the story about how an Ossetian woman in one of the villages had stopped her Georgian neighbours' homes from being burnt down. After this, we thought: why not write a book that includes positive stories like these? However, that was not an easy task. For many, in order to recall positive memories, they first had to talk about painful ones.

The book is available in Georgian, Russian and English. The first presentation of the new edition was held in Yerevan, the Russian version was afterwards taken to Tskhinvali by Ossetian journalists. The book does not carry any political statements, so the reactions are positive. Can a war have a face other than killing, destruction and brutality? We believe that it can.

Recently, both Georgians and Ossetians have become physically divided by fences, as part of the borderisation process carried out by the de facto South Ossetia regime. How has this affected you and your work?

After the war, I thought that everything we did before that time had been destroyed in one day. Some Ossetians stated that they didn't want continue with us. However, in a month's time, it turned out that there were still many people who were missing from the military operation and relatives on both sides couldn't find them. After communicating with our Ossetian friends, we, as representatives of civil society, decided that we should not stop and continued our collective work for reconciliation. With the help of foreign partners, we organised the first Georgian-Ossetian meeting in 2008 in the Netherlands. We agreed that despite the war, there were other problems that needed to be resolved like missing persons, people in jails or mines. Afterwards, we established the Georgian-Ossetian Forum, which meets two or three times per year and defines the problems of both communities. The fields where we currently work are health and medical care, education and freedom of movement despite the borderisation process.

Currently, we cooperate with doctors and medical staff from Georgia and the so-called South Ossetia. This is a very vital dialogue. Doctors are not interested in politics, it is their mission to help and cure people. Secondly, we continue co-operation between women. In de facto South Ossetia, the situation for the population has not improved. After the war, Russians made many investments, but most have been squandered away by corrupt government officials. Nobody built a basic road infrastructure or developed health systems, while Georgia has made significant progress in the issue of health insurance, for example.

It often happens that in very serious situations, Ossetians call us. I will never forget when a sixteen-year-old boy had a car accident and broke his spine. Ossetian doctors claimed that in this situation, treatment in Tbilisi was necessary. If he was not operated on within a day, he would not be able to walk. However, in the so-called South Ossetia, there is a law prohibiting sending someone for treatment to Georgia without the personal signature of the local minister of foreign affairs. It was Saturday, the minister was not in the office and even after a phone call to the so-called president in the last moment; the answer came back negative. The boy was instead sent to Vladikavkaz in Russia, which took more than eight hours. Tbilisi is an hour away. Needless to say, the boy is now in a wheelchair. How is it possible that in the 21st century serious matters of one's health depends on the signature of one dignitary?

In your opinion, what kind of future developments can we expect regarding this conflict? Is there any chance to transform it towards peaceful coexistence?

Our goal is to develop a dialogue between the two ethnic groups, that the image of the enemy will disappear, that the young people who will be leaders in both regions in the future will understand each other. Otherwise, they will never be able to sit down together and talk. Permanently, propaganda claims that Georgians and Ossetians are foes, so if you see them, then shoot. With this lack of communication and an approach of hatred, in several years we could be under the threat of new conflict. Our long-term goal is for people to come to this conclusion: that when we lived together in the past, it was better for us all.

What is the role of women in the peace-building process? Can their voices be heard especially when conflict and decisions or negotiations are often dominated by men?

Peace-making is not a matter of one day, it's a long process. A lot of effort, however, is required to keep the peace. It is very important for the interaction of government and civil society, where women's organisations are very active. Women have proven many times that they are able to create conditions for a peaceful existence.

The role of women in achieving peace is essential. Who else understands what war, confrontation or rebellion can do to one's families and children? Yet, in most countries women are still second-class citizens. They cannot receive a quality education or work in highly paid positions. In most developing countries, women's mortality is much higher than men's.

Before the war in 2008 we had a plan and signed an agreement to open a women's information centre in Tskhinvali. Unfortunately, the war interrupted the whole process. In Georgia, I am involved in the Women's Information Centre in order to increase women's political involvement. Women from the Shida Kartli region are also included, since they understand our region. For me it is very important to engage women in politics and peace-building, as I am sure that only joint efforts will change and bring positive results to the society.

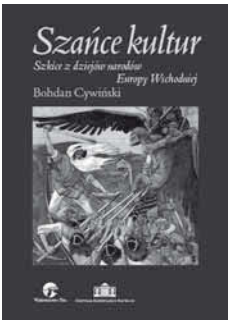
Megi Bibiluri is the founder and director of the NGO Public Union Bridge of Friendship Kartlosi, which deals with Georgian-Ossetian reconciliation. She also published the book *The Other Face of War*, which tells the story of the war between Georgia and Russia in 2008. She currently is the director of the Mediation Centre Georgia.

Elżbieta Kustra-Pirweli is an international relations specialist and PhD candidate 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 in Gori and has participated in OSCE/ODIHR election observation missions.

Rebellious Poets Versus the Tsar

GRZEGORZ NUREK

Polish historian Bohdan Cywiński recently published a 700 page manuscript examining 12 national cultures of Eastern Europe. This deep discussion, coupled with the author's ponderings over the character of Russia throughout history, presents the reader with a unique opportunity for deep reflection on the relations between Russia and the nations it once tried to subdue.



A discussion on *Szańce kultur. Szkice z dziejów narodów Europy Wschodniej* (*The Trenches of Cultures. Sketches from the histories of Eastern European nations*). By: Bohdan Cywiński Published by: Trio Publishing / Natolin European Centre, Warsaw 2013.

In his monumental collection of essays titled *The Trenches of Cultures*, Polish historian Bohdan Cywiński depicts a panorama of 12 Eastern European national cultures that over the centuries suffered oppression from the Russian Empire. Through historical analysis the book offers insight into the current political situation in Ukraine and the reasons behind the annexation of Crimea by Russia.

With over700 pages, this book constitutes an impressive narrative in all respects. Written in a vivid language and offering lucid explanations for the greatest intricacies of history, it is based on many years of research on the respective national cultures of the Latvians, Lithuanians, Estonians, Finns, Moldovans, Ukrainians, Jews, Belarusians, Armenians, Crimean Tatars, Georgians, Azerbaijanis and the peoples

of Caucasia. All that, coupled with the author's musings on the character of the Russian empire, presents the reader with a unique opportunity for deeper reflection on the relations between Russia and the nations it wanted to subdue.

To preserve culture

Born in 1939, Bohdan Cywiński is a specialist in Polish studies and a historian of ideas who has lectured at universities in Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, Ukraine, Belarus and Switzerland. In the historical-cultural analysis of *The Trenches*, he covered the period spanning from pre-historic times up to the year 1917. As the author points out, by adopting a comparative approach, he tried to extract information from the literatures of the different nations. He was also curious to see what could be found in the literature of those nations that had never formed their own state.

At the very beginning, it might be worth explaining how the book got its title. Why does Professor Cywiński use military terminology whilst referring to national cultures? As we know, a trench is an earth fortification consisting of a moated embankment to protect artillery posts. The author explains:

According to Cywiński, Ukraine's national identity is a matter of utmost importance to Russia.

"A nation deprived of political subjectivity either ceases or continues to exist, depending on the extent to which it was able to preserve its cultural subjectivity. This is essential because, by nature, any nation is a cultural phenomenon and can exist only as defined by its own culture. Once dispersed into a foreign culture, it disappears irreversibly – it's not there anymore. That is why wise and far-sighted invaders stubbornly employ methods that at first sight might look silly, petty, or merely mean, such as destroying historical monuments and graveyards, closing down churches and libraries, burning books, or banning people from communicating in their native language. For the very same reason, young people gather in secret meetings to discuss history, read old books, sing folk songs or lay flowers on preserved graves rather than prepare weapons. What looks like an idle gesture during war, is only superficially so. Culture constitutes the deepest space occupied by any nation as it is primordial in nature and as such becomes its last line of defence … A writer, a musician or a painter – they all want to express their own experiences and communicate them to others. They remain merely artists until they hear a brutal political 'NO' directed at them and their art. It's not culture that strives to get involved with politics, but politics that forces its way through a culture's front door to impose a new order. And once again, what counts here, is how the attacked one chooses to react: with courage or meekness."

The professor points out that culture favours the political processes or changes that might lead a nation towards independence. In one of his comments on the nations of Caucasia, Transcaucasia and Crimea, the historian writes: "After the Tsarist regime collapsed, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Crimea proclaimed independence and started developing their respective state systems and apparatus with a great deal of social energy involved in the process. However, when the Bolshevik terror reached these countries a few years later, energy was needed to put up an active resistance. Soviet Russia successfully recreated the former territorial assets of the Tsarist Russia in the Caucasian and Crimean borderland."

Cywiński attempts to trace the origins of the cult of a strong state power among Russians.

Understanding this requires a closer look at the history of prosecuted cultures that resisted oppression, starting with the above-mentioned Ukraine or the Crimean Tartars. According to Cywiński, Ukraine's national identity is a matter of utmost importance to Russia. Both Russian and Ukrainian cultures admit to sharing the heritage of the Kievan Rus' (862-1240). That is where the ancestors of today's Russians in part come from; they left the area 800 years ago. Numerous Russians believe that the land of Little Russia, situated on the Dnieper River, should constitute an important part of current Russian territory. It was through Kyiv, as Cywiński notes, that the Orthodox religion was introduced to the whole of the Rus', and thus also to Moscow.

Identity interrupted

A recent, illustrative internet meme showed photos of Orthodox monasteries of Kyiv, including Saint Sophia's Cathedral that was founded after the Baptism of Rus' in 988. Under each of the four photos of the churches, along with the dates that they were erected, there is a corresponding image of a forest captioned "Moscow". The following question was posted underneath: "And how come Moscow is supposed to be our motherland?"

Ukrainians are proud of the fact that it is Kyiv, and not Moscow, that used to be the metropolitan capital of the Rus'. It was their territory that was home to a political centre of considerable significance. The author of the internet meme, most likely a Ukrainian, laughs at today's Russian propaganda which pushes the idea that Russia is the motherland to Ukraine. And that being true, it further questions Ukrainian eagerness to follow the West and to join the European Union when both family bonds and similar languages should rather push them towards the ancestral motherland. The author of the meme mocks this idea: "When the first Orthodox

churches were being raised in Kyiv, the territory of today's Moscow was densely forested. Who is truly the motherland to the other side then?"

Cywiński gives a detailed account of how the two cultures permeated each other over the following centuries. As a good example he notes that in the first half of the 18th century, the Ukrainian language was predominant in Moscow. This was the case until the end of the century when Russian culture became more influential and the Ukrainian elite started using Russian in both speaking and in writing. Clear signs of Russification were also noticeable in Ukraine as early as the 18th century. In 1720, Tsar Peter I issued a decree that restricted the freedom to publish in Ukrainian. Since then, it was only the Orthodox Church that was allowed to print in Ukrainian, everything else was supposed to be written in Russian.

In the 1880s the Mohyla Academy, the University in Kyiv, adopted Russian as its language of instruction and subsequent Russian tsars had no tolerance for Ukrainian. Tsar Alexander II issued a decree in 1863 that banned any literary works other than highbrow literature from being published in Ukrainian. In 1876 he forbade Ukrainian-language publications from being brought from abroad. It is Professor Cywiński's conviction that these and other numerous Russification activities led to the national identity among Ukrainians to not be fully formed by the start of the First World War.

Cult of a strong power

On the history of Crimea, Cywiński explains that the Tatars settled the Black Sea as early as the 13th century and established a feudal state called the Crimean Khanate by the 15th century. Russia began invading Crimea at the end of the 16th century and in 1783 the Russian Empire annexed Crimea, abolishing the government of the khans. Thirty thousand inhabitants of Crimea who did not recognise the annexation left its territory. An additional twenty thousand Tatars emigrated during the Russian-Turkish War of 1877-78.

Cywiński estimates that a mere 100,000 Tatars inhabited Crimea at the end of 19th century. Under the reign of Empress Catherine the Great, in order to further weaken the Turkish influence on the Tatars, all the high-ranking Islamic clergymen in Crimea were financially supported by Russia to win their loyalty. After years of oppression, the Tatars of Crimea seemed ready to proclaim their independence as the First World War broke out. However, once again, fortune was not on their side. Russia's policy of ethnic intermixture in Crimea, with Ukrainians and Russians settling the peninsula, caused the Tatars to become a minority in Crimea. The further fate of this nation is widely known – in 1944 Stalin deported nearly all the Tatars to Uzbekistan as punishment for their alleged collaboration with Germany's Third Reich.

Cywiński tries to trace back the origins of the cult of a strong state power among Russians in order to find reasons behind the imperial greediness that seems to have plagued Russia for centuries. One of the possible answers he proposes is the cult of the Tsar propagated by the Orthodox Church since the 16th century, where the Tsar is seen as a trustworthy father whose power was unlimited and not subject to any control. A strong-arm rule is what a lot of Russians – though by no means all of them – used to support and some still favour. The conquering of new territories was always the flywheel that helped the growing empire gain its momentum. To raise support for such military conquests, two useful tools were implemented – propaganda and national pride.

The Trenches of Cultures presents the reader with a number of facts that today seem to be falling into oblivion.

The author tries to avoid any commentary on modern times and current political issues – at some point, however, as if carried away by emotions, he breaks his own rule and writes: "[Vladimir] Putin is going to serve his term and then disappear from politics. The imperial mentality of the Russian people will outlive him."

In another of his comments, he draws a sad conclusion on the past (or perhaps on the present as well): "The involvement of the West in the fight of the countries oppressed by the Russian empire for retaining their national identity has been limited to granting their support – usually in a discreet way and openly manifested only on certain occasions."

The professor makes a very interesting observation when saying that, in their centuries-long struggle for freedom from the influence of the Russian empire, the fighting nations rarely resorted to acts of terror. Violence directed against the Russian government was incidental and exerted by individual people. A good example would be the assassination of Nikolay Bobrikov, the governor of Finland, in 1904 or the murder of the pro-Russian chancellor of the seminary in Tbilisi in 1886.

Each of the chapters of the book, which examine a different national culture, end with translated excerpts of well-known poems or legends. At the end of the chapter on Finland's culture, for example, we read part of *The Kalevala*, an epic poem of Finland; the chapter on Estonia ends with a quote from *Kalevipoeg*; the one on Jewish culture concludes with a piece on Rabbi Nachman and Jewish mysticism by Martin Buber; the chapter on Ukraine includes excerpts from *The Books of the Genesis of the Ukrainian People* by Mykola Kostomarov. Perhaps the author decided that it is worthwhile presenting even bits of the literary works that he refers to earlier in the chapters. Those texts formed national identities and preserved the memory of the origins of a given nation – its victories, dignity, wisdom and courage.

Forgotten oppression

The Trenches of Cultures presents the reader with a number of facts that today seem to be falling into oblivion. One of them is the Tsarist policy towards the Jewish community. Tsar Nicholas I, for example, issued *ukases* that demanded the Jews to serve in the army for as long as 25 years, which constituted a huge part of life for those who were not lucky enough to have bribed themselves out of the misery. Other *ukases* forbade Jewish settlements in central Russia and established Russian state supervision over Jewish schools.

The author also discusses the pogroms against Jews in Russia that swept the country, reaching its peak between 1881 and 1883 (224 pogroms, ten of which were mass ones). During a single month in 1905, the pogroms occurred in 690 townships all over the Russian territory. Current Russian propaganda, which promotes the idea that antisemitism is common among Ukrainians, preys on the fact that most of the pogroms back then happened in towns situated near Odessa or Kherson on the Black Sea. It has to be noted, however, that the Ukrainian territory was home to as much as one-quarter of the whole Jewish population inhabiting the Russian Empire (1.3 out of a total of 4 million people) which was a direct result of the earlier-mentioned settlement bans imposed on Jews that kept them away from the Moscow area. That must have created favourable conditions for conflicts to arise. It is worth noting that pogroms were often provoked by the police.

One could continue and enumerate the victims that suffered oppression from the Russian Empire. In 1895, for example, Russia introduced a decree that banned texts written in the Belarusian language from being printed in the Latin script. Cywiński claims that up to 1905, censorship had not allowed the publication of a single work written in Belarusian, aside from the dictionaries of folk-speech. In different periods of history Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Latvians and Estonians ran into similar problems. Other forms of oppression that many of those countries were subjected to by the empire involved employing Russian teachers at schools, disbanding Catholic convents and Lutheran congregations, the deportation of monks, nuns and educated people to Siberia and the closing down and destruction of Catholic churches or handing them over to the Orthodox Church. The property of landowners who took part in uprisings against the empire was confiscated. Between 1900 and 1901, the Russian governor in Finland closed down as many as 30 Finnish newspaper and magazine titles. In 1905, the Russian army invaded Georgia – the non-submissive Georgians were sent to Siberia or killed. Moldova suffered Russian occupation several times. Poland, partitioned between Russia and other countries, disappeared from the map of Europe for 123 years.

It is a pity that the author does not write about the Polish nation, which suffered equally heavy losses and persecutions. Deporting Polish insurgents to Siberia,

executions by firing squads, imprisonment, the confiscation of property, the Russification of education and censorship is forever engraved in our national memory. Another topic the author should have covered is the impact that Russia has had on the nations of Central Asia.

Poems against guns

The process of Russification was much more efficient among those that had already used Russian for quite some time (e.g. the Transcaucasian countries) or whose native language was lexically similar to Russian (Ukraine, Belarus) than among those peoples whose native tongues bear little resemblance to the Russian language (the Baltic states, Finland). The professor also points to a common religion as a factor favouring Russification. The Orthodox clergy had a considerable impact on the Russification processes in Georgia and Ukraine. In the countries with strong Catholic or Lutheran traditions, resistance against the oppressing acts of the empire was much more intense and the influence of the Orthodox Church was much less.

One could say: "Wait, it has always been that the more dominant cultures were expansive and oriented at spreading their own cultural patterns." The French language and culture used to be dominant in the past, and in the 21st century it is English that has taken over. Both Spanish and German cultures still hold a strong position throughout the world. The difference lies in the way in which a language and cultural patterns are served to other nations: is it done in a peaceful manner or enforced on a nation with the use of threats, repressions and violence? This subtle difference seems to be neither noticed nor understood by the monarchs of Russia.

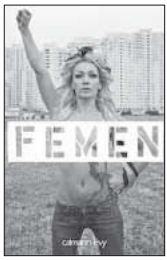
Independence movements in many countries were greatly influenced by the works of Romantic writers. Often forced to publish abroad, these writers led to the mystification of messianic attitudes: "Our nation is weak and tormented like the crucified Christ; but it is the chosen one. We, the sons and daughters of the nation, are the warriors and we fight against the empire of the evil." It can be said that poets like Taras Schevchenko in Ukraine or Juliusz Słowacki, Adam Mickiewicz and Cyprian Kamil Norwid in Poland rose to be the Spirit Kings – the spiritual leaders of the nations.

The best thing that could happen now would be translating *The Trenches of Cultures* into English, Russian, French, German, Spanish and other languages. Perhaps the book could be sent to politicians as an effective vaccine or antidote to the lies and propaganda spread by the current Russian regime.

Translated by Agnieszka Rubka

Grzegorz Nurek is a Polish journalist who contributes to *New Eastern Europe*.

The First Step



Femen by: Femen (with Galia Ackerman), Publisher: Polity Press, Cambridge, Malden 2014.

A flower coronet on her head, naked breasts, a fight for the removal of religious symbols in public spaces, slogans such as "Ukraine is not a brothel" – these are the most common associations, both in Ukraine, but also partially in the West, that people have with the Ukrainian feminist movement Femen. In a country ruled by a patriarchy and where women – quite often better educated and with better knowledge of the world than men – have to "know their place", Femen is regarded as a group of crazy women. That's why it's quite encouraging that a western publishing house, Polity Press, has recently published this book devoted to the protest group and titled it *Femen*.

Undoubtedly, reading the publication helps us understand the phenomenon of the movement. Looking deeper, beyond the symbolic level that takes the form of different high-profile protests where girls show their breasts, the real meaning of Femen's activism is extracted. In the first part of the book, the reader is introduced to four young women: Anna Hutsol, Oksana Shachko, Sasha Shevchenko and Inna Shevchenko. They founded the group in 2008. Before that time, all four were members of different intellectual and feminist groups.

What's also quite important is that all four women had spent some time of their youth (and the most important period of adolescence) in the newly independent Ukraine. Until today Ukraine is an incredibly interesting country where yet pathologies such as male domination in the family, alcoholism, a lack of prospects for young people and a high level of crime are all very strongly present and felt. Hence, it's not surprising that all four women have developed a sense of rebellion against the reality that they knew and experienced themselves. One of the heroines of the book tells the story of how one day she saw a young girl (maybe 17 years old) who was going for a walk in her hometown. She recalls thinking: "how beautiful she is, but also how poor, she's already got her life behind her." Indeed, her life was probably already behind her as quite soon she probably would be pregnant (most likely by accident), give birth and then her boyfriend (or a shotgun husband) will leave her. Then there will be more accidental men and more children. This is quite a common scenario for many women in Ukraine.

Another question about the issue of the woman's role in the family is answered by the book's heroines with references to their own examples. First and foremost, they all describe how in Ukraine, a woman should get married as soon as possible. Otherwise "people will say that nobody wants her". When a mother of one of the book's heroines decides to get married she does not think whether she loves her fiancé or not. It is the mere fact that he was a "good dancer" which makes her decide to spend the rest of her life him. After the wedding, there has to a baby, and rather quickly too. Otherwise "people will say that she has problems." After that, a woman starts having her own duties (she does not share them with a man); she

earns money, raises the children, cleans and cooks. "This is all unfair," says one of the heroines of the book.

Characteristically, the road that Anna, Inna, Oksana and Sasha took towards feminism led through philosophical and intellectual debates. What also helped them was the period of Ukraine's political awaking following the Orange Revolution in the years 2004-2005. This woke hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians out of a terrible lethargy. To a certain degree, it also woke up eastern Ukraine – a region where civil liberties and grass-roots activism have always been the weakest in the country.

The founders of Femen studied philosophy and all read Karl Marx, which could explain their strong convictions about equal status (also between men and women). And they idealised the Soviet Union. For them, Stalinism was a period that was long gone; but it was the final years of the Soviet Union that provoked pleasant memories. They themselves even admit that this fascination with the final years of the Soviet Union was probably because this period overlapped with their childhood years and "childhood is always remembered with nostalgia." It may all sounds quite naïve; their references to Marxism, declarations that Femen's activism doesn't require money – the truth is that in the book they don't want to reveal who is sponsors them; in fact, many of Femen's activities are explained in quite a murky way.

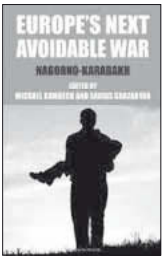
But what is important here is that the book was published. It is also important that Femen exists. Feminist movements in Eastern Europe – both Femen in Ukraine (it should also be pointed out that there were also "actions" in Belarus) and Pussy Riot in Russia – use scandals as their method of action, but the truth is that they draw attention to some very important problems faced by women in these post-Soviet states. In addition to their feminist work they are also involved in different forms of social activity.

Without a doubt, the greatest achievement of Femen is that as a result of some of the protests, the media started to shed light on such pathologies as domestic violence, sexual harassment and prostitution. Topics which until now had been seen as taboos on the post-Soviet territory have started to enter the public discourse.

But in the post-Soviet states, it still will take much time before women's problems leave the level of media events during which activists show their naked breasts, discredit religious symbols and scream and move on to the level of a serious and deep debate. In any way, Femen has made that very first step.

Małgorzata Nocuń
Translated by Iwona Reichardt

Cutting the Gordian Knot of Caucasia



Europe's Next Avoidable War: Nagorno-Karabakh. Edited by: Michael Kambeck and Sargis Ghazaryan. Publisher: Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2013.

The book *Europe's Next Avoidable War: Nagorno-Karabakh* is a collective work, consisting of twenty scholarly essays which present the

conflict of Nagorno-Karabakh from various perspectives. The work was edited by Michael Kambeck, a German, and Sargis Ghazaryan, an Armenian. Both scholars are associated with the non-governmental organisation called the European Friends of Armenia. Their affiliation might give the reader a hint as to what political sympathies are presented in the book. Though the authors try to remain as objective as possible, their pro-Armenian bias communicates itself throughout the body of the texts. Regrettably, the book contains only one piece by an Azerbaijani author – a blogger and former director of the NATO Information Centre in Baku, Geysar Gurbanov (the editors explain this disproportion by saying that other Azerbaijanis who were asked to contribute their articles have declined the invitation).

Among the authors of the essays are theoreticians who, as representatives of various research centres, study the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh; practitioners like activists with NGOs such as the European Friends of Armenia in Brussels, the Regional Studies Centre, the International Centre for Human Development in Yerevan, or the London Information Centre on Conflicts and State-Building; and finally politicians such as members of the European Parliament Elmar Brok (Germany), Frank Engel (Luxembourg), Charles Tannock (United Kingdom) and others like Caroline Cox (a member of the British House of Lords) and Peter Semneby (a Swedish diplomat and former EU Special Representative to the South Caucasus). Such a varied selection of authors carries both pros and cons. On the one hand, it allows for presenting the problem from a much broader perspective; on the other hand, however, the texts by politicians fall short of academic writing – they use propaganda to some extent inasmuch as they show the United Kingdom and the European Union in a favourable light.

The book was published in 2013, which should promise the most up-to-date account of the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. However, the texts were written in 2009-2011 so they fail to deliver the most current factual data regarding the topic or include the changing geopolitical factors (for instance, in September of 2013 Armenia decided against European integration in favour of joining the Russia-led Customs Union, or the recent aggressive behaviour of the Russian Federation towards former Soviet republics).

The introductory essay offers a preliminary analysis of the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh and a broader view of the situation in the whole of the South Caucasus region and the role of the EU in Transcaucasia. What also serves as a good introduction to the topic is the list of the most important events of 1918-2011 with four maps outlining the ethno-linguistic groups of Transcaucasia, the exact location of the South Caucasus in Europe, the area of the conflict and the South Caucasus with all the existing para-states in the region.

The content of the book is thematically divided into three units: "Approaching the Conflict: The Internal Rationale", "The International Community as Foreign Policy Actors in Nagorno-Karabakh: The External Rationale", and "Europe's Next Avoidable War: The Peace Rationale". In the first part, the authors present the origins of the conflict, the course it has taken through the signing of the truce agreement in Bishkek in 1994 and the events that followed over the next dozen years. The

authors also draw a comparison between the war in Nagorno-Karabakh and other ethno-political conflicts in Eastern Europe and analyse the differences and similarities between the aspirations of the Karabakhasian Armenians in Azerbaijan to have a country of their own with those of the Flemish population in Belgium. A very valuable and innovative element included in the first chapter is an opinion polling analysis. Surveys, conducted for the first time among Armenians on both Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh, asked respondents about their views of the conflict. What is also discussed here are the results of town hall meetings which took place in 2008-2009 in 23 towns in Armenia, Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan and involved over 2000 Armenians and Azerbaijanis. Respondents expressed their opinions on a possible solution to the conflict. The results of both studies clearly showed an incredible amount of distrust on both sides of the conflict, but also revealed, quite paradoxically, the desire for peace among the Armenians.

The second part introduces the standpoints of the foreign policy actors (the United States, Russia, Turkey, Iran and particularly that of the European Union) towards the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. The third part of the book includes considerations for the perspective of peace. The authors tried to answer the question of how to avoid another war in Europe. The wide range of arguments presented in the book ends with a summary written by one of the editors in which he puts together the key points made by the respective authors and gives his final recommendations.

The editors in a lucid way explain their reasons behind publishing this collection. Some of the reasons include: a growing interest in ethno-political conflicts, the need to fill the existing gap in research and political analyses of Nagorno-Karabkh, especially given the changes that this geopolitical environment is currently undergoing and the necessity to avoid the outbreak of another war (we learned that lesson in Georgia in 2008). The book should be given an overall positive opinion as it is a comprehensive and useful source of knowledge on the topic that attempts to organise all the available data – and in certain areas provides completely new information on the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. It does, however, possess several drawbacks.

First of all, the focus is too much on the position of the European Union. The EU has not (and has never been) the most important of the third parties involved in the conflict. The intention behind this move can certainly be explained by the editors' desire to motivate the EU to become more active in the region. Yet, focusing on Brussels's involvement (or the lack thereof) in Nagorno-Karabakh and at the same time neglecting the role of other powers such as the US or Russia and the actions undertaken by the OSCE Minsk Group might lead to confusion and misunderstanding of the situation by those readers who are less familiar with the topic. Another flaw of the publication is the fact that almost all of the essays keep repeating the same information about past events, usually as part of an introduction to the topic. This may bore the reader and leave an impression that particular texts are not highly original. What is missing, on the other hand, are detailed analyses of the internal situation in Nagorno-Karabakh (regarding its political

system and the current state of its economy) and estimates on how it correlates with the intensity of the conflict.

Despite these weak points, the authors have to be given credit for discussing a wide range of phenomena, facts and processes pertaining to the conflict that are of utmost importance. Armenia and Azerbaijan have mutually exclusive expectations regarding the possibility of a war in Nagorno-Karabakh – while Yerevan would rather keep the status quo, Baku is interested in regaining control over the region. The authors show the paradox inherent in the Charter of the United Nations where the right of nations to self-determination (e.g. the case of Armenians in Karabakh) is given the same value as the right of territorial integrity (e.g. the control of Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh).

A lot of attention is dedicated to the deepening disproportion between the military spending of Armenia and Azerbaijan. As the authors point out, in the past few years Baku has spent huge sums of money obtained from the sale of oil and natural gas on military equipment (135 million US dollars in 2003 compared to 3.12 billion US dollars in 2011, which exceeds the total budget of Armenia). Armenia's military spending has increased as well, though to a much smaller extent (390 million US dollars in 2011). The Azerbaijani government has expanded its army and strengthened war rhetoric at the same time, leaving the possibility of another military intervention on the table. It claims that both international law and the truce agreement give Azerbaijan the right to regain control in Nagorno-Karabakh and adjacent territories by force. One of the authors seems to contradict such statements by pointing to Baku's earlier commitments to abstain from using military force.

The book also shows the burden of history on both Armenian-Azerbaijani and Armenian-Turkish relations (Joseph Stalin incorporated Nagorno-Karabakh, mostly inhabited by ethnic Armenians, to the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialistic Republic in 1923 while the Armenian Massacre took place in 1915). The trauma left after those past experiences should be overcome in a similar way that happened in post-Second World War Germany and France, through integration and reconciliation, democratising the region and changing existing attitudes.

The above considerations end with a detailed analysis of the possibility of another outbreak of war. It is stressed again that the only party that is interested in a military solution of the conflict is Azerbaijan, though Baku authorities are also well aware of the dramatic consequences their potential defeat could bring (economic collapse or loss of power for the Ilham Aliyev regime). Armenia, on the other hand, would resort to war only in a preventive case. Two alternative war scenarios were considered in the book, a short-term armed confrontation limited to a small territory (aimed at Baku achieving its territorial targets) and a long-standing war aimed at Azerbaijan taking control over the whole territory of Nagorno-Karabakh. The second option seems more probable; however, it would bring on a humanitarian disaster, huge losses on both sides and most probably it would involve both the Russian Federation and Turkey.

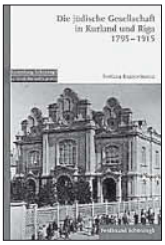
The authors list recommendations to prevent another outbreak of war including: an emphasis on building mutual trust between the sides of

the conflict, at the same time clearly pointing to the party that has been obstructing the peace process (Azerbaijan); the necessity to inform the conflict affected community of the OSCE Minsk Group efforts; making Azerbaijan quit its war rhetoric and start putting real efforts into peaceful solutions; and the necessity to sign a new treaty that would strengthen the resolutions of the existing truce agreement. The authors see a strong need for the EU to become more involved in the conflict solution by laying an embargo on weapons for all sides, proposing concrete peace initiatives, helping Armenia and Azerbaijan at introducing necessary reforms including consolidating the rule of law in both states. The authors also suggest that the EU should send a civil-observation mission to Nagorno-Karabakh and implement the instruments offered by the Eastern Partnership initiative. In the worst case scenario, in other words war, the authors believe that the EU's most effective actions would be political isolation, trade embargoes, travel bans, bank account freezes and a threat to recognise the independence of Nagorno-Karabakh by the international community.

Most of the above-mentioned recommendations seem reasonable, though their implementation is going to pose incredible difficulties. One can only hope that at least some of them will be successfully executed so that more bloodshed in the Caucasus can be avoided.

Wojciech Wojtasiewicz
Translated by Agnieszka Rubka

Uncovering Latvia's Jewish History



Die jüdische Gesellschaft in Kurland und Riga 1795-1915 (The Jewish Community in Courland and Riga). By: Svetlana Bogojavlenska. Publisher: Schoeningh Ferdinand GmbH, Paderborn, Germany, 2012.

Latvia is usually not one of the most popular topics in European publications. What's more, anyone who wants to learn about Latvian Jewry will enter a *terra incognita*. Latvia's internal publishing market is, in this regard, only slightly better. It's only been since 1991, after a long break caused by censorship and a narrative of Jews being a "Soviet people", that Latvian researchers could again begin to study the country's Jewish history. The work of Marģers Vestermanis, a Latvian historian and director of the Jews in Latvia Museum (Ebreji Latvijā) is one of the most notable in this regard. Not surprisingly, the German book *Die jüdische Gesellschaft in Kurland und Riga 1795-1915* written by Svetlana Bogojavlenska is dedicated to him.

In the preface of the book, Bogojavlenska tackles the question of the degree to which antisemitism in Latvia was the product of German and Russian rule (here she cites the views of Leo Dribins) and to what degree it is an inherent trait of Latvian society. In order to answer this question, Bogojavlenska committed years of research that led her to writing her doctoral dissertation and, ultimately, the publication of this book. An additional encouragement came from the working of the Latvian committee of historians and a public

discussion of antisemitism. Bogojavlenska further discusses the degree to which the terms "anti-Judaism" and "antisemitism" are characteristic to Latvia. Citing Aivars Stranga, she mentions various kinds of antisemitism in interwar Latvia: literary antisemitism which came from France, racist antisemitism represented by the Perkonskrusts organisation as well as ideological (political) antisemitism represented by the regime of Kārlis Ulmanis, Latvia's dictator from May 1934.

The geographical territory of her work is interesting. In the 19th century, Latvia was divided into three governorates: Livonia (with its capital in Riga), Courland (with its seat in Jelgava) and the Vitebsk region, which included Latgale. In reality, only the Vitebsk governorate belonged to the traditional Jewish Pale of Settlement. Bogojavlenska, however, omitted this region. Instead, she concentrated on the Jews of Courland and Riga.

The choice of the chronological space that was chosen for the book seems quite comprehensible and justified. The book opens in 1795, the year of the third partition of Poland, to which Courland and Semigalia belonged, as well as the creation of the Courland Governorate. The analysis ends in 1915 with the outbreak of the First World War and the evacuation of Jews from the provinces (for allegedly being pro-German). This date also signifies the end of the Russian rule of Livonia and Courland and the de facto liquidation of the Pale of Settlement.

Despite choosing 1795 as the first year of the analysis, Bogojavlenska also presents what had happened to Latvia's Jews before that. She mentions, for example, that in 1570, in Piltene County, Jews received freedoms and property rights from the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. At the beginning of the 18th century, following an epidemic in Jelgava, the capital of the Duchy of Courland and Semigallia, a Jewish cemetery was built there.

The status of Courland and Riga's Jews, since they were not under the Pale of Settlement, was quite peculiar. Bogojavlenska compares it to the status of Jews in Moscow or St Petersburg which, in the 19th century, was regulated on the one hand by the law of the Baltic governorates and, on the other, by the Jewish legislation of the empire. There was no uniform legislation for all of Russia. At first, Jews were not allowed to settle in Courland (the exception was Piltene County). Baron von Heyking, a senator in St Petersburg and a steadfast supporter of giving privileges to local Jews, pointed to their importance to economic development. The Russian Senate, emphasising that Jews have been living in Courland for 200 years, allowed them to stay in the province despite the local authorities calling for their expulsion. The Jewish residents of Courland, however, were doubly taxed and had to register themselves twice in the cities. By 1829, Jews were also allowed to settle in Riga, the capital of the Livonian Governorate.

Overall, Jews living in Courland and Riga had much fewer privileges than Jews from the Pale of Settlement. They could not, for example, create local governments. They were only given the right to vote in local elections as late as 1877. Meanwhile, the situation of Riga's Jews, as compared to those from Courland, was more difficult with regards to purchasing real estate. Until 1918, they could still not purchase any real estate in Livonia.

Despite the introduction of reforms liberalising the rights of Jews in the Tsarist Empire – especially during the reign of Alexander

II – Jews did not gain equal rights until 1918. In 1915, during the First World War, several thousand Courlandish Jews were expelled deep into Russian territory. This operation did not include Riga's Jews, who assisted refugees from Courland during the war.

Bogojavlenska describes the social and economic life of Courlandish Jews. For example, she points out that as a result of the 1799 liberalisation, burial societies began to sprout up. Jewish elementary schools, synagogues and associations caring for the sick also began to operate. By 1804, local Jews were given the right to create kahals. While discussing the economic role of the Jews in Courland, the author notes that the Russian authorities attempted to limit Jewish monopolies. Jews were glassmakers, painters, cobblers and tailors.

In 1860, the governor of Courland reported to the central authorities that the entire internal trade of the province – which was nonetheless insignificant – was in the hands of the Jews. And yet, Jews were poorer than Christians partly because they were doubly taxed. However, they outnumbered the Latvians in trade: in 1881, they accounted for 37 per cent of the artisans in Courland, while Germans accounted for 43 per cent and Latvians only 16 per cent. Jews also dominated the banking sector as well as the export and import of wheat, linen, cannabis and manufactured goods. The first factories introduced in the empire were also successfully established by Jewish entrepreneurs. Bogojavlenska examines the question of whether the significant participation of Jews in industry and trade provoked a reaction from other nationalities. She points out that while the Russian authorities limited the rights of Jews, the Courlandish Germans also had negative feelings towards them. In 1827, merchants and artisans from Jelgava asked the Tsar to limit the number of Jews in the city.

A key question posed in the book is how Latvians viewed their Jewish neighbours. Jews were the protagonists of many Latvian folk songs. They were the intermediaries between the city and the country, which was inhabited primarily by Latvians. Throughout the centuries, however, the Latvian view changed with the strengthening of their position in the countryside, migration to the cities and the Latvian national rebirth. Soon, Jews were seen as economic competitors who lived at the expense of the rural areas.

In 1881, Courland was the site of ritual murder charges and anti-Jewish disturbances. Although Latvian-Jewish relations were difficult at this time, not all Latvians fell into the anti-Jewish hysteria. In December 1881, a representative of the national rebirth, Krišjānis Valdemārs, published an article in which he presented the benefits of possible cooperation between Jews and Latvians in local elections. Meanwhile, Jānis Pliekšāns (Rainis) called antisemitism an "infectious disease". The author cites the opinion of Valdemārs, that German propaganda was responsible for Latvian antisemitism.

Bogojavlenska also dedicates a discussion on Haskalah, the Jewish enlightenment movement, which also reached Courland. Already in 1799, Courlandish Jews were given the right to attend Christian schools by the Tsar. The author mentions Josef Wunderbar of Jelgava, who was a teacher at a German gymnasium. The language of Haskalah was, of course, German and the library of the Jewish club in Jelgava possessed a large collection of newspapers from Germany. The Yiddish language was treated

as the language of the undereducated and a symbol of the "Jewish ghetto". The Jews also did not want Russification and they spoke Latvian poorly. In that case, how did the Germans from the provinces look at the acculturation of Courlandish Jews? The author responds: unappreciatively. Jews were competition for the German middle class. In 1853, Ernst Christian van Trautvetter wrote that Germans cannot be glad at all that Jews had begun to speak German. Courlandish Lutherans believed that in a Christian state, only Christians could take advantage of its rights and liberties. Despite this, a certain segment of the German population supported the emancipation of Jews (under the condition of baptism).

The book is not only focused on Courlandish Jews and goes deeper into Latvia. In Riga, as Bogojavlenska notes, there was a relatively small Jewish community. It is estimated that in the mid-19th century they numbered less than 1,000 people. The breaking point was 1841, when Jews were allowed to register in Riga under the liberal policies of Tsar Alexander II. The historical base of Riga's Jews was the so-called Moscow Faubourg (Moskauer Vorstadt), an industrial district of Riga. In 1913, 61 per cent of Riga's Jews lived there. Particularly interesting were the constant tensions between Jews tied to German culture and those tied – by language – to Russian culture. In the middle of the 19th century, the Russian authorities tried to utilise Russian-speaking Jews to give Riga a more Russian character.

Riga's Jews also initially lived off of trade and artisanship. According to the census of 1897, 21,000 Jews lived in Riga, about eight per cent of the population. About half of them were employed in industry. This number caused Riga's Jews to become active not only in Zionism but in socialism, which was growing in popularity. By 1901, a branch of the Bund (a Jewish socialist political party formed in Poland that advocated for the assimilation of Jews and patriotism for their countries rather than Zionism) was established in Riga. Already from its early years, the Bund collaborated with the Latvian Social Democratic Workers' Party. Co-operation strengthened especially during the Russo-Japanese War when the two partisan organisations organised protests against Tsarist militarism. In 1905, elections to the Duma were held in Riga. Because Jews had no chance to elect their own deputies, they sought out allies of other nationalities. Jews were allied with the Kadets and the progressive bloc of Latvians, Russians and Poles. Both lists competed with the Latvian conservative people's party and the German right.

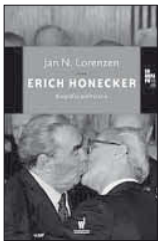
Bogojavlenska's book should be praised for many reasons. First of all, her work as a historian deserves recognition. Jewish life from the Third Partition of the Polish Republic until the entry of German troops into the area of Courland and Zemgale in 1915 is described in a detail found nowhere else. The book is thus an unusual compendium of Jewish life in Livonia and Courland. Another key point about Bogojavlenska's book is that despite being written with academic intention, it is not boring. The author manages to present the stories in such a way that it generates interest not only for seasoned historians, but also researchers of literature and the general readership.

This book is a critical voice on this part of history which was eclipsed by the events of the Second World War or the Holocaust which

was jointly undertaken by German propagators and, unfortunately, the Latvian population that collaborated with them. The world described in the publication *Die jüdische Gesellschaft in Kurland und Riga 1795-1915* no longer exists. This fact alone proves that this book merits our attention.

Tomasz Otocki
Translated by Filip Mazurczak

Who was Erich Honecker?



Erich Honecker. A Political biography. By: Jan N. Lorenzen. Publisher: Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, Wrocław 2014.

Jan N. Lorenzen's book appeared on the German market more or less at the same time as another one dedicated to Erich Honecker entitled *Staatschef a.D.* (*State Leader in Retirement)*, by Thomas Kunze. This book, unlike Lorenzen's publication that covers Erich Honecker's lifetime, reported only on the last years of his life, the period between 1989 and 1994. Interestingly enough, if the German media reviews of both books are trustworthy, neither of them lived up to the expectations of German readers. All in all, the book by Kunze was received slightly more favourably, since it was the outcome of independent research and investigation by the author who met with and interviewed many still-living witnesses to the events described in the book, broadening the scope of the information collected on Honecker's life.

The book by Lorenzen, however, is based solely on information which is readily available, as it was fully covered in previously published materials and studies concerning the former First Secretary of the East German Socialist Unity Party. Sadly, it does not bring much new into Germany's contemporary historical discourse. It is only, as accurately defined by Peter Jochen Winters in his review in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung,* "a rather skilful compilation of what recently can be read in relevant publications concerning Honecker and the history of the GDR." At the same time, both the length of the East German leader's life (almost 82 years), and the times he lived in, abounding with events that were incredibly significant for the history of contemporary Europe and the key meaning that Honecker played in the post-war history of the GDR, i.e. the state whose existence was a significant element of the post-war balance of power in the world, make the small volume of the book quite striking.

Hence, after reading Lorenzen's book, one indeed finds it difficult to disagree with the critical opinions formulated in the German media. The book is more of a rough chronology of the main events, rather than a detailed biography enabling us to obtain some information on *how* Honecker was able to make things happen or *what* exactly he did to stay in power for such a long time. As a matter of interest, it might be worth mentioning that in the German version the title, Lorenzen's book is described as a biography. In this regard, the Polish publisher seems to stay more on the safe side since the Polish language version of the book is described as a "political biography".

Thanks to this, the Polish reader should at least be less disappointed with the humble amount of information concerning Erich Honecker's private life included in Lorenzen's book.

This is a shame, since common citizens not only of the GDR, but also of other countries of the Eastern bloc, generally knew very little about their leaders and this knowledge was limited to the official image only, which in the national political discourse was forced upon them by the state propaganda apparatus. It would be beneficial, and not just in order to satisfy one's curiosity, to finally learn who actually were the people holding the highest offices in the countries of the former communist bloc. What led them to the top? Were they fanatics of a particular ideology who in their way of thinking could not break free of its limitations? Or perhaps they were ruthless opportunists, driven in their actions only by their personal interests? Or maybe they were rather specific hostages of history in a given (geo)political situation, unable to behave differently? Or perhaps they were all of these at once? Therefore, to make a long story short: what kind of people were they and what stimulated their actions?

Having read Honecker's biography, generally speaking, it is still impossible to answer the questions concerning this long-serving East German leader. We might only assume that in different periods of his life each of these elements characterised his behaviour with different degrees of intensity. Thus, there were periods in his life when he was a naïve, or at least uncritical, ideologist (especially if we believe the assessment in Lorenzen's book, according to which Honecker simply lacked tactfulness and the ability to think abstractly to become a real ideologist). However, there was unquestionably a time, which seemed to last ages, when his political ambition prevailed and when he turned into a calculated, ruthless, unscrupulous and career-oriented political player.

On the other hand, it cannot be denied that his life had some dramatic periods when his fate was decided upon by the course of history, although we must admit that it was not always harmful for him. For instance, 10 years in a Nazi prison must have been a traumatic experience. Then again, Honecker was very fortunate since he was born, grew up and lived in his youth in the Saar Basin, whose status was regulated by the Treaty of Versailles until 1935. It meant that his career in the youth structures of the communist party could develop (before he was arrested in 1935) much easier than in the territory of the Reich. The greatest gifts from history for Honecker were, however, undeniably the events of 1945, which gave rise to his rapid political career. We must remember that Honecker and his fellow communists neither organised nor carried out any revolution. The possibility of executing their political visions came to them in the form of the victorious Red Army, which authorised their actions, but undoubtedly only to the extent that would be consistent with the Soviet vision. Therefore, what we can find in the biography is a high number of interesting facts, for instance that Erich Honecker began his political career right after his 10th birthday when he joined the Young Communist League of Germany (KJVD), or that apparently this future leader was not very eager to start "working" himself. He was only interested in "political work".

Some bits and pieces found in Lorenzen's book also concern a few somewhat juicy details from Honecker's private life; he earned himself a bad reputation, as he did not shy away from female companionship. It worried the party's officials greatly. For a contemporary young person, it might seem surprising that when he finally married a party colleague (in accordance with the party's suggestion and with the party's approval), the party then had to allow him to get divorced a couple of years later and marry his second wife Margot. Moreover, Lorenzen's book provides us with a rather superficial overview of Honecker's rapid career in the early years after the war when he was earning his first stripes (with different results) in the state administration and in different positions in the party.

We learn about his relationship with Walter Ulbricht, whose trust Honecker earned during the events of 1953 and then became his "student", closest colleague and – later – was appointed his successor. We meet Honecker as the main architect and builder of the Berlin Wall, which was put up at lightning speed in August 1961 exclusively due to his organisational skills. We read about the circumstances of Honecker taking power in the GDR in 1971, the key aspect of which was his true friendship with Leonid Brezhnev and, it would seem, a relaxed attitude towards such values as loyalty or friendship with his mentor Ulbricht. Finally, we read about the long period of his governance (Honecker held the highest national position in the GDR for 18 years straight), and then about his leaving and the last years of wandering.

As mentioned earlier, this is superficial information and presented in the form of a calendar of events. That is why in Lorenzen's book, a reader will not find sufficient and satisfying information concerning many key issues. Unfortunately, we find out very little for instance about the years Honecker spent in the Gestapo prisons. Lorenzen does mention Honecker's escape in March 1945, which ended with his voluntary return to the prison a few weeks later, but he does not elaborate on the subject even though it was an absolutely striking event, especially considering that it is not clear how on earth Honecker got away with his escape. We also fail to learn how he managed to create such a balance of power inside the Socialist Unity Party that allowed him stay the leader of the GDR for so long. Neither do we discover what actions helped him systematically extend his own rights and at the same time limit the rights of the Politburo. We only read that it happened.

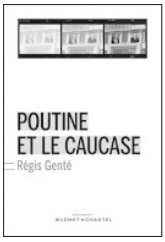
For many readers, the key issue is to find out how people like Honecker could justify the enslavement of their own people to themselves. What was the root of their contempt for ordinary people? By what right did they give themselves to apply different types of force against their own compatriots? How did Honecker justify to himself the construction of the wall that was to make Germans remain in the GDR and live in accordance with the rules he established? Was he able to block out the awareness of the growing number of victims who were shot dead when attempting to cross the border?

Unfortunately, when it comes to these questions, Lorenzen's book falls short. In favour of the book, one could argue that the less interested reader might find it satisfying. Thanks to the book, he or she will learn, even though in a nutshell, about Erich Honecker's fate topped with a handful of interesting facts

without having to go into details. This book would be worth recommending for those who wish to learn about history, but only a little. For those who would like to learn and understand more, this book would not really be worth recommending. But it is better to know a little than nothing at all.

Agnieszka Szymańska
Translated by Justyna Chada

Putin's Favourite Playground



Poutine et le Caucase (Putin and the Caucasus).
By: Régis Genté.
Publisher: Libella, Paris, 2014.

Since the annexation of Crimea in the spring of this year, journalists and commentators in the West have started to feel again a strong need to understand Russia and especially the Kremlin's role and motivations in the Ukrainian quagmire. To do so, however, one does not necessarily need to linger on the current events as part of the answer lies in Russia's past and its relationship with the region which neighbours Crimea. Such is a thesis which stems from the book titled *Poutine et le Caucase* (*Putin and the Caucasus*) which was written by Régis Genté and recently published in France.

Genté is an independent French journalist who lives in Georgia. He has been reporting on Central Asia and the Caucasus for ten years and thus provides the reader with a very broad and rich perspective on the history of the Caucasus. What's also important is the fact that the book was published in January 2014, one month before the start of the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympic Games. As the author notes, the Olympics took place exactly 150 years after what Moscow considers its final victory over the Caucasus: the famous Battle of Krasnaya Polyana.

Poutine et le Caucase is aimed, among other things, at lifting the veil over all the financial and political efforts that have been put into place by the Russian government to hold such a costly sporting event as the Olympic Games. Clearly for any other country, being selected to host the Olympic Games would be tantamount to being a modern and stable country with an adequate infrastructure and labour force. For the Russian Federation, however, this honour was a synonym to something much more valuable and vital to its own survival: the approval of Putin's actions in the Caucasus and those of Russia since the 19th century.

The centuries-long relationship between the Caucasus and Russia is complex and noxious. Historically speaking, the Caucasus was a part of the Persian world until the Russian Empire set its eyes on this mountainous region. From 1817 to 1864 the Caucasus witnessed the invasion by the Russian Empire which ended with the annexation of the areas of the North Caucasus to Russia and the ethnic cleansing of the Circassians. Other territories of the Caucasus (such as Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan) were incorporated into the Russian Empire at various times in the 19th century as a consequence of Russian wars with Persia and the Ottoman Empire. The region was unified as a single political entity and its boundaries only altered when Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan

became independent in 1991, after the fall of the Soviet Union.

Clearly, Russia's efforts to maintain its grip on the region have always been dominated by conflict, corruption and even ethnic rejection. Consequently, the Caucasus region today looks like a giant mosaic, where different languages and religions jar with the Russian language and the Orthodox Church. Three linguistic groups are found in the Caucasus: the Caucasians (Chechen Ingush, Cherkess and Dagestani), the Indo-Europeans (Russian, Greek and Ossetian) and the Turkic peoples (stemming from Central Asia). Beyond linguistic diversity, there is also religious diversity with various denominations of both Islam and Christianity.

This diversity, combined with a strong will of some republics to gain autonomy, is one of the reasons why the Caucasus remains unstable. This is an issue of which the Russian Federation is quite aware, since security has always been more important than development in the region. To prove this point, Genté quotes Alexander Tkatchev, the head of the Krasnodar Krai – an administrative unit, subject to the Russian Federation which is located near Crimea. In 2012, Tkatchev stated that the role of this region had traditionally been that of an "ethnic buffer zone". Unfortunately, as Genté argues throughout the book, not only is this focus on security restraining the establishment of a peaceful and prosperous region, but it has also contributed to the escalation of violence. Indeed, the radicalisation of the rebels in Chechnya is one of the results of the ideological convictions that originated from conflict. To prove this point, Genté states that during the Second Chechen War, which lasted from August 1999 to May 2000, the rebellion had extended to neighbouring republics such as Dagestan. History shows that whenever the Russian Federation is weakened, like it was in 1971 or 1991, the Chechens try to liberate themselves from the colonial yoke; hence the Kremlin's concern for maintaining security in the region.

Thus, the Caucasus remains a tense environment where each linguistic or religious entity craves for, if not independence, Russia's acknowledgement of the ethnic and moral damages that it caused in the past. This is where Genté strikes at the core of Russia's, or Putin's, political stance towards other post-Soviet territories. In other words, it is highly unlikely that Russia will ever admit that its activities in the Caucasus were illegal or inhumane. The main reason for this behaviour is best explained, as Genté believes, by the fact that Putin has taken on the legacy of Russian colonial history. As Genté writes, "There is still a form of colonial engineering taking place in the Caucasus."

Admittedly, the approval of the International Olympic Committee for Russia to organise the 2014 Winter Olympic Games in the Caucasus meant validation of Putin's policy in regards to the region. For Russia, Sochi has not only been the question of a worldwide reputation, but also legitimacy. To the Russian president this is what matters the most. As the author argues, Putin has an obsession with bringing Russia back to the front of the international stage.

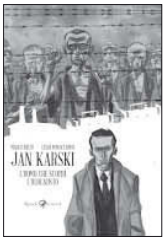
Not only has the Cuacasus served the Kremlin's political ambitions and strategies, it has also embodied the "other". Russian specialists, such as Susan Layton, argue that the invasion of the Caucasus by the Russian Empire was in fact a way of imitating colonial Europe: the Russian Empire wanted to have its own Orient and found it in the Caucasus. The people from

the Caucasus represent everything that is not Russian. This is even more relevant in the current context with a noticeable rise within the Russian society of nationalist sentiments and orthodox ideology.

The publication of *Poutine et le Caucase* in France in 2014 served as a perfect opportunity for a western reader to understand what was really laid beneath the Olympic Games at Sochi. In other words, the book presents Putin's overall political strategy and recognises the fact that the Caucasus has been used to serve Russia's international ambitions. Upon reading the book, and if the author's views are right here, it becomes quite clear that the region will remain a hotbed of tension and one where the restoration of Russia's power will be achieved to the detriment of its peaceful recovery.

Lana Ravel

The Man Who Discovered the Holocaust Becomes a Comic Book



Jan Karski. L'uomo che scoprì l'Olocausto (Jan Karski. The man who discovered the Holocaust). By: Rizzo Marco and Bonaccorso Lelio. Publisher: Rizzoli Lizard, Milan, Italy 2014.

One hundred years after his birth, Jan Karski, a Polish partisan during the Second World War, is finally introduced to the Italian audience thanks to the graphic novel *Jan Karski: The Man Who Discovered the Holocaust*, telling this extraordinary story. This renowned member of the Polish resistance who acted as a courier to the government-in-exile during the Nazi occupation recently became the hero of a new comic book written by two Sicilian authors who became fascinated by this incredible story, which is not commonly known to the Italian audience.

The graphic novel is a well-established literary genre in many countries with a strong culture of cartoons such as the United States, Belgium and France. The genre is gaining popularity, but still represents a niche in the publishing market and lacks the same impact on an audience that traditional novels would. Nevertheless, in Italy graphic novels are becoming a medium to tell stories of modern heroes and figures of contemporary history.

Jan Karski is not the first graphic novel focusing on Poland's history. Israeli artist Rutu Modan already presented the issue of re-establishing lost properties in her refined masterpiece *The Property*. French cartoonist Sylvain Savoia and Marzena Sowa narrated the deeds of a little girl during communist times through their series of short vignettes about life in Poland in the early 1980s. However, the one that is likely to be the most known and renowned graphic novel, which shares the location and the historical context of the Karski novel, is *Maus* by Art Spiegelmann. *Maus* takes place in Poland during the Second World War and depicts the author interviewing his father about his experiences as a Polish Jew and Holocaust survivor. His personal memories are expanded by the horrors of war and the human suffering from the Nazi persecution. In Poland, the reception of the work was controversial mainly because of the largely unsympathetic depictions of Poles, often described as Nazi

collaborators and represented as pigs in the book. Publishers and commentators refused to deal with the book for fear of protests and boycotts. Indeed, in 2001 when Piotr Bikont, a journalist for *Gazeta Wyborcza*, decided to publish *Maus* in Polish as an independent publisher, demonstrators protested and burned the book in front of *Gazeta*'s offices.

The Jan Karski project seems to neither share the same ambitions of *Maus*, nor the risk of producing such a wave of national indignation. The topic of Polish-Jewish relations (often controversial and interesting for many) and the story of a national hero, risking his own life to witness the atrocities of the Holocaust before the Allies, would be attractive for this work to be translated into Polish.

The two Sicilian authors, journalist and dramatist Marco Rizzo and cartoonist Lelio Bonaccorso, have collaborated in the past, telling the stories of many "modern heroes" well-known within Italian society. This time, however, they chose to tell the story of a Polish national hero from the Second World War who is almost unknown to the Italian audience. It would seem quite a risky choice, but such an extraordinary story could attract a wide audience. Karski, a member of the Polish resistance, took part in many missions before being sent by the underground movements linked to the Polish government-in-exile to witness the devastation of the Warsaw ghetto and to a concentration camp. His mission was to witness and report the Nazi atrocities of the Holocaust to the Allies in London and Washington. At first, not many believed Karski, but thanks to his commitment and the publication of his book *Courier from Poland: The Story of a Secret State*, the Holocaust and its horrors in Europe were exposed to Americans.

As Rizzo admits in a short appendix decorated with the some storyboard sketches, such a rich and complex history had to be simplified in order to be adapted to a comic book. Some details are scratched and it results in a quicker reading, nevertheless the work is inspired by Karski's *Story of a Secret State*.

The Italian comic's story unfolds smoothly and quickly: the scenes, merged into chapters, come in such a quick succession that an Italian reader approaching the story for the very first time would almost have to force himself to slow down in order to indulge a bit more in the historical reflections and delight himself with the beautiful illustrations etched by Bonaccorso's pencil. The lines are simple and clean, filled with pale watercolour brush strokes suited for a melancholic narration. Long and sharpened, these strokes are extremely basic and rough when describing the brutal and struggles of the Nazi horrors in the gaunt and barely sketched bodies of the Jewish prisoners of the concentration camps and the miserable Warsaw ghetto.

This simple representation doesn't completely feed the interest that arises in the reader. Neither do the precious and delicate illustrations satisfy the interest in the story of Jan Karski, as it would be rather unlikely that a comic book could cover such a complex story in a single album for a reader to delight in for no more than a couple of hours. This is due to the limitations of comics as an art medium.

This volume constitutes rather a foretaste for a deeper examination without the oversimplifications. For lovers of this literary genre, especially Italians unfamiliar with Karski's heroism, it is a great way to learn about this hero's story.

Giacomo Manca

26 JULY - 17 AUGUST
ST. DOMINIC'S FAIR

XVIII INTERNATIONAL STREET AND OPEN-AIR THEATRES FESTIVAL FETA
10–13 JULY

GDAŃSK

ESPERANZA + CONCERT
SOLIDARITY OF ARTS FESTIVAL
16 AUGUST

BALTIC SAIL GDAŃSK 3–6 JULY

INTERNATIONAL MOZART FESTIVAL MOZARTIANA
17–23 AUGUST

25–27 JULY
4TH WORLD GDAŃSK REUNION

Gdansk. Culture of Freedom

GDAŃSK
city of freedom

fb.com/gdansk
twitter.com/gdansk
instagram.com/gdansk_official